

Born into the Struggle:
The Children of South Africa's
Early Anti-Apartheid Activists



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Short Abstract

Drawing on an oral history project with 45 interviewees, born between 1943 and 1976, this thesis examines the experiences and recollections of the children of anti-apartheid activists. Involved across a range of political organisations during the 1940s to 1960s, their parents belong to an early generation of anti-apartheid activists. Although many of these children have played visible roles in post-apartheid public life, their experiences remain largely absent from existing scholarship. Whereas most studies in the emerging field of ‘personal histories’ of the South African struggle focus on African National Congress (ANC) activism in exile after 1976, this study brings into view an earlier period and situates childhood within the struggle both inside South Africa and in exile, framing their experiences as a lasting but neglected legacy of apartheid (activism). Seeking to understand children’s varied relationships with their parents’ organisations and divergent political trajectories, this thesis outlines the radically shifting political landscape from the late 1940s to the 1990s, exposing children to vastly different levels of repression, secrecy, political communities, and opportunities for politicisation, impacted by race and location, but most importantly, time. When (and at what age) children encountered their parents’ activism and the state’s repression shaped their immediate experiences and longer-term political trajectories. Drawing on psychological research, the study highlights the significance of children’s ability to comprehend the persecution they faced and the vital role that community and ideology played in enabling children to cope. Ultimately, children’s relationships to their parents’ movements and the political context influenced children’s decision to join their parents’ struggle, participate in alternative socio-political movements, or seek stability in non-political spaces. Finally, this thesis examines how children’s experiences of return to South Africa post-1994 and subsequent political developments, as well as personal changes,

impacted children's recollections, shaping how they view themselves within a broader historical narrative.

Long Abstract

In post-apartheid South Africa, the children of anti-apartheid activists have written memoirs, given interviews, and created other cultural productions. They occupy visible roles in politics, the civil service, business, and heritage institutions. Yet, despite their prominence, few scholars have examined their perspectives and experiences. Too often, these children appear only as narrative embellishments, used to animate accounts of their parents' lives.

This study has sought to illuminate the diverse ways in which these children experienced and interpreted their parents' political activities, and how those experiences ultimately shaped their own relationships to the struggle and often diverging political trajectories. By examining the lives of individuals born over three decades in South Africa and in exile, this thesis traces the patterns of repression, community, politicisation, and support that shaped these children's lives over time and place. In addition, this thesis explores how children remember their involvement in anti-apartheid activism and how they view themselves within a broader historical narrative, highlighting how the passage of time, political events, and personal developments influence their recollections.

This thesis is based on an oral history project with 45 interviewees, based in South Africa, the UK, and the US. Their parents were active in a range of anti-apartheid organisations, including the PAC, the Black Consciousness Movement (BCM), the Black Sash, but predominantly the African National Congress (ANC) and the Congress Alliance, during the 1940s to the 1960s as part of an early generation of anti-apartheid activists

(although most stayed active afterwards). Born between 1943 and 1976, these children spent most or all of their childhoods during their parents' activism, and they actively remember apartheid, whether from within South Africa or from exile. The use of oral histories is informed by memory research, which emphasises the constant (re-)construction of memory by the narrator in interplay with others (including the interviewer), shaped by the passage of time, changing socio-economic-political circumstances, personal development, perceived significance, and in response to trauma. To broaden the demographic scope and add a temporal component, interviews conducted by other researchers were also consulted. In addition, this thesis uses memoirs and other forms of autobiographical writings, as well as archival sources, including newspaper articles, political documents, and letters, to gain an understanding of children's experiences and how childhood was constructed within the liberation movements.

This thesis argues that the rapidly changing political landscape in South Africa and in exile from the late 1940s to the 1990s, as well as race and location, fundamentally influenced children's experiences of anti-apartheid activism. When (and at what age) children encountered their parents' activism – and the associated repression – proved decisive in influencing both their immediate experiences and their longer-term political trajectories. The evolving political context determined the forms of violence children endured at the hands of apartheid agents, the level of required secrecy, the responsibilities they assumed to support their parents, the nature of community support available to them, and their opportunities for politicisation. Drawing on psychological research, this thesis highlights the significance of children's ability to understand the persecution they faced and the role that community and ideology played in helping them cope with trauma and uncertainty. Understanding how children were politicised, and the extent to which they were

integrated into – or excluded from – their parents’ movements, is therefore essential. The thesis contends that those who grew up under intense repression, amidst secrecy and limited participation in political activities, were excluded from their parents’ political movement and, consequently, more vulnerable to psychological strain.

Following the Introduction (Chapter 1) and the Historical Context (Chapter 2), Chapter 3 examines children’s interactions with the apartheid state and its violence as a direct consequence of their parents’ activism in South Africa. It argues that the home – traditionally imagined as a space of safety – became a central site of repression, blurring the public-private dichotomy that is so often established by activists in autobiographical writings. As repression increased in the late 1950s and throughout the 1960s, children became indirect targets of the state’s psychological and physical warfare against activists but were also deliberately targeted in the state’s attempt to extract information and place psychological pressure on their parents. While younger children struggled with their parents’ absences and the lack of information amidst this repression, older children took on new responsibilities vis-à-vis their parents and siblings, assuming adult-like responsibilities. The analysis further considers how race shaped these experiences: children of colour suffered under severe economic constraints and harsher repression, but generally experienced more community support. Meanwhile, white children were ostracised and harassed by their communities, albeit amidst improved financial and domestic stability.

Chapter 4 positions exile as a further consequence of this repression. By tracing children’s routes into exile and their experiences with their host country, this thesis suggests that geopolitical processes, the socio-political contexts of their exile destinations, and race shaped their initial exile experiences. Through examining the multiple reasons for which

families turned to exile and the possibility for border crossings, this thesis argues that children's experiences and narratives challenge common conceptualisations of exile. Exiled families were, however, not out of reach of Pretoria's violence, particularly in the frontline states. In addition to children's actual experiences of this violence, this thesis also explores how children interacted with this violence through their fears, nightmares, and imaginations, exposing the continued psychological impact of apartheid's violence. Parental absences continued into exile, as activists were assigned to missions, spent time in military camps, and underwent further education, but also as parents struggled to provide a livelihood. Like in South Africa, older children took on new responsibilities, caring for their younger siblings and/or helping to provide financially. This thesis contends that the ANC's institutional engagement with the education and welfare of children and youth began only after the Soweto Uprising; previously, responsibility for children rested largely within families and informal community networks. The chapter further examines the psychological toll of exile on children, emphasising how exposure to their parents' emotional distress and mental health struggles shaped their own well-being. Patterns of substance abuse among youth emerged not only as a means of coping with displacement and trauma, but also reproduced their parents' coping mechanisms. While cases of sexual assault of children by members of the movement were isolated, these did occur throughout the period, exacerbated by the lack of supervision. Lastly, this chapter examines some of the experiences of children who were left behind by parents fleeing into exile, highlighting their omission from the historical narrative.

Chapter 5 explores children's politicisation and identifies five interconnected processes: 1. through interactions with their parents at home, 2. through the constant exposure to apartheid, 3. through 'participation by default', 4. in peripheral spaces in the

home and the community, and 5. through children-specific groups or alternative sites of education. While Chapter 3 suggests that the home was a site of repression, Chapter 5 suggests that it was also one of the main spaces for children's politicisation, as it was here that they learned from their parents and interacted with their parents' political communities. Yet, these five processes were shaped by the changing levels of repression. While all children inherited a strong sense of justice from their parents, children thus experienced differing levels of understanding of and integration into their parents' political movements, based on when they experienced childhood. Whereas the late 1940s and early 1950s were marked by relatively overt activism and vibrant, often mixed-race political communities that enabled children to participate (by default) in their parents' political activities and in children-specific groups, the increasing repression by the late 1950s and especially the 1960s caused children to be isolated from their parents' activism and communities, while children-specific groups disintegrated. This repression continued into the 1970s, although the outbreak of the Soweto Uprising and an increase in activism led children to become more politicised once more. By the 1980s, the increase in grassroots movements enabled increased participation by default, although without the same multi-racial, social intensity of the 1950s. In exile, their specific location and associated communities furthermore played an important role in children's politicisation, as this thesis demonstrates through a comparison of London, Maputo, Lusaka, and Mazimbu. This chapter highlights the important role that other politicising agents, especially other activists, played, alongside children's direct interactions with their parents. In addition, this chapter also emphasises the varying degrees of intentionality that underline children's politicisation, highlighting how children picked up on political leanings and ideas through overhearing snippets of information, sensing, and picking up on parents' anxieties.

Chapter 6 takes a closer look at the narratives of sacrifice and the political family that were dominant in the liberation movements, from pre-illegality to exile. This thesis suggests that these narratives underline an ‘emotional formation’ which children ‘learned’ through their parents and the movement, underpinning their positioning within the struggle. This ‘emotional formation’ valued the collective over the personal and symbolically replaced the biological family with the political family. By exploring this emotional formation and the uses it held for activists and their children, I show how children interacted with politics through emotions and how children navigated this emotional formation. While children rhetorically placed a strong emphasis on this symbolic political family, their recollections also suggest that the biological family co-existed, cooperated, and clashed with this political family. This thesis argues that it was the extent to which children were politicised and integrated into the political community, as shaped by the shifting political situation, which enabled them to accept this ‘emotional formation’ and, thus, cope with the apartheid state’s violence. Children who were less integrated into their parents’ movement as a consequence of the changing political context struggled to learn this ‘emotional formation’, which left children feeling bewildered and isolated.

Chapter 7 builds on the themes of politicisation and repression explored in the preceding chapters to trace children’s own political pathways (in childhood and adulthood). Perhaps surprisingly, especially in light of the post-1976 ANC’s stated aim to educate and train the movement’s future comrades and contributors to the nation, children showed drastically diverging political pathways: while some joined their parents’ liberation movements, others aligned themselves with alternative socio-political movements, or distanced themselves entirely from political life. This chapter argues that the transition from politically exposed childhoods to activist adulthood was impacted by the changing political

context and children's integration into their parents' movement, which enabled or restricted children enacting their 'disposition for activism' within the South African liberation movement. Whereas the pipeline from child to activist for those who had experienced the more overt political structures of the late 1940s and early 1950s was clear, children who experienced the repressive period during the late 1950s and 1960s had difficult relationships with their parents' movement and found few opportunities to enter anti-apartheid activism in South Africa. The Soweto Uprising and the emergence of numerous youth organisations in the 1980s enabled children (especially children of colour) to become active participants in the struggle *as children*. Where children in the UK had a more distant exposure to their parents' children, many enacted their 'disposition for activism' through the numerous socio-political movements that operated in the UK. Children integrated into their parents' movement or wishing to further integrate could pursue their desire to participate by taking up ANC scholarships, or by volunteering at the Solomon Mahlangu Freedom School (SOMAFSCO) and Dakawa, following their establishment. Children also joined the ANC's armed wing, *uMkhonto we Sizwe* (MK), although this was shaped by gender and parental influences. The chapter also interrogates the relational label 'child of activists', suggesting that those who did integrate into liberation movements eschewed this identity to avoid accusations of nepotism.

Chapter 8 examines South Africa's transitional period and the three decades of majority rule that followed, focusing on how the children of activists negotiated questions of return, identity, and the post-apartheid nation. Examining children's decisions to and experiences of return, this thesis places special attention on those who chose not to return, challenging the dominant focus on returnees in existing scholarship and revealing how decisions about return were shaped by professional uncertainties, weak ties to their parents'

homeland, and, above all, the desire to spare their own families the dislocation they had once endured. Children who did return struggled with experiencing the escalating violence in the early 1990s, the reality of life under apartheid, their personal encounters with racism, language difficulties, (re-)integration into extended families and social life, as well as educational and professional difficulties. Adopting a memory-studies approach, the chapter, then, traces how these individuals' narratives have evolved over time in response to personal transformation, political disillusionment, and enduring post-apartheid inequities. The chapter investigates how children have made claims of neglect, demands for justice, and fought for recognition of their parents' achievements in the public space. Children invoked their 'political childhood' to critique the present and to articulate a vision of the South Africa that was not realised, highlighting how, for children, the political remained deeply personal. Personal life-course changes, such as their own ageing, their parents' decline and death, and the experience of raising their own children, have furthermore influenced how they make sense of their past. The chapter concludes by exploring how the post-apartheid era has reshaped these children's communities and identities, suggesting that the choice of return as well as the actual experiences of return and events since have led children to turn towards a more cosmopolitan identity.

By analysing these children's experiences of repression, community, support, and politicisation, this thesis explores an under-researched aspect of the struggle, contributing significantly to the recently emerging field of personal histories in South African historiography. While previous research on childhood and family politics has focused on the ANC in exile post-1976, often adopting an institutional perspective, this thesis explores childhood in activism from the late 1940s onwards, paying attention to both exile and South Africa and adopting a child-centric focus. By tracing children's experiences of the state's

repression, this thesis furthermore complements and extends the work of South Africanists who have hitherto focused on activists' experiences of imprisonment, detention, and exile, by showing how children's experiences reflected their parents' repression. Finally, by examining how political ideals were passed across generations and revealing the intimate costs of resistance, this thesis frames the experiences of activists' children as a lasting but neglected legacy of apartheid. The destruction of family life, long recognised as a key feature of apartheid, was felt with particular intensity among activists' families.

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Table of Contents

Short Abstract.....	ii
Long Abstract.....	iii
Acknowledgments.....	xii
Table of Contents.....	xv
List of Abbreviations.....	xviii
List of Figures.....	xxiii
Chapter 1: Introduction.....	1
Overview.....	1
Literature Review.....	3
Existing Literature on the Children of Activists in South Africa and Exile.....	4
Children and the Personal in the South African Struggle.....	7
Biographical Consequences and Transgenerational Legacies of Activism.....	11
Children as Political Subjects: South Africa and Beyond.....	15
Memory Studies.....	23
Research Methods and Methodology.....	26
Selection Criteria.....	26
Defining Activism.....	28
Oral Histories.....	30
Overview of Sources.....	33
Author’s Oral Histories.....	34
Previously Recorded Oral Histories.....	40
Autobiographical Writings.....	41
Other Archival Material.....	42
Discussion of Sources.....	42
Structure and Argument.....	49
Chapter 2: Historical Context.....	55
Political Activism in the late 1940s-1950s.....	55
The State’s Clamp Down.....	56
The Turn to the Armed Struggle and into Exile.....	59
The BCM and the Soweto Uprising.....	63
Reform and Repression under Botha.....	66
Negotiations to End Apartheid.....	69
Chapter 3: Experiencing the Repression of Activism – Children’s Interactions with the Apartheid State in South Africa from 1948-1990.....	72
Introduction.....	72
Structural Inequalities.....	72
Deteriorating State Repression.....	75
Children’s Homes as Sites of Repression.....	77
Parental Detentions, Trials, and Imprisonment.....	80

Children’s Roles and Responsibilities	91
Death of Activist-Parents in South Africa	95
Psychological State of Parents	98
Community Support and Ostracisation	101
Conclusion	104
Chapter 4: Experiencing the Repression of Activism – Experiences of Exile from 1948-1990	107
Introduction	107
Routes into Exile	108
Conceptualising Exile as Experienced by Children	115
Experiences of Apartheid’s Violence in Exile	123
Parental Absences and Family Separation	129
Psychological Distress and Substance Abuse in Exile	134
Sexual Assault in Exile	137
Those Left Behind	139
Conclusion	142
Chapter 5: Learning Activism – Children’s Politicisation in South Africa and Exile	145
Introduction	145
Home and Community: Children’s Politicisation	146
Political Understanding in the late 1940s to late 1950s	156
Political Understanding in the late 1950s to the late 1960s	164
Political Understanding in the 1970s to the late 1980s in South Africa	167
Political Understanding in Exile from the 1960s to 1990	170
London	172
Lusaka	181
Maputo	187
Mazimbu	189
Belonging and Identity in Exile	193
Conclusion	198
Chapter 6: Sacrifice and the Political Family	201
Introduction	201
The Choice to Have Children	202
Narratives of Sacrifice and the Political Family	205
Sacrifice and the Political Family as an ‘Emotional Formation’	209
The Political Family over Time	214
The Importance of Community and Ideology	220
Conclusion	221
Chapter 7: Becoming Activists – Children’s Political Pathways	223
Introduction	223
Disposition for Activism	224
Political Participation in the late 1950s-1960s from South Africa and into Exile	226
Political Participation in Exile in the 1970s and 1980s	236

Political Participation in South Africa in the 1970s and 1980s	251
Conclusion	262
Chapter 8: Return and Reckoning – The End of Apartheid to the Present.....	266
Introduction.....	266
‘Return’	268
Possibility for ‘Return’	270
Experiences of ‘Return’	273
Reckoning	281
Children of Activists in the Public Sphere: Legal Battles and Life-writing	281
Children of Activists in the Public Sphere: Political Childhood	297
Private Reckoning.....	304
Conclusion	311
Chapter 9: Conclusion	314
Significance of Research.....	314
Key Argument.....	316
Children’s Engagement with Political Activity	321
The Political Is Personal	323
Constructions of Childhood	324
Research Limitations and Avenues of Future Research	325
Bibliography	328
Author’s interviews:.....	328
Archives consulted:.....	330
Primary sources:.....	331
Secondary Sources:	341

List of Abbreviations

AAM	Anti-Apartheid Movement
AEM	African Education Movement
ANC	African National Congress
ANCVL	African National Congress Veterans' League
ANCWL	African National Congress Women's League
ANCWS	African National Congress Women's Section
ANCYL	African National Congress Youth League
Anti-SAIC	Anti-South African Indian Council
APLA	Azanian People's Liberation Army
ASA	Association of African Students
AZAPO	Azanian People's Organisation
AZASO	Azanian Students' Organisation
BC	Black Consciousness
BCM	Black Consciousness Movement
BCP	Basutoland Congress Party
BCP	Black Community Programmes
BDAF	British Defence and Aid Fund
BNP	Basutoland National Party
BOSS	Bureau of State Security
BPC	Black People's Convention
CCB	Civil Cooperation Bureau
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency

CIHS	Central Indian High School
CND	Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament
COD	Congress of Democrats
CODESA	Convention for a Democratic South Africa
COREMO	Mozambique Revolutionary Committee
COSAG	Concerned South African Groups
COSAS	Congress of South African Students
CP	Communist Party USA, usually abbreviated as CPUSA
CPC	Coloured People's Congress
CPSA	Communist Party of South Africa
DC	Dependants' Conference
DIP	Department for Information and Publicity (ANC)
DPSC	Detainees' Parents Support Committee
FEDSAW	Federation of South African Women
FRELIMO	Frente de Libertação de Moçambique
GDR	German Democratic Republic
HRC	Human Rights Council
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross
IDAF	International Defence and Aid Fund for Southern Africa
IDASA	Institute for Democratic Alternatives
IFP	Inkatha Freedom Party
IRG	Individual Reparation Grants
JODAC	Johannesburg Democratic Action Committee

LLA	Lesotho Liberation Army
LP	Liberal Party
LYL	Lenasia Youth League
LESCO	Lenasia Students' Congress
MDM	Mass Democratic Movement
MK	uMkhonto we Sizwe
MYS	Modern Youth Society
NAHECS	National Heritage and Cultural Studies Centre
NCCR	National Coordinating Committee for Repatriation
NEC	National Executive Committee, usually of the African National Congress
NEUM	Non-European Unity Movement
NIC	Natal Indian Congress
NP	National Party
NPA	National Prosecuting Authority
NUSAS	National Union of South African Students
OAU	Organisation of African Unity
PAC	Pan African Congress
PARC	People Against Race Classification
RENAMO	Resistência Nacional Moçambicana
RYC	Rand Youth Club
SACC	South African Council of Churches
SACHED	South African Committee on Higher Education
SACP	South African Communist Party

SACPO	South African Coloured People's Organisation
SACTU	South African Congress of Trade Unions
SADF	South African Defence Forces
SAHA	South African History Archive
SAIC	South African Indian Council; SAIC can refer to the Indian Council of the 1950s and the accommodation of Indians in the Tricameral parliament.
SAIRR	South African Institute for Race Relations
SAP	South African Police
SAPS	South African Police Services
SASA	South African Student Association
SASO	South African Students' Organisation
SAUF	South African United Front
SAYCO	South African Youth Congress
SB	Special Branch, later Security Branch
SBF	Steve Biko Foundation
SOMAFCO	Solomon Mahlangu Freedom College
SOYA	Society of Young Africa
SWAPO	South West Africa People's Organisation
TASC	Transvaal Anti-SAIC Campaign
TIC	Transvaal Indian Congress
TIYC	Transvaal Indian Youth Congress
TRASCO	Transvaal Students' Congress

TRC	Truth and Reconciliation Commission
UCT	University of Cape Town
UDF	United Democratic Front
UFH	University of Fort Hare, or 'Fort Hare'
UIR	Urgent Interim Reparations
UK	United Kingdom of Great Britain
USA	United States of America
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
UNHCR	Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
UWC	University of the Western Cape
WCC	World Council of Churches
WF	Woodcraft Folk
Wits	University of the Witwatersrand
WPCC	Western Province Council of Churches
WSEA	Women's Section East Africa of the African National Congress
YCS	Young Christian Students
YD	Young Democrats
YSS	African National Congress Youth and Student Section
ZANU-PF	Zimbabwe African National Union – Patriotic Front
ZAPU	Zimbabwe African People's Union

List of Figures

Figure 1: Distribution of birthdate of interviewees.	38
Figure 2: Racial distribution of interviewees.	38
Figure 3: Gender distribution of interviewees.	39
Figure 4: Experiences of exile of interviewees.	39
Figure 5: Parental political affiliation of interviewees.	40

Chapter 1: Introduction

Among us was a girl of thirteen or fourteen, a schoolgirl still in her gym, the daughter of Lionel Burger. It was a bitter winter day. She was carrying blankets and even a hot-water bottle for her mother. The relatives of the people detained in a brutal dawn swoop had been told they could bring clothing etc. to the prison. (...) The child was dry-eyed and composed, in fact she was an example to us all of the way a detainee's family ought to behave. Already she had taken on her mother's role in the household, giving loving support to her father, who was all too soon to be detained as well. (...) But he knew that his schoolgirl daughter could be counted on in this family totally united in and dedicated to the struggle.¹

Overview

In Nadine Gordimer's novel *Burger's Daughter* (1979), Rosa Burger became isolated from the political community following the detention, and later death of her mother, the imprisonment and death of her father, and the accidental drowning of her brother.² Although fictional, the novel was inspired by Gordimer's connection to activist circles and the life of Ilse Wilson (née Fischer), whom Gordimer had asked for permission to publish.³ The parallels are evident: Ilse's mother, Molly, died in a car accident in 1964, the day following the Rivonia Trial, in which Ilse's father, Bram Fischer, defended the accused. Suffering from cystic fibrosis, Ilse's brother, Paul, died in 1971. Four years later, her imprisoned father died of cancer. Until the last minute, authorities had refused pleas for clemency, transferring him to his brother's home in Bloemfontein mere weeks before his death. Her older sister, Ruth, had been effectively exiled. Gordimer's novel, despite being fictionalised, sheds light on the intricate position of isolation and responsibility that the children of activists faced. Published in the United Kingdom (UK), it was almost immediately banned in South Africa (although the ban was later lifted).⁴

¹ Nadine Gordimer, *Burger's Daughter* (London: Penguin Books, 1979), 12.

² Gordimer, *Burger's Daughter*.

³ Ilse Wilson, interviewed by author, Johannesburg, 6 February 2023.

⁴ Nadine Gordimer, *Conversations with Nadine Gordimer*, ed. Nancy Topping Bazin and Marilyn Dallman Seymour (Jackson, MS: University Press of Mississippi, 1990), 161.

Burger's Daughter is one of the many memoirs, fictional novels, films, theatre productions, documentaries, and other testimonies exploring the experiences of children of anti-apartheid activists. Many children have themselves assumed public roles or spoken openly about their lives, featuring prominently in the South African (and to some extent British) public sphere. Yet, with few notable exceptions, their narratives remain largely absent from academic research, hiding in plain sight. When they appear, they do so only to add vibrancy to the narratives of their parents' lives, acting as symbols of the sacrifices their parents made. This thesis seeks to address this academic gap by placing their experiences at the centre of scholarly analysis.

At the core of this thesis stands an oral history project with 45 children of activists. They were born between 1943 and 1976 to parents representing a range of political organisations (particularly the African National Congress (ANC)/Congress Alliance). In addition, children's and activists' memoirs, cultural productions, existing interviews conducted by previous researchers, and archival documents were consulted.

By interviewing individuals born across a wide range of years, this study examines how children's experiences were shaped by both time – through the evolving political landscape and levels of state repression – and place, across South Africa and exile. These children encountered different levels of exposure to apartheid's violence, political activity, and their parents' activist networks. These variations, this thesis suggests, shaped children's diverging political pathways: whereas some children matched or even exceeded their parents in struggle activism, other children joined other political movements or actively distanced themselves from politics. By analysing children's experiences of repression, community,

and levels of politicisation across time and place, this thesis illuminates the extent to which activism was transmitted across generations.

This thesis furthermore uses oral histories to understand how children reflect on their childhood in anti-apartheid activism and perceive themselves as part of a historical narrative, emphasising the role that time, political developments, and personal changes play in shaping their recollections.

Literature Review

This literature review situates the experiences of activists' children within South African and international scholarship, highlighting this thesis' interdisciplinary approach, which draws on history, sociology, psychology, and political science, as well as memory and trauma studies. I begin this review by emphasising the limited available research on the children of South African activists, highlighting a clear gap in the literature, before turning to struggle histories, where personal and family experiences have only recently received increased attention, albeit narrowly focused on the ANC in exile, post-1976. While feminist scholarship on the Federation of South African Women (FEDSAW) and political motherhood provides valuable insights, it has largely overlooked the lived realities of activists' children, whose experiences represent a significant yet neglected legacy of apartheid. To address this gap, I draw on international research on the biographical consequences of activism, intergenerational trauma studies and the history of emotions to frame activism as an emotional and transgenerational legacy. To understand children as political actors, including their agency, I draw on political science, psychology, and sociology, but particularly the history of childhood. Finally, I turn towards memory research to underline its role in shaping children's narratives.

Existing Literature on the Children of Activists in South Africa and Exile

Despite their prominence in the South African public sphere, children of activists remain largely absent from research. Only a small number of works, primarily psychological and sociological in nature, have addressed this gap, complemented by a handful of ‘struggle’ anthologies which include the narratives of these children. These works remain predominantly concerned with the ANC and the experiences of exiles, reflecting on the ANC’s continued domination of the historical narrative.

Early research on the children of activists largely emerged from psychological studies in the 1980s, shaped by growing concern over the escalating levels of state repression directed at young people (alongside emerging scholarship on children as political actors, see below). In 1986, Donald Skinner and Leslie Swartz assessed 19 pre-school children, based in the Western Cape, whose parents were detained, noting ‘[h]igh anxiety levels and problems of emotional expression existed (...) with mood changes, irritability, withdrawal and reserved behaviour being shown.’⁵ Most of these behaviours waned upon release, although security post-detention shaped the development of long-term issues.⁶ Albeit limited by its sample size and exploring a much younger group of children, I draw significantly on Skinner and Swartz’s insights in Chapters 3 and 4.

Since apartheid ended, there has been an explosion of literature concerned particularly with the ANC’s experience of exile. In the late 1980s/early 1990s, activist Hilda Bernstein conducted over 500 interviews with South African exiles for *The Rift – The Exile*

⁵ Donald Skinner and Leslie Swartz, “The Consequences for Preschool Children of a Parent’s Detention: A Preliminary South African Clinical Study of Caregivers’ Reports,” *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry* 30, no. 2 (1989): 246, 256.

⁶ Skinner and Swartz, “Consequences for Preschool Children,” 225.

Experience of South Africans (1994), including a handful of exiled children.⁷ Pan African Congress (PAC) activist Laretta Ngcobo published the writings of exiled women in *Prodigal Daughters* (2012), also including several narratives by children of activists.⁸ A rare exception to the exile focus is provided by *Knocking on... mothers and daughters in struggle in South Africa* (2008), edited by Shirley Gunn and Sinazo Krwala, featuring narratives by six mother-daughter pairs in South African activism.⁹

Mark Israel's *South African Political Exile in the United Kingdom* (based on his 1996 doctoral thesis) pays closer attention to the children of exiles, especially regarding their difficult 'return' to South Africa.¹⁰ Israel, a child of South African exiles himself, suggests that the ideologies that were created for and by activists were not transmitted to the next generation, causing children to doubt their identification with their parents' home country.¹¹ In 2009, Nadja Manghezi, another activist, published *The Maputo Connection, The ANC in the World of Frelimo*.¹² Part historical analysis/part reminiscence of the ANC's time in Maputo, Manghezi's book describes three children's recollections of Maputo in the late 1970s/early 1980s, including their experiences of a tight-knit community, ANC support, and Mozambican solidarity. Hugh Macmillan has published a similar analysis of an exile

⁷ Hilda Bernstein, *The Rift: Exile Experiences of South Africans* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1994).

⁸ Laretta Ngcobo, ed., *Prodigal Daughters: Stories of South African Women in Exile* (Scottsville [Durban]: University of KwaZulu-Natal Press, 2012).

⁹ Shirley Gunn and Sinazo Krwala, eds., *Knocking on ... Mothers and Daughters in Struggle in South Africa* (Cape Town and Johannesburg: Human Rights Media Centre with Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation, 2008).

¹⁰ Mark Israel, *South African Political Exile in the United Kingdom* (Basingstoke: Macmillan Press, 1999).

¹¹ Mark Israel, "Living with 'A World Apart': Second Generation South Africans in the United Kingdom and the Ideologies of Exile," in *Post-Colonialism: Culture and Identity in Africa*, eds. Pal Ahluwalia and Paul Nursey-Bray (New York: Nova Science, 1997), 175-198. Israel's chapter, as published in this edited collection was unavailable to the author, instead relying on a copy that Israel kindly provided. Consequently, the page numbers do not correspond, and have thus been excluded.

¹² Nadja Manghezi, *The Maputo Connection: The ANC in the World of Frelimo* (Johannesburg: Jacana Media, 2009).

community through *The Lusaka Years: The ANC in Exile in Zambia 1963 to 1994* (2013), but only briefly touches on the experiences of children.¹³

The hitherto most comprehensive analysis of ANC children in exile was published by Zosa de Sas Kropiwnicki in 2017.¹⁴ Building on oral histories and archival research, de Sas Kropiwnicki uses Kertzer's conceptualisation of 'generation' (as 'historical location', 'kinship relations', 'life cycle' and 'cohort') to argue that the *Masupatsela*, despite their varied experiences, comprise a generation.¹⁵ While I draw on some of her findings, I also challenge de Sas Kropiwnicki's work, as it primarily focuses on children who were born in the mid- to late 1970s and thus were between ten to seventeen years old when they 'returned' in 1990-1994.¹⁶ While she occasionally references children born well before this date, subsuming them into her analysis, I suggest that children's birth dates and the age at which they experienced certain events, as well as their location, crucially shaped their experiences. While de Sas Kropiwnicki's interviewees might have posed a coherent 'generation', broadening the scope to children born before the 1970s challenges the representativeness of the *Masupatsela* as the children of South African exiles (and activists).

Glenn Frankel, a *Washington Post* journalist, based in Southern Africa in the mid-1980s, published *Rivonia's Children: Three Families and the Cost of Conscience in White South Africa* (1999) following his close friendship with activist Hillary Kuny, who introduced him to the Bernsteins, amongst others.¹⁷ *Rivonia's Children* – a journalistic take

¹³ Hugh Macmillan, *The Lusaka Years: The ANC in Exile in Zambia 1963 to 1994* (Johannesburg: Jacana Media, 2013).

¹⁴ Zosa de Sas Kropiwnicki, *Exile Identity, Agency and Belonging in South Africa: The Masupatsela Generation* (London: Palgrave Macmillan (Palgrave Studies on Children and Development Series), 2017).

¹⁵ De Sas Kropiwnicki, *Exile*, 3-4.

¹⁶ De Sas Kropiwnicki, *Exile*, 212.

¹⁷ Glenn Frankel, *Rivonia's Children - Three Families and the Price of Freedom in South Africa* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicholson, 1999).

on the Wolpe, Bernstein and First/Slovo families in the 1960s – focuses primarily on the experiences of white activists

(...) not because their sacrifices were greater, but because they chose to make those sacrifices. (...) The comforts and privileges of middle-class life in South Africa were far above its economic equivalent in the West. (...) To put all of that aside, to resist the temptation to join the mainstream, was a remarkably selfless act.¹⁸

While the book is not only highly detailed but also deeply emotionally touching, it also, unfortunately, falls victim to his ideological opposition to communism: amidst his justifications for researching communists, he struggles to see that it was their ideology which led them to commit their – and their children’s – lives to the anti-apartheid struggle.¹⁹

By focusing on children of activists who were born between the late 1940s and mid-1970s and experienced South Africa and/or exile, this thesis offers a crucial addition to the scholarship that has hitherto dismissed the experiences of children of activists, or narrowly focused on exile and white children.

Children and the Personal in the South African Struggle

Initially, research and activists’ memoirs neglected the ‘personal’. In her seminal paper on ‘heroic masculinity’, Elaine Unterhalter not only finds that authorship of ‘struggle memoirs’ is skewed towards white and male activists but also that these memoirs are dismissive of the personal consequences of activism, instead espousing ‘heroic masculinity’.²⁰ This ‘entails giving oneself to the struggle and reforming oneself in that process: the self is not held apart from the [political] work’.²¹ Focused on political ideology and camaraderie, the personal

¹⁸ Frankel, *Rivonia's Children*, 5.

¹⁹ Frankel, *Rivonia's Children*, 4-5; Susie Linfield, “Why, the Beloved Country,” *The Nation*, 13 December 1999, www.thefreelibrary.com/Why%2C+the+Beloved+Country-a059694114.

²⁰ Elaine Unterhalter, “The Work of the Nation: Heroic Masculinity in South African Autobiographical Writing of the Anti-Apartheid Struggle,” *European Journal of Development Research* 12, no. 2 (2000): 160, 163-5.

²¹ Unterhalter, “The Work of the Nation,” 165.

lives of activists, and therefore that of their children, are obscured.²² Israel also highlighted the gendered pattern across his interviews: ‘While men with families spoke only of direct political pressure on themselves, South African women often discussed their decision to leave in terms of their attachment to men and family.’²³

A small number of female-written memoirs have dealt more closely with the effects of activism on children, expressing feelings of guilt and regret. Blanche La Guma’s *In the Dark with my Dress on Fire* (2010), AnnMarie Wolpe’s *The Long Way Home* (1994) and Phyllis Ntantala’s *A Life Mosaic* (1993) vividly describe the Special Branch’s (SB) harassment of their children and the detrimental effects of exile on their childhoods.²⁴

More recently, several South African (gender) historians have tackled ‘personal histories’, exploring the social, familial, and emotional dimensions of the struggle. Kalpana Hiralal centres the home as a political space for the wives of Indian anti-apartheid activists, where they interact with other activists, host meetings, hide escapees, and provide support to their political spouses.²⁵ Arianna Lissoni and Maria Suriano investigate ANC men’s marriages to Tanzanian women in exile.²⁶ Rachel Sandwell has written extensively on childcare in exile, particularly the ‘Charlottes’ in Tanzania, and the politics regarding pregnancies at the Solomon Mahlangu Freedom College (SOMAFCO) and in camps.²⁷ Sean

²² Unterhalter, “The Work of the Nation,” 163, 170.

²³ Israel, *South African Political Exile*, 81.

²⁴ Blanche La Guma with Martin Klammer, *In the Dark with my Dress on Fire – My life in Cape Town, London, Havana and Home Again* (Johannesburg: Jacana, 2010); Annemarie Wolpe, *Long Way Home* (London: Virago, 1994); Phyllis Ntantala, *A Life’s Mosaic - The Autobiography of Phyllis Ntantala*, online edition (Berkeley, University of California, 1993).

²⁵ Kalpana Hiralal, “Married to the Struggle: For better or worse Wives of Indian anti-apartheid activists in Natal: The untold narratives,” *New Contree* 70, Special Edition (2014): 83-106.

²⁶ Arianna Lissoni, “Dear Comrade Chief Rep: Love, marriage and the family in the ANC in exile in Tanzania,” *African Studies* 76, no. 1 (2017):1-21; Arianna Lissoni and Maria Suriano, “Married to the ANC: Tanzanian Women’s Entanglement in South Africa’s Liberation Struggle,” *Journal of Southern African Studies* 40, no. 1 (2014): 129-150.

²⁷ Rachel Sandwell, “Building a State in Exile: Women in the African National Congress, 1960-1990” (PhD diss., McGill University, 2015).

Morrow, Brown Maaba, and Loyiso Pulumani also discuss some of these gendered politics at SOMAFCO.²⁸ The majority of these works focus on the ANC post-1976. As I discuss in Chapter 5, the ANC only actively engaged with questions of childcare and education after 1976, following the influx of unaccompanied South African children and youth. Yet, (exiled) activists had children well before 1976. This thesis, thus, also contributes to South African ‘personal histories’ by exploring childhood in the South African struggle prior to the ANC’s official engagement with such questions. Existing studies also often blur the line between children of activists and Soweto children. By centring the experiences of children of activists, I highlight their vastly different experiences and relationships to the struggle.

Particularly, FEDSAW’s focus on motherhood has been polemical in scholarship – Julia Wells and Cherryl Walker (although Walker later questioned this notion) argue that these women’s demands represented deep-seated conservatism:

While the women effectively resisted oppression from a ruthlessly coercive state, they were at the same time defending the primacy of their roles as *mothers and homemakers*. Racial oppression was tackled while traditional gender-defined roles were re-enforced.²⁹

Later, Wells termed this ‘motherism’.³⁰ Critics, like Nomboniso Gasa and Zine Magubane, view the idea of ‘motherism’ as ethnocentric, instead emphasising that motherhood is conceptualised differently in African contexts.³¹ Megan Healy-Clancy sees ‘public

²⁸ Sean Morrow et al., *Education in Exile: SOMAFCO, the African National Congress school in Tanzania, 1978 to 1992* (Cape Town: Human Science Research Council, 2004).

²⁹ Julia C. Wells, *We Now Demand! The History of Women’s Resistance to Pass Laws in South Africa* (Johannesburg: Witwatersrand University Press, 1993), 1; Cherryl Walker, *Women and Resistance in South Africa*, 2nd edition (Cape Town: David Philip Publishers, 1991 [1982]), xxi–xxii.

³⁰ Julia C. Wells, “The Rise and Fall of Motherism as a Force in Black Women’s Resistance Movements” (paper presented at Conference on Women and Gender in Southern Africa, University of Natal, Durban, 1991).

³¹ Nomboniso Gasa, “Feminisms, motherism, patriarchies and women’s voices in the 1950s,” in *Women in South African history: they remove boulders and cross rivers/ basus’imbokodo, bawel’imilambo*, ed. Nomboniso Gasa (Cape Town: Human Sciences Research Council Press, 2007), 207-229; Zine Magubane, “Attitudes towards Feminism among Women in the ANC, 1950–1990: A Theoretical Re-interpretation,” in *The Road to Democracy in South Africa, Volume 4, 1980–1990*, ed. South African Democracy Education Trust (Pretoria: UNISA Press, 2010), 975-1036.

motherhood’ as a ‘potent political discourse’.³² In her study of 1980s Tswana women, Judith Stevenson argues that ideas of African motherhood ‘easily transferred to political action and, combined with the ANC’s mother discourse, resulted in black women moving towards claiming identities as activist-mothers in fulfilment of this new “good mothering” model.’³³

Yet, Healy-Clancy highlights:

In South Africa, political performances of maternal authority could efface unconventional forms of love and could make it difficult to talk about familial struggles. For the FEDSAW women who loved women rather than men, who were childless by choice or fate, or who struggled with estrangements from their own children as they proclaimed their maternal authority publicly, a real limit of motherhood as a political strategy may have been its pain.³⁴

FEDSAW’s symbolism also clashed with the lived experiences of the activists’ biological children, yet this is rarely dealt with academically – an omission, this thesis tackles.

South African scholars have long seen the destruction of the South African family as a key consequence of colonial segregation and apartheid.³⁵ Children’s separation from their parents in consequence of their parents’ political activism, detention and imprisonment, or exile echoes this destruction of the family. Luli Callinicos writes:

The double irony of the ANC in exile was that the escape from dispossession and homelessness, both real and symbolic, imposed on black people by apartheid in the land of their birth, was now duplicated by the anguish and predicament of exile experienced by Tambo and many others committed to the national liberation movement.³⁶

This thesis offers a closer insight into the personal impacts of anti-apartheid activism – such as the destruction of the family – positioning the suffering of activists’ children as a further

³² Meghan Healy-Clancy, “The Family Politics of the Federation of South African Women: A History of Public Motherhood in Women’s Antiracist Activism,” *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 42, no.4 (2017): 844.

³³ Judith Stevenson, “‘The Mamas Were Ripe’: Ideologies of Motherhood and Public Resistance in a South African Township,” *Feminist Formations* 23, no. 2 (2011): 144.

³⁴ Healy-Clancy, “Family Politics,” 859.

³⁵ For a discussion of this idea, see Debbie Budlender and Francie Lund, “South Africa: A Legacy of Family Disruption,” *Development and Change* 42 (2011): 925-946.

³⁶ Luli Callinicos, *Oliver Tambo – Beyond the Engeni Mountains* (Cape Town: David Philip Publishers, 2004), 410.

legacy of apartheid. As their lives were deeply entangled in South Africa's historical processes, this thesis provides a new, much-needed perspective on the liberation struggle.

Biographical Consequences and Transgenerational Legacies of Activism

While the majority of international research on the consequences of social movements still focuses on political and institutional outcomes, scholars have increasingly explored the biographical consequences for participants in social movements, particularly in the New Left and the Civil Rights movement in the United States of America (USA).³⁷ Doug McAdam's work on the Freedom Summer project and social movement participation in the 1960s and 1970s was crucial in driving this research.³⁸ Marco Giugni emphasises that 'people who have been involved in social movement activities, even at a low level of commitment, carry the consequences of that involvement throughout their life.'³⁹ Activists 'were more likely than their age peers to have divorced, married later, or remained single'.⁴⁰ Darren Sherkat and T. Jean Blocker suggest that activists were less likely to have children.⁴¹ Yet, as Camille Masclet critiques, social movement studies generally fail to engage with the biographical consequences for activists' children.⁴²

³⁷ Marco G. Giugni, "Personal and Biographical Consequences," in *The Blackwell Companion to Social Movements*, eds. David A. Snow et al. (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2004), 495-6; Camille Masclet, "Examining the Intergenerational Outcomes of Social Movements – The case of feminist activists and their children," in *The Consequences of Social Movements*, eds. Lorenzo Bosi et al. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016): 106. See also Doug McAdam, "The Biographical Consequences of Activism," *American Sociological Review* 54 (1989): 744-60, Doug McAdam *Freedom Summer* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988) and James M Fendrich, "Keeping the Faith or Pursuing the Good Life: A Study of the Consequences of Participation in the Civil Rights Movement," *American Sociological Review* 42 (1977): 144-57.

³⁸ McAdam, *Freedom Summer*.

³⁹ Giugni, "Personal and Biographical Consequences," 494.

⁴⁰ Giugni, "Personal and Biographical Consequences," 494.

⁴¹ Darren E. Sherkat and T. Jean Blocker, "Explaining the Political and Personal Consequences of Protest," *Social Forces* 75 (1997): 1049.

⁴² Masclet, "Feminist activists and their children," 106-7.

There are several noteworthy interventions from Northern Ireland, the USA, Palestine, and France, as well as other African countries, which investigate the experiences of children of activists/combatants.⁴³ In Northern Ireland, Rolston has written extensively on the children of (ex-)combatants, emphasising the importance of community and ideology in children's ability to cope (see Chapter 6).⁴⁴ Applying a term initially used to denigrate children of communists who used their 'birthright' to advance in party politics, Judy Kaplan and Linn Shapiro researched 'red diaper babies', the 'children of CP [Communist Party USA] members, children of former CP members, and children whose parents never became members of the CP but were involved in political, cultural, or educational activities led or supported by the Party.'⁴⁵ In her work on the children of Vietnam War resisters, Winona Rymond-Richmond emphasises the development of a 'participation identity', making children more likely to join socio-political movements in adulthood.⁴⁶ Chapter 7 will draw on Rymond-Richmond, as well as Julie Pagis, who researches children of the '68 generation in France, to explore children's choices in joining their parents' political movement.⁴⁷ Christian Williams, amongst others, investigates the lives of children of members of the South West Africa People's Organisation (SWAPO), pre- and post-independence.⁴⁸ The

⁴³ Bill Rolston, *Children of the Revolution – The lives of sons and daughters of activists in Northern Ireland* (Derry: Guildhall Press, 2011); John Blake, *Children of the Movement* (Chicago: Chicago Review Press, 2007); Christian A. Williams, "SWAPO's Struggle Children and Exile Home-Making: The Refugee Biography of Mawazo Nakadhilu," *African Studies Review* 63, no. 3 (2020): 593-615; Maslet, "Feminist activists and their children," 106-129; Winona Rymond-Richmond, "Children of War Resisters: Intergenerational Transmission of Activism, Political Orientation, Injustice Frames, and Law Resistance," *Law & Social Inquiry* 48, no. 4 (2023): 1261-1280; Yoke Rabaia et al., "Coping and Helping to Cope: Perspectives of Children of Palestinian Political Detainees," *Children & Society* 32 (2018): 345-356; Julie Pagis, *May '68 – Shaping Political Generations* (Amsterdam University Press, 2018).

⁴⁴ Rolston, *Children of the Revolution*, 24.

⁴⁵ Judy Kaplan, Linn Shapiro, *Red Diapers – Growing Up in the Communist Left* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1998), 2-3.

⁴⁶ Rymond-Richmond, "Children of War Resisters," 1263.

⁴⁷ Pagis, *May '68*.

⁴⁸ Williams, "SWAPO's Struggle Children," 593-615; Dorthea Nanghali Etuwete Shiningayamwe et al., "The Social and Economic Challenges of the Namibian Children of the Liberation Struggle at Berg Aukas Camp in Grootfontein, Otjozondjupa Region," *Open Journal of Social Sciences* 2 (2014): 288-298; Lalli Mestola, "Reintegration as Recognition – Ex-Combatant and Veteran Politics in Namibia" (PhD diss., University of Helsinki, 2015); Ndinelao Kaxuxuena and Manfred Janik, "The pre-independence psychological experiences of the Namibian children of the liberation struggle: a qualitative study," *South African Journal of Psychology* 50, no. 4 (2020): 587-97.

Namibian context shows parallels to the South African context – perhaps not surprising in light of their common adversary and their regular interactions in camps. Yet, as Chapter 8 will discuss, children of SWAPO – ‘struggle kids’ – have acted as a more dominant pressure group in independent Namibia than their South African counterparts.

To fully understand the long-term impact of activism on activists’ children, it is necessary to consider two intersecting fields: the history of emotions, which examines how emotional norms are produced and transmitted, and transgenerational trauma studies, which explore how unprocessed trauma is communicated across generations. Together, these literature fields provide tools to understand how activism created enduring emotional legacies within families.

As part of a more general umbrella of the emotional or ‘affective turn’, Carol and Peter Stearns suggested the term ‘emotionology’ in 1985 to theorise ‘emotion as historically and cultural contingent, as a sociological process.’⁴⁹ Initially, historians of emotions did not give enough attention to children and childhood.⁵⁰ Yet, childhood and the family are a key locus for the exploration of emotion, so Karen Vallgård writes:

Family and childhood are sites saturated with emotional negotiations and experiences. They are often associated with particular expectations of affective intimacy and characterised by a potential to evoke tender as well as hostile and ambivalent feelings.⁵¹

⁴⁹ Peter Stearns and Carol Stearns, “Emotionology: clarifying the history of the emotions and emotional standards,” *American Historical Review* 90, no. 4 (1985): 813-836, cited in Katie Barclay, “State of the Field: The History of Emotions,” *History* 106, no. 371 (2021): 456.

⁵⁰ Stephanie Olsen, “The History of Childhood and the Emotional Turn,” *History Compass* 15, no.11 (2017): 1-2.

⁵¹ Karen Vallgård, “Family, Childhood and Emotions,” in *The Routledge History of Emotions in the Modern World*, eds. Katie Barclay and Peter N. Stearns (London: Routledge, 2022), 267.

I draw particularly on the concept of ‘emotional formation’ by Karen Vallgård et al., defined as a ‘set of emotional structures ordered in a particular *pattern*’.⁵² This concept is similar to William Reddy’s ‘emotional regime’ or Barbara Rosenwein’s concept of ‘emotional community’, but Vallgård et al. place it temporally ahead of these alternative concepts.⁵³ In addition to being a pattern, it is also a process:

An emotional formation depends on such informal education and on the repeated daily experiences and practices of individuals within communities. In this way, children learn what is expected of them – what they should or should not feel or what they should or should not display – by doing, and by learning what works and what does not within the various emotional communities in which they operate. Emotional formations are produced and reproduced by doing, learning and articulating, in order to produce specific habits of feeling in the self or in others.⁵⁴

An ‘emotional formation’ is never fixed and is continuously consolidated ‘as a result of varying degrees of intentionality’.⁵⁵ As children cross between different emotional formations, they encounter ‘emotional frontiers’ – while some manage to skilfully navigate these, other children ‘may have felt disjointed, torn, inadequate, confused or alienated’.⁵⁶ Crossing these ‘emotional frontiers’, so Vallgård et al. argue, can ‘denaturalize’ the emotional formations they are used to.⁵⁷

The field of transgenerational trauma developed in Germany in the 1960s, when psychologists noted that children of Holocaust survivors showed psychological damage, similar or even worse than their parents.⁵⁸ Research has since expanded to other atrocities,

⁵² Karen Vallgård et al., “Emotions and the Global Politics of Childhood,” in *Childhood, Youth and Emotion in Modern History: National, Colonial and Global Perspectives*, ed. Stephanie Olsen (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 20.

⁵³ Barbara H. Rosenwein, “Worrying about Emotions in History,” *American Historical Review* 107, no. 3 (2002): 821-45; William M. Reddy, *The Navigation of Feeling: A Framework for the History of Emotions*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001); Olsen, “The Emotional Turn,” 6.

⁵⁴ Olsen, “The Emotional Turn,” 6.

⁵⁵ Vallgård et al., “Emotions and the Global Politics of Childhood,” 20-1.

⁵⁶ Vallgård et al., “Emotions and the Global Politics of Childhood,” 22, 25.

⁵⁷ Vallgård et al., “Emotions and the Global Politics of Childhood,” 25.

⁵⁸ Angela Connolly, “Healing the wounds of our fathers: intergenerational trauma, memory, symbolization and narrative,” *Journal of Analytical Psychology* 56 (2011): 607-626; Zeldia Gillian Knight, “In the Shadow of Apartheid: Intergenerational transmission of black parental trauma as it emerges in the analytical space of inter-racial subjectivities,” *Research in Psychotherapy* 22, no. 1 (2019): 128-137.

including the children of USA Vietnam veterans, transgenerational legacies of colonialism and slavery for African Americans, and the violence imposed on First Nations People in Canada and its transgenerational effects on descendants.⁵⁹ Transgenerational trauma ‘refers to the notion that parents transfer their unprocessed trauma to their children’.⁶⁰ While trauma can be transmitted through lasting hormonal changes and DNA, social scientists and historians investigate how trauma is transmitted through ‘indirect knowing’ and the lack of communication between trauma survivor and child.⁶¹ Children become ‘avid readers of silences and memory traces (...)’.⁶² Most research focuses on children who were born after a traumatic event, where children navigate ‘memories without experience’.⁶³ Yet, the children of activists of this thesis do have some experiences of their parents’ trauma, despite facing major knowledge gaps. For example, Zoya witnessed her father returning home bleeding profusely, yet was told that this was caused not by the SB, but by a dentist visit.⁶⁴ Nonetheless, children of activists engaged with their parents’ trauma in ways similar to children experiencing transgenerational trauma, i.e., through ‘indirect knowing’, sensing issues, and imagination.

Children as Political Subjects: South Africa and Beyond

In the following section, I draw on psychological, political, and sociological research, and particularly the history of childhood, to discuss children as political subjects. I begin by drawing on psychological scholarship on children’s experiences of political conflicts and

⁵⁹ For a discussion of these see Cyril Kenneth Adonis, “Exploring the Salience of Intergenerational Trauma among Children and Grandchildren of Victims of Apartheid-Era Gross Human Rights Violations,” *Indo-Pacific Journal of Phenomenology* 16, no. 1-2 (2016): 163-179.

⁶⁰ Knight, “In the Shadow of Apartheid,” 128.

⁶¹ Carli Coetzee, *Written Under The Skin – Blood and Intergenerational Memory in South Africa* (Woodbridge: Boydell & Brewer, 2019), 4; Shanaaz Hoosain, “The Transmission of Intergenerational Trauma in Displaced Families” (PhD diss., UWC, 2013): 46.

⁶² Coetzee, *Written Under The Skin*, 4.

⁶³ Connolly, “Healing the wounds,” 612.

⁶⁴ Zoya Joseph, interviewed by author, London, 11 May 2023.

war, before turning towards children's politicisation, and the question of agency – the latter dominates discussions within the history of childhood. Finally, I turn towards the discussion of children as political actors in South African historiography.

Children in violent conflicts were first investigated during and after the Second World War by the likes of Anna Freud and John Bowlby, who highlighted how children were primarily impacted by the separation from their parents, not the destruction they witnessed.⁶⁵ Skinner and Swartz summarised some of the major, post-Second World War findings, emphasising children's flexibility and resilience, children's fears, including for their parents, which are often more distressing than actual experiences of violence, the role that understanding the situation and communication about their worries plays in alleviating children's levels of stress, and the normalisation of violence 'as an ordinary part of everyday life'.⁶⁶ They also highlight that 'children's anxieties are often a reflection of the caregivers' anxieties rather than a response to the threatening situation in itself'.⁶⁷ I draw on this body of literature throughout Chapters 3 and 4 to explore how children were impacted by the repression they experienced.

The extent to which children *can* participate politically has been hotly contested, so Michael Wyness et al. write: 'For many the very essence of childhood, at least in contemporary western terms, prohibits political participation such that the 'political child' is seen as the 'unchild' (...)'.⁶⁸ In her essay on school desegregation, Hannah Arendt argued

⁶⁵ Bowlby wrote extensively on his idea of attachment theory over 40 years, see for example in John Bowlby, *Attachment and loss, Volume 1. Loss* (New York, Basic Books, 1969). See also Anna Freud and Dorothy T. Burlingham, *Infants without Families. Reports on the Hampstead Nurseries, 1939-45* (New York: 1973), 161, cited in Tara Zahra, *The Lost Children: Reconstructing Europe's Families after WWII* (Cambridge, MA.: Harvard University Press, 2011), 64.

⁶⁶ Skinner and Swartz, "Consequences for Preschool Children," 244-245.

⁶⁷ Skinner and Swartz, "Consequences for Preschool Children," 244-245.

⁶⁸ Michael Wyness et al., "Childhood, Politics and Ambiguity: Towards an Agenda for Children's Political Inclusion," *Sociology* 38, no. 1 (2004): 82.

controversially that children should be held apart from the political, protected by the private realm.⁶⁹ Sana Nakata disagreed with Arendt, suggesting

that it is both necessary, and possible, to recognise the political agency of children. Not because children ought to be placed in the position of having to fight difficult battles, but because sometimes they do.⁷⁰

The children of activists were frequently placed into the political arena – often against their desire and at great cost to them.

In the 1970s, political scientists researching children’s politicisation relied on Jean Piaget and Lawrence Kohlberg’s stage models of cognitive and moral development.⁷¹ Children were perceived as ‘passive and receptive, gradually moulded by various socialisation agencies’, particularly the family.⁷² Political scientists believed that children under the age of 14 did not have the ability to discuss complex political concepts.⁷³ Focus was placed on the political attitudes, not civic actions, of children.⁷⁴

Political socialisation became increasingly criticised by childhood researchers in the 1980s and 1990s, influenced by Elliot Turiel’s social-cognitive domain model, which

posits that children aged 3-4 years and upwards evaluate social events using three main domains: the self, the group, and morality as gained during earlier stages of development. According to this social-cognitive domain model, young children can exercise multiple forms of reasoning at once; moral considerations, social-conventional norms, and personal goals all provide input into social reasoning.⁷⁵

⁶⁹ Hannah Arendt, “Reflections on Little Rock,” *Dissent* 6, no.1 (1959): 45-56.

⁷⁰ Sana Nakata, “Elizabeth Eckford’s Appearance at Little Rock: The Possibility of Children’s Political Agency,” *Politics* 28, no. 1 (2008): 20.

⁷¹ Jean Piaget, “The Theory of Stages in Cognitive Development,” in *Measurement and Piaget*, eds. Donald Ross Green et al. (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1971), 1-11, cited in Diane M. Rodgers, *Children in Social Movements – Rethinking Agency, Mobilization and Rights* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2020), 10.

⁷² Constance A. Flanagan and Lonnie R. Sherrod, “Youth Political Development,” *Journal of Social Issues* 54, no. 3 (1998): 448; Anna Emilia Berti, “Children’s Understanding of Politics,” in *Children’s Understanding of Society*, eds. Martyn Barrett and Eithne Buchanan-Barrow (Hove: Psychology Group, 2004), 72.

⁷³ Jan W. Deth et al., “Children and Politics: An Empirical Reassessment of Early Political Socialization,” *Political Psychology* 32, no. 1 (2019): 149.

⁷⁴ Rodgers, *Children in Social Movements*, 10.

⁷⁵ Elliot Turiel, *The Development of Social Knowledge: Morality and Convention* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), cited in Daniel Bar-Tal et al., “Political socialization of young children in intractable conflicts: Conception and evidence,” *International Journal of Behavioral Development* 41, no.3 (2017): 416.

Others emphasised the social construction of childhood stages, rejecting Piaget's developmental stages:

The idea of developmental stages used in research on children's socialization was seen to ignore the social construction of childhood as a category in the social structure (...).⁷⁶

Researchers found that even in early childhood, children were able to express political opinions and possess basic political knowledge.⁷⁷

Recently, political socialisation research has resurged, exploring the transmission of partisanship, political issues, trust, and engagement from parents to children.⁷⁸ M. Kent Jennings et al. write that 'families marked by parental political engagement and frequent political interchanges are families fostering the transmission of political attitudes and identities from parents to child.'⁷⁹ '[H]igh level of parental socialization and stability in their political traits', as well as 'homogeneity and visibility of their parents' political choices' enhance transgenerational transmissions of political ideas.⁸⁰ Jennings et al. also pinpoint to the stability of children's political opinion over time: 'Children who acquire political predispositions early in life from their parents are more stable in their early adulthood than are those who "leave home without it."' ⁸¹ Alan Acock and Vern Bengtson suggest 'that mothers have more influence on their children's attitudes than do fathers.'⁸² Unlike previous socialisation researchers, this next generation focuses more closely on the complex, dynamic

⁷⁶ Rodgers, *Children in Social Movements*, 14.

⁷⁷ Deth et al., "Children and Politics," 149.

⁷⁸ Rodgers, *Children in Social Movements*, 10; M. Kent Jennings et al., "Politics across Generations: Family Transmission Reexamined," *Journal of Politics* 71, no. 3 (2009): 784.

⁷⁹ Jennings et al., "Politics across Generations," 789.

⁸⁰ Masclet, "Feminist activists and their children," 112.

⁸¹ Jennings et al., "Politics across Generations," 795.

⁸² Alan Acock and Vern L. Bengtson, "Socialization and attribution processes: Actual vs. perceived similarity among parents and youth," *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 40 (1980): 519-530, cited in Charlotte Chorn Dunham and Vern L. Bengtson, "The Long-Term Effects of Political Activism On Intergenerational Relations," *Youth & Society* 24, no. (1992): 36.

processes underlying political socialisation, including the role not just of families, but also of other socialisation agents, as well as children's agency within this process.⁸³ Masclet writes that political socialisation is not a unilateral process in which children are passive recipient, but that 'the second generation appropriates the inheritance in relation to their own biography'.⁸⁴

Daniel Bar-Tal et al. also argue that 'within the context of intractable conflict, political socialization begins earlier and faster than previously suspected and is evident among young children', due to 'conflict-related events that are inseparable parts of their daily lives'.⁸⁵ They argue that the exposure to conflict impacts political socialisation in three ways: 1. indirectly, by 'being continuously exposed to information about the conflict in their environment', 2. directly, by agents of socialisation including family members, teachers, and the media, and 3. through direct personal experiences of conflict, including family loss, injury to family members, home destruction, detention, or active participation in violence.⁸⁶

Sociologists and historians demanded the reframing of the 'lens' on children's political engagement – rather than focusing on children's lack of formal political participation, researchers should address 'children's everyday experience of social change'.⁸⁷ Sociologist Diane Rodgers developed a typology for children's participation across three, albeit fluid categories: 'strategic participation', 'participation by default', and 'active participation'.⁸⁸ This typology, so Rodgers suggests, provides a 'continuum of

⁸³ Jennings et al., "Politics across Generations," 783; Rodgers, *Children in Social Movements*, 10.

⁸⁴ Masclet, "Feminist activists and their children," 114.

⁸⁵ Bar-Tal et al., "Political Socialization," 415, 417.

⁸⁶ Bar-Tal et al., "Political Socialization," 418.

⁸⁷ Dorothy Moss, "The Form of Children's Political Engagement in Everyday Life," *Children & Society* 27 (2013): 24-5.

⁸⁸ Rodgers, *Children in Social Movements*, 1-2.

agency for children in social movements'.⁸⁹ Strategic participation sees children being utilised 'to create powerful symbolic messages'.⁹⁰ Participation by default considers how children are exposed, and politicised, through 'accompanying [their] parents to social movements and with varying degrees of awareness', often in the absence of other childcare.⁹¹ Active participation sees children 'being fully and voluntarily present by their own words or actions' in social movements.⁹² I draw extensively on Rodgers's typology, particularly participation by default, in Chapter 5 to interrogate children's politicisation and integration into the struggle and its blurred line to active participation.

Children's agency has also been a central preoccupation of childhood historians. Sarah Maza critiqued other historians for attributing children too much political agency.⁹³

While children have their own will, so Maza argues,

[s]uch instances of individual assertion, however, are a far cry from what Sewell describes as "an ability to coordinate one's actions with others and against others, to form collective projects, and to monitor the simultaneous effects of one's own and others' activities."⁹⁴

Where children exert agency (as children involved in the Soweto Uprising), so Maza argues polemically, 'their age and situation render the *child* label questionable':

Just as adults in situations of dependency—menials, slaves, racial "inferiors"—have often been infantilized, older children who attain autonomy through wages and removal from the parental household become adultified.⁹⁵

Other historians disagree, so Paula Fass writes: 'no historical subjects ever spoke plainly in their own voices or acted entirely freely.'⁹⁶ Inspired by feminist research on women's agency

⁸⁹ Rodgers, *Children in Social Movements*, 100.

⁹⁰ Rodgers, *Children in Social Movements*, 1.

⁹¹ Rodgers, *Children in Social Movements*, 1, 44-5.

⁹² Rodgers, *Children in Social Movements*, 2.

⁹³ Sarah Maza, "The Kids Aren't All Right: Historians and the Problem of Childhood," *American Historical Review* 125, no.4 (2020): 1268-9.

⁹⁴ William H. Sewell Jr., *Logics of History: Social Theory and Social Transformation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), 145, cited in Maza, "The Kids Aren't All Right," 1269.

⁹⁵ Maza, "The Kids Aren't All Right," 1268-9.

⁹⁶ Paula Fass, *Children of a New World* (New York: New York University Press, 2006), 5.

in the everyday, Mary Jo Maynes emphasises ‘the inadequacy of prevailing notions of historical agency’.⁹⁷ In her study of exiled South African children, de Sas Kropiwnicki argues that ‘[t]heir agency occurred in the everydayness of life and found its power in the ability to disrupt the daily routines and practices that adults assumed as given and traditional.’⁹⁸ According to her, it is through ‘embedded or “bounded”’ (Giddens, 1984) social relations that children exercise their agency and negotiate their “relative autonomy”.⁹⁹ This thesis takes caution to emphasise children’s agency as they interacted with their surroundings and others, while also highlighting the ways in which their agency was “bounded”.

Turning towards South Africa, much of the existing scholarship on political childhood and youth has focused on the Soweto Uprising in 1976 and the 1980s, when thousands of children and youth became involved in the township uprisings, youth, and civic organisations, and/or joined *uMkhonto we Sizwe* (MK) in exile.¹⁰⁰ Colin Bundy, amongst others, argues that students’ involvement in the Soweto Uprising was a consequence of ‘(i) the glaring defects of black education; (ii) the very substantial expansion of black schooling over the past couple of decades; and (iii) the issue of unemployment amongst black school-

⁹⁷ Mary Jo Maynes, “Age as a Category of Historical Analysis: History, Agency, and Narratives of Childhood,” *Journal of the History of Childhood and Youth* 1, no.1 (2008): 116.

⁹⁸ De Sas Kropiwnicki, *Exile*, 3.

⁹⁹ Anthony Giddens, *The Constitution of Society: Outline of the Theory of Structuration* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1984); Samantha Punch, “Negotiating Autonomy: Childhoods in Rural Bolivia,” in *Conceptualizing Child-Adult Relations*, eds. Leena Alanen and Berry Mayall (London: Routledge Falmer, 2001), 24, both cited in de Sas Kropiwnicki, *Exile*, 5.

¹⁰⁰ See for example Colin Bundy, “Street sociology and pavement politics: aspects of youth and student resistance in Cape Town, 1985,” *Journal of Southern African Studies* 13, no. 3 (1987): 303-330, Clive Glaser, “Youth and generation in South African history,” *Safundi* 19, no. 2 (2018): 117-38; Jeremy Seekings, *Heroes or Villains? Youth Politics in the 1980s* (Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1993); Deborah Posel, “The ANC youth league and the politicization of race,” *Thesis Eleven* 115, no.1 (2013): 58-76; Monique Marks, *Young Warriors – Youth Politics, Identity and Violence in South Africa* (Johannesburg: Witwatersrand University Press, 2001).

leavers.’¹⁰¹ Deborah Posel saw the Soweto Uprising as the starting point for a ‘fully-fledged generational crisis’.¹⁰²

By the 1980s and 1990s, South African media increasingly emphasised the militancy of the youth, as the actions of the ‘young comrades’ or ‘com-tsotsis’ (a crossover of ‘comrade’ and ‘tsotsi’) blurred the line between the political and the criminal.¹⁰³ Monique Marks describes ‘a time when many in South Africa looked upon politicised youth as a menace, and began to speak about black youth in general as a “lost generation”’.¹⁰⁴ Jean and John Comaroff highlight the socially constructed, highly politicised nature of childhood and youth as concepts:

In the final years of struggle against apartheid, the category of youth expanded to include diverse classes of freedom fighters: students, workers, even criminals. In this story, it is true, not all young blacks are youth. But all youth are black. Also overwhelmingly, if not exclusively, male. And if some people never become youth, others seem unable to outgrow the label, even in middle age.¹⁰⁵

Lauded by some as ‘young lions’, Seeking argues that labelling them as youth – which ‘has inherent connotations of destructiveness, immaturity, impulsiveness and even susceptibility’ – also sought to delegitimise their actions.¹⁰⁶

At the same time, South African and international actors, particularly in the UK through the Anti-Apartheid Movement (AAM), made a deliberate effort to cast them as children to highlight the police violence and cater to Western audiences, subjecting them to

¹⁰¹ Bundy, “Street sociology,” 311; Glaser, “Youth and generation,” 127.

¹⁰² Posel, “The ANC youth league,” 62.

¹⁰³ Jeremy Seekings, “Beyond Heroes and Villains: The Rediscovery of the Ordinary in the Study of Childhood and Adolescence in South Africa,” *Social Dynamics* 32, no. 1 (2006): 5; Glaser, “Youth and generation,” 117-8.

¹⁰⁴ Marks, *Young Warriors*, 6.

¹⁰⁵ Jean Comaroff and John Comaroff, “Reflections on Youth: From the Past to the Postcolony,” in *Frontiers of Capital: Ethnographic Reflections on the New Economy*, eds. Melissa S. Fisher and Greg Downey (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2006), 274, cited in Sarah Emily Duff, *Changing childhoods in the Cape Colony: Dutch Reformed Church evangelicalism and colonial childhood, 1860-1895* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 2-3.

¹⁰⁶ Seekings, *Heroes or Villains?*, 5, 56.

the ‘politics of age’, so Emily Bridger argues.¹⁰⁷ In September 1987, the Bishop Ambrose Reeves Trust and the AAM organised the ‘International Conference on Children, Repression and the Law’ at the University of Harare to address South Africa’s ‘war on children’.¹⁰⁸ Several previously detained children were invited to speak – their testimonies were later broadcast, although ‘their stories were incrementally generalized, drained of historical specificity, and reframed according to two particular arenas of Western moral concern: human rights and child victimization.’¹⁰⁹ This clashed with their own narratives, so Bridger argues, which ‘place emphasis on their agency, ideological commitments, and coping mechanisms, as well as clearly presenting themselves as “heroes” rather than “victims” in the struggle against apartheid.’¹¹⁰

Throughout this thesis, I explore the social construction of childhood by investigating the relational label ‘child of’ and the extent to which children continued to be perceived as their parents’ children. Through exploring this relational label and examining children’s political activity, I also contribute to the above authors’ discussion on agency.

Memory Studies

Finally, I reflect on the contributions of memory studies to this thesis, as it underlines key tenets, not just of my methodology (see below), but also the conjunction between public and private memory, as discussed in Chapter 8.

¹⁰⁷ Emily Bridger, “Functions and Failures of Transnational Activism: Discourses of Children’s Resistance and Repression in Global Anti-Apartheid Networks,” *Journal of World History* 26, no. 4 (2015): 865, 878. The term ‘politics of age’ is coined by David M. Rosen in “Child Soldiers, International Humanitarian Law, and the Globalization of Childhood,” *American Anthropologist* 109, no. 2 (2007): 296.

¹⁰⁸ Victoria Brittain and Abdul S. Minty, *Children of resistance: statements from the Harare Conference on Children, Repression and the Law in Apartheid South Africa* (London: Kliptown Books, 1988), 9; Bridger, “Transnational Activism,” 875.

¹⁰⁹ Bridger, “Transnational Activism,” 867-8, 877.

¹¹⁰ Bridger, “Transnational Activism,” 867.

In recent decades, memory studies have seen a boom across disciplines, particularly in interplay with oral histories. Alistair Thomson writes: ‘Recent memory research by neuroscientists and psychologists has confirmed [Alessandro] Portelli’s claim that memory is “not a passive depository of facts, but an active process of creation of meanings’.¹¹¹ Rather than having ‘raw’ experiences, narrators remember memories that are constructed through interpretations of what happened, altered by the passage of time, changing socio-economic-political circumstances, personal events, perceived significance, and as a trauma response, amongst various other factors.¹¹² It is constantly (re-)constructed by the narrator in collaboration with others.¹¹³ In fact, the act of re-telling experiences (for example, in an oral history interview) is an act of re-experiencing the experience and (re-)constructing its memory and significance.¹¹⁴

Memory particularly impacts childhood histories, as we rarely can access children-created sources. Instead – as does this study – we usually rely on sources produced by adults, reflecting on their childhoods, ‘mediated by nostalgia or filtered through the adult’s current perspectives’.¹¹⁵ Nonetheless, Maynes argues:

One of the implications of these observations is that narratives of childhood can be very telling indeed – not as direct evidence of the experience of children, of course, but rather as sources of insights into the impact and meanings of childhood, and of childhood as a phase of the construction of agency and subjectivity.¹¹⁶

¹¹¹ Alistair Thomson, “Memory and Remembering in Oral History,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Oral History*, ed. Donald A. Ritchie (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 82.

¹¹² Michelle Mouton and Helena Pohlandt-McCormick, “Boundary Crossings: Oral History of Nazi Germany and Apartheid South Africa: A Comparative Perspective,” *History Workshop Journal* 48 (1999): 41, 47, 59.

¹¹³ Yvonne Singer, “The Veiled Room,” in *Memory and Migration: Multidisciplinary Approaches to Memory Studies*, eds. Julia Creet and Andreas Kitzmann (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2011), 278, cited in de Sas Kropiwnicki, *Exile Identity, Agency and Belonging*, p. 27.

¹¹⁴ Stephen Rose, “Memories Are Made of This,” in *Memory: An Anthology*, eds. Harriet Harvey Wood and Antonia Susan Byatt (London: Chatto and Windus, 2008), 65-66, cited in Thomson, “Memory and Remembering in Oral History,” 86.

¹¹⁵ Nell Musgrove et al., “Hearing Children’s Voices: Conceptual and Methodological Challenges,” in *Children’s Voices from the Past – New Historical and Interdisciplinary Perspectives*, eds. Nell Musgrove et al. (Cham, CH: Springer Link, 2019), 18.

¹¹⁶ Maynes, “Age as a Category of Historical Analysis,” 119.

Furthermore, individual and collective memories intersect, influence, and challenge each other.¹¹⁷ Memory research traces back to the works of the French sociologist and philosopher Maurice Halbwachs on ‘collective memory’ and historian Pierre Nora’s work on ‘lieux de mémoire’ (sites of memory).¹¹⁸ Barbara Misztal writes:

Collective memory is, according to Halbwachs, always “socially framed” since social groups determine what is “memorable” and how it will be remembered: “The individual calls recollections to mind by relying on the frameworks of social memory”.¹¹⁹

How, and through what forces, collective memory is shaped and reproduced has been the object of scholarly debate. Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger’s ‘The Invention of Tradition’ was hugely influential in shaping the ‘presentist memory approach’ (as Misztal refers to it), which ‘scrutinizes how public notions of history are manipulated by the dominant sectors of society through public commemorations, education systems, mass media, and official records and chronologies’ to suit the needs of the present.¹²⁰ The Popular Memory Group, set up at the Centre for Contemporary Studies in Birmingham in the 1980s, disagreed with the top-down approach of the presentist approach:

The Group did not conceive of a dominant political order as monolithic, singular or totalizing, but rather as a dynamic, conflictual, fluid and unstable “site of contestation between the dominant social formations in the ruling power bloc and those marginalized social formations seeking concessions from the dominant, and whom the dominant constantly strives to incorporate” (...).¹²¹

The dynamics of memory approach further modified the popular memory approach by arguing that ‘memory is always partly a “given”, that it is never purely a construction and

¹¹⁷ Steven High, Edward Little, “Introduction,” in *Remembering Mass Violence: Oral History, New Media, and Performance*, eds. Steven High et al. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2014), 5.

¹¹⁸ Maurice Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992); Pierre Nora, ed., *Les lieux de memoire (The Places of Memory)*, 7 vols. (Paris: Gallimard, 1983–94).

¹¹⁹ Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*, 182, cited in Barbara A. Misztal, *Theories of Social Remembering* (Maidenhead: Open University Press, 2003), 51.

¹²⁰ Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger, eds. *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), cited in Misztal, *Theories of Social Remembering*, 56. Also see Benedict Anderson, *Imagined communities: reflections on the origin and spread of nationalism* (London: Verso, 2006 [1983]).

¹²¹ Roberta Pearson, “Custer loses again: the contestation over commodified public memory,” in *Cultural Memory and the Construction of Identity*, eds. Dan Ben-Amos and Liliane Weissberg (Detroit, MI: Wayne State University Press, 1999), 180, cited in Misztal, *Theories of Social Remembering*, 63–4.

that every community should be seen as partly a “community of fate” and partly a “community of will” (Booth 1999).¹²² This approach ‘locates memory in “the space between an imposed ideology and the possibility of an alternative way of understanding experience”.’¹²³ The core tenet of new sociological theories is that memory is

intersubjectively constituted – which assumes that while it is an individual who remembers, his or her memory exists, and is shaped by, their relation with, what has been shared with others and that it is, moreover, always memory of an intersubjective past, of a past time lived in relation to other people (...).¹²⁴

Individual memory is thus ‘socially organized or socially mediated’¹²⁵ While research on public memory is often focused on sites of memorialisation, Chapter 8 focuses on children’s public and private engagement with their experiences, their parents, and their position in society as children of activists.

Research Methods and Methodology

Selection Criteria

This thesis analyses the experiences, memories, and interpretations – and their interplay – of children of anti-apartheid activists.¹²⁶ Children were selected based on two criteria. First, their parents were active in apartheid resistance between the late 1940s and late 1960s, hereby referred to as the early generation of anti-apartheid activists (most continued to be active after the 1960s).¹²⁷ There had been extensive resistance to colonial domination prior

¹²² W. James Booth, “Communities of memory: on identity, memory, and debt,” *American Political Science Review* 93, no. 2 (1999): 253, cited in Misztal, *Theories of Social Remembering*, 67.

¹²³ Susannah Radstone, “Working with Memory: an Introduction,” in *Memory and Methodology*, ed. Susannah Radstone (Oxford: Berg Publishers, 2000), 18, cited in Misztal, *Theories of Social Remembering*, 68.

¹²⁴ Misztal, *Theories of Social Remembering*, 6.

¹²⁵ Misztal, *Theories of Social Remembering*, 5.

¹²⁶ This thesis has received CUREC approval by the Social Sciences and Humanities Interdivisional Research Ethics Committee of the University of Oxford (Reference: R83894/RE002).

¹²⁷ Two recorded interviewees were not biological children of activists, but their uncles had been major activists, and both had strong relationships to this relative. A further individual’s parents were involved in the struggle, but only minorly, while his aunts and uncles – whom he was close with – were more deeply involved. Their inclusion reflects on differing conceptualisations of kinship in non-Western cultures, in which children were raised by extended families.

to the 1940s, but it was only from the 1940s onwards that this developed into resistance to the apartheid government (instated in 1948) at a national level with African mass support.¹²⁸

Secondly, all children interviewed were born between the early 1940s and 1976. This time frame was selected as children actively remember apartheid (including from exile) and have experienced the majority, if not all, of their childhood during their parents' activism. These children experienced the increase in repression in the 1950s and 1960s and/or were the first generation of children to be born in exile.

Activists from that period varied in age: for example, while both were active in the 1960s, Nelson Mandela would have seen Chris Hani as his junior (by 24 years!). Activists also had children at different life stages, often impacted by long-term imprisonment. Furthermore, families like the Pillay-Naidoo or the Pahads constituted several generations of activists, blurring the line between children and parents 'generations'. Where available, I consulted material on/by several generations – for example, I have included the memoir and existing interviews by/with Aziz Pahad, as the son of a prominent political family, but also interviewed his son, Sam, born in 1973. Varying birth dates introduce the analytical axis of age.

I did not interview any children born after 1976, although I occasionally draw on the available narratives of such younger children, including Lindiwe Hani, Amilcar 'Milou' Maharaj and Sekai 'Joey' Maharaj, as well as Lukhanyo Calata.¹²⁹ All were born in the early

¹²⁸ William Beinart, *Twentieth-Century South Africa* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 96, 104.

¹²⁹ Lindiwe Hani with Melinda Ferguson, *Being Chris Hani's Daughter* (Cape Town: Melinda Ferguson Books, 2017); Lukhanyo Calata and Abigail Calata, *My Father Died For This*, Ebook (Cape Town: Tafelberg Publishers, 2018); Leila Issel-Davids, *Knocking on... mothers and daughters in struggle in South Africa*, eds. Shirley Gunn and Sinazo Krwala (Cape Town: Human Rights Media Centre with Centre for Study of Violence and Reconciliation in Johannesburg, 2008); Milou Maharaj, interview by Padraig

1980s and have some memories of their parents' activism or its consequences – Lukhanyo Calata's first memory pertains to his father's funeral.¹³⁰

Defining Activism

In the South African context, the following seems appropriate to fall within the scope of activism: membership of a banned party, political actions that led to detention, political imprisonment, banning or being listed, participation in public protests, and active lobbying of government and other pressure groups.¹³¹

Gender, race, self-identification, post-apartheid politics and the dynamics of public remembrance further shape who is perceived as an activist. Chris Bobel finds that women tended not to self-identify as activists due to a 'perfect standard' that they upheld for activists.¹³² Gendered divisions of labour in South African activism accentuate this further: while women tended to perform supportive roles (care work, preparing food or being the family's breadwinner, etc.), men often inhabited more front-facing roles.¹³³ During his fieldwork, Israel frequently encountered sexist assumptions in defining political exiles, and noted that some women were asked to stay out of politics to care for children.¹³⁴ To account for these gendered dynamics, Jennifer Baumgardner and Amy Richards call for the expansion of definitions of activism to include 'everyday acts of defiance'.¹³⁵ The use of the

O'Malley, 13 September 2004, O'Malley – The Heart of Hope, Nelson Mandela Foundation; Joey Maharaj, interview by Padraig O'Malley, 6 September 2004, O'Malley – The Heart of Hope, Nelson Mandela Foundation.

¹³⁰ Calata and Calata, *My Father*, 43.

¹³¹ Yet not all those who were detained/tried by the state were activists. Spouses, other relatives, and even entirely random individuals were often detained in place of the intended.

¹³² Chris Bobel, "'I'm Not an Activist, Though I've Done a Lot of It': Doing Activism, Being Activist and the 'Perfect Standard' in a Contemporary Movement," *Social Movement Studies* 6, no. 2 (2007): 156.

¹³³ Myra Marx Ferree and Carol Mueller, "Feminism and the women's movement: a global perspective," in *The Blackwell Companion to Social Movements*, eds. David A. Snow et al. (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2004), cited in Bobel, "I'm Not an Activist," 156.

¹³⁴ Israel, *South African Political Exile*, 81.

¹³⁵ Jennifer Baumgardner and Amy Richards, *Manifesta: Young Women, Feminism, and the Future* (New York: Farrar, Strauss & Giroux, 2010), 283.

snowballing method to locate interviewees furthermore relies on identification by others.¹³⁶ To avoid some of the pitfalls of (self-)identification, I defined activism deliberately expansively throughout my interviewing process to offer interviewees the possibility to reframe the term.

The apartheid state denoted activists as ‘terrorists’ to discredit them and suppress popular support, especially following MK’s launch in 1961.¹³⁷ The liberation movements used the term ‘freedom fighter’ to subvert the regime’s labelling and affirm their legitimacy. The Organisation of African Unity (OAU) also defined the ANC and PAC as recognised ‘liberation movements’, further subverting this positioning.¹³⁸ One interviewee emphasised his preference for the term ‘freedom fighter’ to ‘activist’ in describing his father, suggesting that the latter referred primarily to white activists. Noting this perception, I decided to keep the word ‘activists’, as it is, nonetheless, a term widely used in South Africa for activists of any racial background and offers a broader interpretation of possible – including non-violent – activity.

It is useful to briefly discuss the distinction between ‘foot soldiers’ and ‘activists’. As will be discussed in the *Historical Context*, the PAC formed its armed wing, *Pogo* (later Azanian People’s Liberation Army (APLA)), following the Sharpeville Massacre in 1960. Later, effectively, the ANC’s armed forces, MK was formed around July 1961 as an independent organisation with leaders from the ANC and the South African Communist

¹³⁶ Israel, *South African Political Exile*, p. 11.

¹³⁷ Anisseh van Engeland, “A Successful ‘Turn Over’: The African National Congress Moves from Sabotage to a Legitimate Political Force and from Apartheid to Democracy,” in *From Terrorism to Politics*, eds. Anisseh van Engeland and Rachael M. Rudolph (London: Routledge, 2008), 21.

¹³⁸ Seane Mabitsela, “The Role of OAU on Representation of National Liberation Movements at the UN, 1963-1974,” *Journal of African Union Studies* 12, no. 1 (2023): 71.

Party (SACP).¹³⁹ Many activists were integrated into MK or *Pogo/APLA* or received some military training, while other activists had no military training and/or opposed violence. The ANC also expressed concerns about the lack of politicisation in camps, suggesting that not all MK soldiers can be considered political activists.¹⁴⁰ Many ‘foot soldiers’ faced reintegration difficulties in the 1990s, leading to continued socio-economic issues, societal marginalisation, as well as psychological issues and substance abuse.¹⁴¹ Expecting support from the ANC upon their return, many felt abandoned. While this thesis treats the terms as mostly synonymous, enabling me to interview children across the board, in practice, I primarily interviewed children whose parents – if members of MK or one of the other armed forces – held leadership roles. As discussed below, this reflects my own outsider status, my security concerns as a female researcher, as well as foot soldiers’ socio-economic marginalisation.

Oral Histories

Oral history as an academic field and a method developed in the 1970s/1980s, driven by insight from feminist and subaltern studies.¹⁴² In South Africa, oral histories adopted a ‘political edge’ during the liberation struggle.¹⁴³ Promising a subversion of traditional historical sources, oral history was positioned as an opportunity to give voice to the voiceless – a notion now outdated.¹⁴⁴ While usually well-meaning in intention, oral history has the

¹³⁹ Arianna Lissoni, “Umkhonto we Sizwe (MK): The ANC’s Armed Wing, 1961–1993,” *Oxford Research Encyclopaedia of African History*, 22 December 2021.

¹⁴⁰ Stephen Ellis, *The External Mission: The ANC in Exile, 1960-1990* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 112.

¹⁴¹ Cyril K. Adonis, “Exploring interpersonal issues and challenges confronting ex-combatant fathers and their sons in post-apartheid South Africa,” *South African Journal of Psychology* 44, no. 1 (2014): 62.

¹⁴² Anna Sheftel and Stacey Zembrzycki, *Oral History Off The Record – Towards an Ethnography of Practice* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 7.

¹⁴³ Sean Field, “Turning up the Volume: Dialogues about Memory Create Oral Histories,” *South African Historical Journal* 60, no. 2 (2008): 176-77.

¹⁴⁴ High, Little, “Introduction,” 4; Field, “Turning up the Volume,” 176.

potential to be ‘exploitive, voyeuristic, or opportunistic’.¹⁴⁵ Researchers initially saw these narratives as ‘raw data’ and themselves as the interpreters – a concept devoid of understanding of memory, reproducing ‘a form of cultural colonialism’.¹⁴⁶

Using insights from memory studies, oral history now views data as not just retrieved from the narrator, but ‘*created through inter-subjective dialogue*’.¹⁴⁷ Michael Frisch suggests that the narrator and interviewer have ‘shared authority’ in a dialogical space.¹⁴⁸ Consequently, the knowledge created is specific to the interaction, making each aspect of the process crucial.¹⁴⁹ Alessandro Portelli argues that there is a further participant in this setting – the narrated self (the individual at the time of the event) in juxtaposition to the narrating self (the individual at the time of telling): ‘(...) every interview – and indeed all remembering – involves a dialectical relationship between these different selves at different times.’¹⁵⁰ The final, invisible, participant is the interpreting reader.

While earlier oral historians stressed that traditional sources were also subjective, Portelli positions oral history’s subjectivity as its main asset.¹⁵¹ The use of oral histories requires self-reflexivity (with an equally harmful risk of overdoing this). As Joy Parr frames it: ‘We are seeking not objectivity but a highly disciplined subjectivity.’¹⁵²

¹⁴⁵ Stephen M. Sloan, “Conclusion: The Fabric of Crisis: Approaching the Heart of Oral History,” in *Listening On The Edge: Oral History In The Aftermath Of Crisis*, eds. Mark Cave and Stephen M. Sloan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 269.

¹⁴⁶ Steven High, “Introduction,” in *Beyond Testimony and Trauma – Oral History in the Aftermath of Mass Violence*, ed. Stephen High (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2015), 13.

¹⁴⁷ Field, “Turning up the Volume,” 177.

¹⁴⁸ Michael Frisch, *A Shared Authority: Essays on the Craft and Meaning of Oral and Public History* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1990), cited in Anna Sheffel and Stacey Zembrzycki, “Only Human: A Reflection on the Ethical and Methodological Challenges of Working with ‘Difficult’ Stories,” *Oral History Review* 37, no. 2 (2010): 194.

¹⁴⁹ High, *Beyond Testimony and Trauma*, 15.

¹⁵⁰ Alessandro Portelli, *Battle of Valle Giulia: Oral History and the Art of Dialogue* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1997), 185, Thomson, “Memory and Remembering in Oral History,” 90.

¹⁵¹ Alessandro Portelli, “What Makes Oral History Different?,” *History Workshop* 12 (1979): 96-107.

¹⁵² Joy Parr, “‘Don’t Speak for Me’: Practicing Oral History amidst the Legacies of Conflict,” *Journal of the Canadian Historical Association* 21, no. 1 (2010): 4.

Oral history is complicated by the potentially unequal power dynamics between researcher and narrator. Due to their institutional reputation and personal backgrounds, researchers often find themselves holding an elite position. Yet, narrators can hold significant power, able to withhold the knowledge that the researcher hopes to acquire.¹⁵³ Secondly, in the context of this thesis, many interviewees hold public and elite positions within South Africa, equalising the interaction.

Feeling exploited through the researcher's friendly, but ultimately strictly professional approach, the narrator can feel as though they gain nothing concrete from participating, while the researcher gains academic prestige.¹⁵⁴ The oral historian can offer neither monetary support nor healing; their main contribution comes in the form of a historical record.¹⁵⁵ These aspects need to be communicated appropriately to the narrator. While one interviewee highlighted potential issues and others approached me with appropriate caution, the majority of my interviewees voiced their approval for my research.

Lastly, the re-telling of events risks re-traumatising interviewees. While oral historians should never claim to provide healing, the grappling with past events can be a meaningful and validating one.¹⁵⁶ Sean Field advocates for the exploration of life histories, rather than just the traumatic event, to 'illuminate the narrator's sense of self, purpose and agency'.¹⁵⁷

¹⁵³ Sean Field, "Interviewing in a culture of violence: moving memories from Windermere to the Cape Flats," in *Trauma and Life Stories: International Perspectives*, eds. Graham Dawson, Kim Lacy Rogers and Selma Leydesdorff (London: Routledge, 1999), 66.

¹⁵⁴ Valerie Yow, "Ethics and Interpersonal Relationships in Oral History Research," *Oral History Review* 22, no.1 (1995): 58.

¹⁵⁵ Field, "Interviewing," 69.

¹⁵⁶ Mark Cave, "What Remains – Reflections on crisis oral history," in *The Oral History Reader*, eds. Robert Perks and Alistair Thomson (Oxford: Routledge, 2014), 1-2.

¹⁵⁷ Field, "Turning up the Volume," 185.

Trauma insight also needs to inform data analysis, as trauma can cause incoherence in memory, coping mechanisms that can confuse the interviewer (e.g., humour), and the repression of memories.¹⁵⁸ Portelli states:

(...) oral history approaches truth as much when it departs from ‘facts’ as when it records them carefully, because the errors and even the lies reveal, under scrutiny, the creative processes of memory, imagination, symbolism and interpretation that endow events with cultural significance.¹⁵⁹

Silences and ‘ruptures’, so Michelle Mouton and Helena Pohlandt-McCormick argue, are similar to the ‘hidden transcripts’ of archives, that James Scott discusses.¹⁶⁰ Lee Ann Fuji calls this the ‘meta data’ of interviews:

spoken and unspoken expressions about people’s interior thoughts and feelings, which they do not always articulate in their stories or responses to interview questions. (...) They include rumors, silences, and invented stories (...).¹⁶¹

Overview of Sources

The following section discusses the sources that have been triangulated in this thesis. They are split into four categories: a) oral history interviews recorded during my fieldwork in South Africa and the UK in 2023, hereby referred to as the ‘author’s oral histories’, b) oral history interviews recorded by other researchers, hereby referred to as ‘previously recorded oral histories’, c) written, autobiographical works by children and their parents, referred to as ‘autobiographical writings’, and d) other archival and publicly available material.

¹⁵⁸ Gadi BenEzer, “Trauma signals in life stories,” in *Trauma and Life Stories*, eds. Selma Leydesdorff et al. (London: Routledge, 1999), 34; Cave, “What Remains,” 2.

¹⁵⁹ Alessandro Portelli, *The Text and the Voice, Writing, Speaking and Democracy in American Literature* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 53.

¹⁶⁰ James Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts* (New Haven: Yale University, 1990), 2, cited in Mouton and Pohlandt-McCormick, “Boundary Crossings,” 41-2, 50.

¹⁶¹ Lee Ann Fuji, “Shades of Truth and Lies: Interpreting Testimonies of War and Violence,” *Journal of Peace Research* 47, no. 2 (2010): 232.

Author's Oral Histories

I interviewed 45 individuals, based in South Africa, the UK, and the USA. They were contacted primarily using the 'snowball method': I started with a few social and professional contacts and requested to be put in touch with relevant acquaintances after each interaction. This approach incurred several issues with self-identification, as already discussed, as well as in relation to my positionality, as discussed below.

I usually had an initial conversation with interviewees over text/phone regarding my own background and interest in the subject, before sharing the participant information form. Meetings were held in a variety of places in accordance with the interviewee's wishes and my own safety concerns. Generally, I visited women in their homes if they felt comfortable doing so, while I talked to men in public spaces unless they had previously been vouched for. This likely impacted the depth male interviewees were willing to go into publicly. Out of the 45 interviews, six were conducted online, as interviewees could not meet in person. At the meeting, interviewees were provided with a consent form and an opportunity to ask further questions; I usually also shared more about myself to equalise information inputs, creating rapport.¹⁶² All interviews were conducted in English – often my interviewees' first language. Nonetheless, there were some cultural misunderstandings which were usually handled through further questioning and humour. All meetings were audio-recorded; virtual meetings were video-recorded (both after confirming consent). Virtual meetings were impacted by internet quality, load-shedding (controlled power cuts in South Africa), and the difficulty of building rapport and reading the narrators' reactions, especially silences, across screens. Interviews themselves were conducted according to life history approaches to ensure the welfare of interviewees.¹⁶³ While I prepared some questions, I followed narrators'

¹⁶² Portelli, *Battle of Valle Giulia*, 12.

¹⁶³ Sloan, "Fabric of Crisis," 271.

interests and directions. All meetings ended with a brief exchange about the interview, followed by another contact a few days later. While I was conscious of potential re-traumatisation, most interviewees left me with the expression that they had previously discussed this experience, including in some cases with a professional. I also never asked about any possible experiences of trauma directly or indirectly, and left the choice of their retelling to the narrator. Voluntary participation and possible withdrawal were crucial in making this research more ethical.

Most narrators chose their names to be associated with the interview, in which case I made them aware of the potential risks involved. Some decided to be pseudonymised but were informed of the risk of potential ‘discovery’ by those familiar with their life histories. While I believe the risks to be low, unfavourable reflections on their parents – South Africa’s heroes – risk attracting negative public attention. Historians working with individuals’ narratives engage with the complicated ethical questions of also representing those who did not consent to this narrative.

All interviews were initially transcribed verbatim in line with ‘naturalism’, meaning that stutters, laughter, pauses, or repetitions were noted.¹⁶⁴ After the initial transcriptions, quotes have been edited for clarity and narrative flow, preserving non-verbal clues when it mattered to the analysis.

All interviewees were middle to upper-middle-class, as discussed further below. While some see elite interviews requiring a fundamentally different approach, other oral historians have come to see that similar methodologies, ideas of consent, ownership and

¹⁶⁴ Daniel Oliver et al., “Constraints and Opportunities with Interview Transcription: Towards Reflection in Qualitative Research,” *Social Forces* 84, no. 2 (2005): 1274.

agency apply.¹⁶⁵ It is, nonetheless, worth pointing out that all interviewees were highly educated – most with a university degree – and likely saw themselves as my equal if not of higher status, a feeling accentuated by my young age.

I was raised mostly in Germany and, unlike many struggle researchers, have no personal relationship to South Africa or the struggle. My choice of topic was often met with confusion, although its reception was overwhelmingly positive – as discussed in Chapter 8, many interviewees have felt ignored, thus potentially welcoming academic interest. My young age and appearance, as well as my gender, likely made me appear less threatening, while my institutional background offered me legitimacy. Andrew Herod discusses how researchers can (un)consciously match their interviewees to create rapport.¹⁶⁶ I noticed this in three specific ways: first, I emphasised my education at a boarding school in Tanzania in conversations about SOMAFCO, and my own sense of displacement, living outside of my home country, to those that had been exiled, second, I framed my choice of research in personal objectives (including through my time in Tanzania and personal reflections on my own grandparents and parents), and third, through political commentary on South Africa, especially load shedding, which led to lively discussions about South Africa's fate. My race and gender also impacted the recruitment of interviewees, as I will discuss below. These varying dynamics reflect on the understanding that the often-used binary of insider/outsider is too rigid, and should, instead, be seen as a spectrum.¹⁶⁷

¹⁶⁵ Donald A. Ritchie, "Introduction: The Evolution of Oral History," in *The Oxford Handbook of Oral History*, ed. Donald A. Ritchie (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 5.

¹⁶⁶ Andrew Herod, "Reflections on Interviewing Foreign Elites: Praxis, Positionality, Validity, and the Cult of the Insider," *Geoforum* 30, no.4 (1999): 321.

¹⁶⁷ Alan Wieder, "Testimony as Oral History: Lessons from South Africa," *Research News and Comment* 33, no. 6 (2004): 24.

Overall, interviewees were born between 1943 and 1976 – at the point of interview, interviewees were between 47 and 80 years old. As discussed in Chapter 8, their age likely played a role in the interviewing process and outcome, as people past their 60s usually go through a ‘life review’, more likely to reminisce.¹⁶⁸ About 44% of individuals were white, 24% were black, 18% were Indian, 11% were of Mixed Descent, and 2% were Coloured.¹⁶⁹ I interviewed 64% women and 36% men. 22% had not been exiled (although some had left South Africa for short periods, not related to their parents’ political activities, and not for major periods in their childhood). 36% had been born in exile, and 42% had been born in South Africa, but were later exiled. Of those in exile, ten individuals (22% of the overall sample or 29% of exiled children) settled in the UK or the USA (although some returned to South Africa for a couple of years), and one further individual, who left South Africa in 1978, not directly related to her parents’ activism, did not return.¹⁷⁰ The majority of parents (87%) associated with the Congress Alliance, predominantly the ANC and the SACP. 7% of children were born to parents associated with the PAC. One child’s (2%) mother was a member of the Black Sash. One interviewee’s (2%) father – Steve Biko – was involved with the Black Consciousness Movement (BCM): while Biko and the BCM were particularly active in the 1970s, Biko’s activism did start in the late 1960s. One individual’s (2%) parents initially associated with the PAC, but later pivoted to the ANC – a fact that the interviewee had not been aware of until after apartheid ended.

¹⁶⁸ Ritchie, “Introduction,” 13; Joanna Bornat, “Remembering in Later Life: Generating Individual and Social Change,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Oral History*, ed. Donald A. Ritchie (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 202-15.

¹⁶⁹ See the section ‘Race’ below for a critical discussion of these categories.

¹⁷⁰ Sonya Lubner, daughter of Esther and Hymie Barsel, left South Africa in 1978 with her husband and children out of ‘moral reasons’ – she did not want her children to be raised under apartheid.

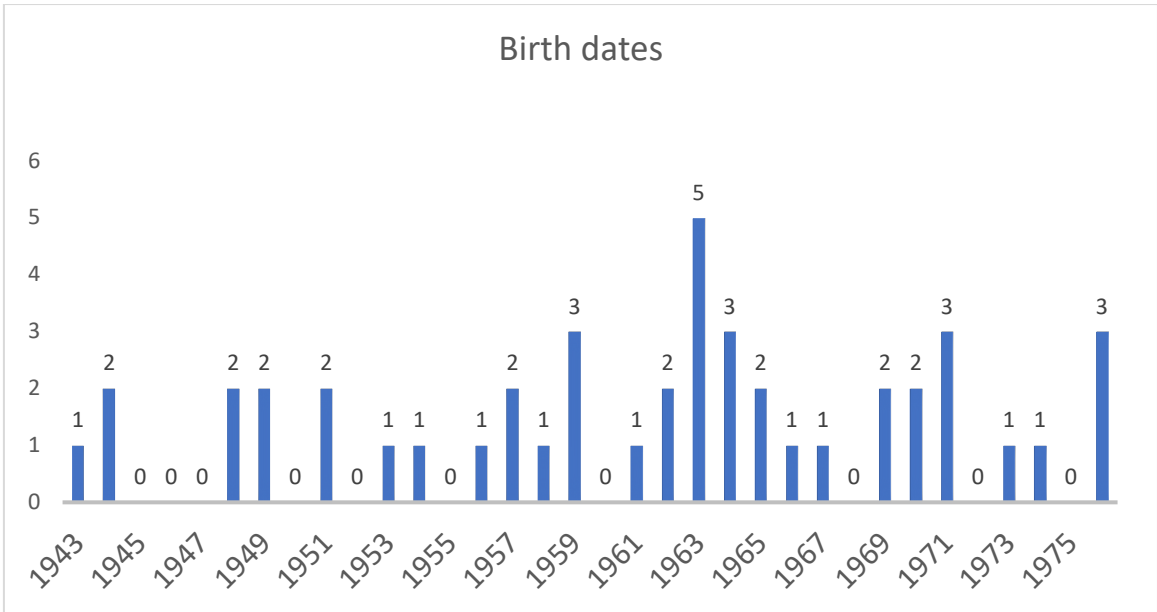


Figure 1: Distribution of birthdate of interviewees.

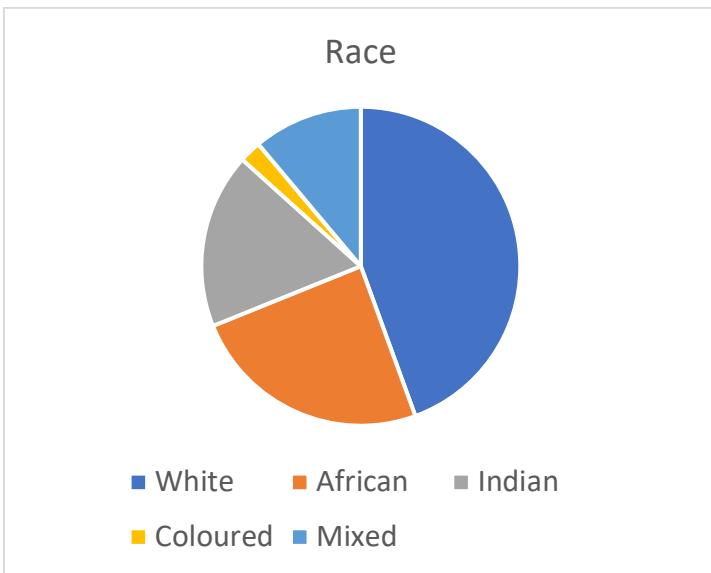


Figure 2: Racial distribution of interviewees.

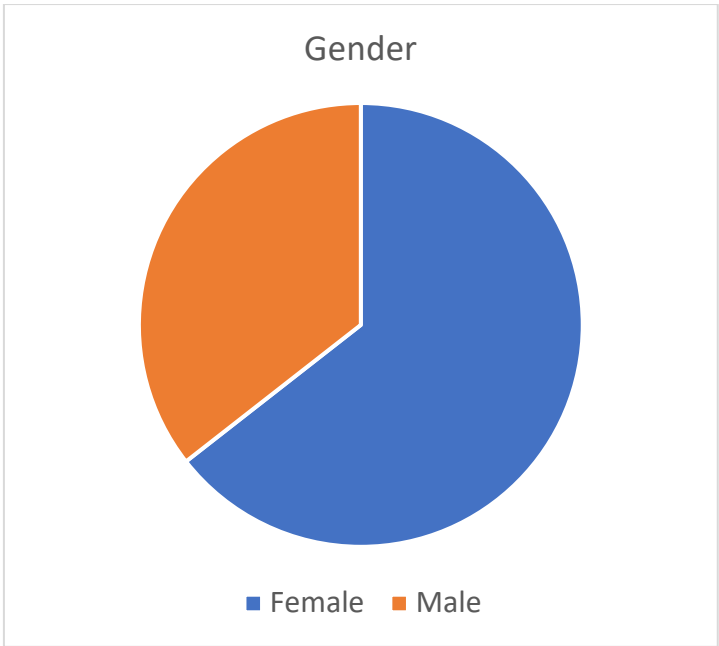


Figure 3: Gender distribution of interviewees.

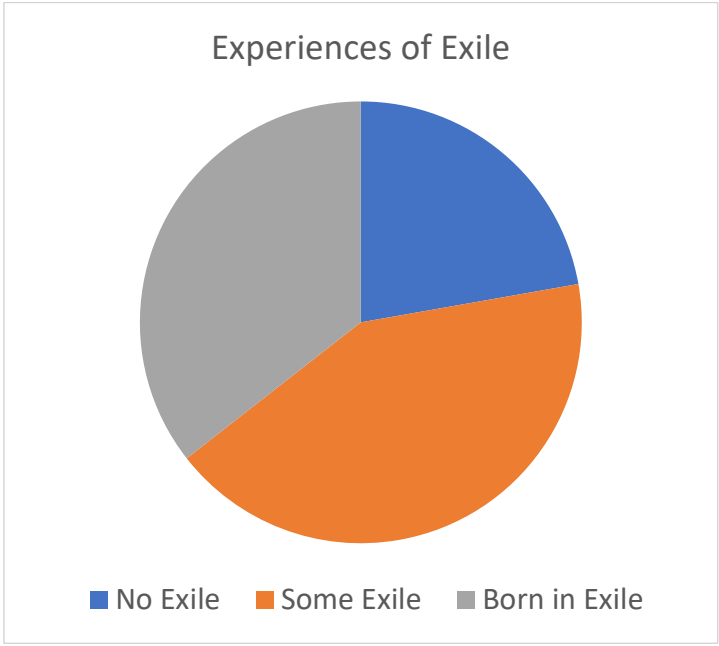


Figure 4: Experiences of exile of interviewees.

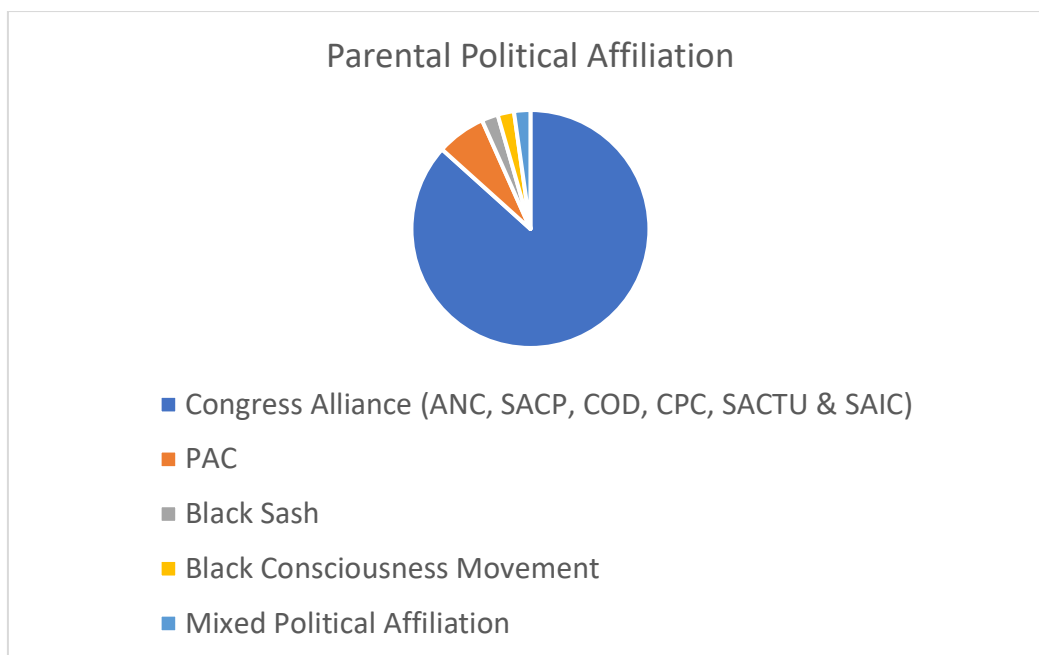


Figure 5: Parental political affiliation of interviewees.

Previously Recorded Oral Histories

Hilda Bernstein conducted over 500 interviews in the late 1980s-early 1990s, including with several children of activists.¹⁷¹ I consulted the published book, as well as the original transcripts at the Mayibuye Archives at the University of the Western Cape (UWC).¹⁷² Led by former SACP activist, Wolfie Kodesh, from 1992-1995, the Oral History of Exile project, also archived at the Mayibuye Archives, was likewise consulted.¹⁷³ In addition, smaller numbers of interviews were taken from the Julie Frederikse Collection (1979-1990), the South African History Archive (SAHA) Exiles Project (1991), the Legal Resources Centre (2006-2009), all at the University of the Witwatersrand ('Wits'), as well as the Commonwealth Oral History Project at the University of London, Pdraig O'Malley's website 'O'Malley – The Heart of Hope', and the South African Democracy Education Trust's publication 'The Road to Democracy in South Africa'.¹⁷⁴ Glenn Frankel also gave

¹⁷¹ Bernstein, *Rift*.

¹⁷² MCA7 Hilda Bernstein Collection, Mayibuye Archives, UWC, Cape Town.

¹⁷³ MC6 Oral History of Exiles Project, Mayibuye Archives, UWC, Cape Town.

¹⁷⁴ AL2460 Julie Frederikse Collection, Tracing the Unbreakable Thread – Non-Racialism in South Africa, SAHA, Wits, Johannesburg; AL2461 SAHA Exiles Project, SAHA, Wits, Johannesburg; AG3298 Legal

me access to his interview transcripts, conducted in the 1990s, currently at the University of Delaware, albeit not publicly accessible.¹⁷⁵ Lastly, I also accessed some of the publicly available Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) transcripts with victims and family members, which share some characteristics with oral history projects, despite major differences.¹⁷⁶

Most previously recorded interviews share a thematic focus on exile, emphasising questions of belonging, identity, and home – questions that arose in my interviews, but not as the focus. By using archived oral histories, particularly only transcripts, one loses the dialogical aspect of collaborative knowledge production, as well as interviews’ ‘meta data’.¹⁷⁷ Nonetheless, the use of previously recorded oral histories allowed me to gain a wider demographic understanding, especially regarding race and gender (see more below). As many of these previously recorded interviews were conducted in the 1990s, they furthermore provide insights as to how individuals’ interpretations might have changed over time.

Autobiographical Writings

I also draw significantly on memoirs written by both children of activists and their parents. While memoirs written by activists were already published under apartheid, particularly by the International Defence and Aid Fund for Southern Africa (IDAF) in London to garner

Resources Centre Oral History Project, Historical Papers, Wits, Johannesburg; Commonwealth Oral History Project, 2012-2015, University of London, London; O'Malley – The Heart of Hope. Compiled by Pdraig O'Malley. Hosted by the Nelson Mandela Foundation. <https://omalley.nelsonmandela.org/>; South African Democracy Education Trust, *South Africans Telling Their Stories, Volume 1* (Pretoria: Mutloatse Arts Heritage Trust, 2008).

¹⁷⁵ Glenn Frankel Papers, University of Delaware, Newark, DE.

¹⁷⁶ Sean Field, “Disappointed Remains: Trauma, Testimony, and Reconciliation in Post-apartheid South Africa,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Oral History*, ed. Donald A. Ritchie (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 142-59.

¹⁷⁷ Field, “Turning up the Volume,” 181; Fuji, “Shades of Truth,” 232; Paul Thompson with Joanna Bornat, *The Voice of the Past: Oral History*, 4th edition (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017 [1978]), 7.

international sympathy, ‘struggle memoirs’ have further boomed since the end of apartheid. Three memoirs, written by children of activists, are critically discussed in Chapter 8. Further autobiographical material includes archived and published letters between children and their parents, assembled letters addressed to Oliver Tambo on what would have been his 100th anniversary, as well as submissions to Ngcobo’s anthology, offering a rare PAC perspective.¹⁷⁸ Some autobiographical (often unpublished) writings and letters were also provided to me by interviewees.

Other Archival Material

This final group includes miscellaneous news interviews, press articles, and political organisations’ documents, consulted at the Archives of the South African Liberation Movements (NAHECS) at the University of Fort Hare (UFH), as well as SAHA and the Historical Papers Archive at Wits. Children are mostly absent from these archives until the Soweto Uprising and the establishment of the ANC’s educational complex in Tanzania in the mid-1970s, see more in Chapter 5.

Discussion of Sources

Gender

Particularly, the author’s oral histories are skewed towards women, suggesting a bias in my interviewing process and in the publishing of women’s stories, especially as this gender gap is not reflected in birth records. I mitigated this bias by consulting previously recorded oral histories. In addition, this bias did not appear harmful given the persistent underrepresentation of women in research.

¹⁷⁸ Ngcobo, *Prodigal Daughters*; Mabuza, Lindiwe, ed. *Conversations with Uncle OR Tambo*. Johannesburg: Real African Publishers, 2017.

Previously, oral history projects tended to record more male narratives.¹⁷⁹ Isabel Hofmeyer states that ‘men are more likely to tell ‘true’ historical accounts than women, who tend to use fictionalized narrative’.¹⁸⁰ Nonetheless, women and gender studies took up the call of oral histories and following the shift towards embracing the subjectivity of the source, women quickly became a key target group. Memoirs, published by children of anti-apartheid activists, are also skewed towards women, reflecting wider trends in memoir authorship (see more in Chapter 8). Estelle Jelinek argues that female memoirs tend to focus on personal histories, the relational and family life, lending itself to the writing of memoirs by children of activists.¹⁸¹

Data collection (or creation, in this case) is also impacted by gender dynamics and my positionality. Women are often more reluctant to be interviewed by men.¹⁸² Field suggests that female interviewees withheld information because of his gender.¹⁸³ Meanwhile, female researchers can struggle to gain access to male spaces, although when they do, they are often perceived as non-threatening, which can work to their advantage.¹⁸⁴ Belinda Bozzoli emphasises the intersectionality of these dynamics: her research assistant, Mmantho Nkotswe, proved particularly skilled at connecting with the women of Phokeng, as she was a Setswana speaker and appeared to come from a similar class.¹⁸⁵ Follow-up interviews, conducted by a black, male, non-Setswana researcher, were much less

¹⁷⁹ Thompson with Bornat, *The Voice of the Past*, 296.

¹⁸⁰ Isabel Hofmeyer, *We Spend Our Years as a Tale that is Told: Oral Historical Narrative in a South African Chieftdom* (Johannesburg: University of Witwatersrand, 1993), cited in Field, “Interviewing,” 70.

¹⁸¹ Estelle C. Jelinek, “Introduction: Women’s Autobiography and the Male Tradition,” in *Women’s Autobiography*, ed. Estelle C. Jelinek (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1980), 7-8, cited in Gerd-Rainer Horn, “Women’s Autobiographies: History and Meaning,” in *Letters from Barcelona: An American Woman in Revolution and Civil War*, ed. Gerd-Rainer Horn (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan), 21.

¹⁸² Andrew Herod, “Gender Issues in the Use of Interviewing as a Research Method,” *The Professional Geographer* 45, no.3 (1993): 309.

¹⁸³ Field, “Interviewing,” 67.

¹⁸⁴ Herod, “Gender Issues,” 309.

¹⁸⁵ Belinda Bozzoli, “Interviewing the Women of Phokeng: Consciousness and gender, insider and outsider,” in *The Oral History Reader*, eds. Robert Perks and Alistair Thomson, 3rd edition, online (London: Routledge, 2015 [1998]).

successful. The women showed aversion to being interviewed, answering with brief, non-indicative answers.

I was connected more frequently with other women, and women tended to be more inclined to speak to me than the men I approached. Female friendship networks, conducted over messenger services, likely played a role in these dynamics. As mentioned previously, my refusal to meet some men at their homes likely also led to fewer in-depth conversations, possibly even putting men off from being interviewed. Hilda Bernstein's 'Rift' interviews and Wolfie Kodesh's 'Oral History of Exiles' project do not appear to have similar gender discrepancies, although their insider status likely mitigated this.

Race

Race continues to be one of South Africa's society's defining features: its influence on all social, political, and economic interactions cannot be overstated. The racial classification of people until 1994 constituted 'an integral part of the system of control' by the white government.¹⁸⁶ Classification was rooted in a near-arbitrary system, loosely specified along ancestry, visual appearance, and socio-economic status.¹⁸⁷ The post-apartheid South African government maintained the system of racial classifications (without its associated laws) to enable societal and economic redress, a decision criticised by many South Africans, including those preferring classification by ethnicity. The civil rights group 'People Against Race Classification (PARC)', founded in 2010, argued for the abandonment of racial classification, preferring class as a vector for redress.¹⁸⁸ Especially the term 'Coloured'

¹⁸⁶ A.J. Christopher, "'To define the indefinable': population classification and the census in South Africa," *Area* 34, no. 4 (2002): 402.

¹⁸⁷ Christopher, "'To define the indefinable'," 405.

¹⁸⁸ People Against Race Classification (PARC), "Home," *PARC SA*, accessed August 19, 2025, <https://www.parsa.co.za/>; Mohammed Allie, "Race in South Africa: 'We haven't learnt we are human beings first,'" BBC News, 21 January 2021, <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-55333625>.

remains highly controversial.¹⁸⁹ By continuing to use racial classifications, researchers become complicit in this act of oppression. Yet, race shaped interviewees' experiences drastically, making the inclusion of racial statistics critical to attempt representativeness.

Children with differently categorised parents, who grew up in exile, did not fit these apartheid-produced categories. Under apartheid, their birth was illegal, and they would have been classified as 'Coloured', an umbrella term for people of mixed descent. Segregation and apartheid laws led to the creation of a specific Coloured community, culture, and history. I interviewed several children whose parents were of different racial categories but – due to exile – did not experience being part of a Coloured community. For them, I used the term 'Mixed', rather than 'Coloured'.

The author's oral histories show a clear bias towards white children of activists, limiting the studies' representativeness to a certain degree. Almost half of the narrators were white. The South African population census of 1960 shows that around 68.3% of the South African population were black/African (or 'Bantu'), 19.3% were white, 9.5% were Coloured, and 2.9% were Indian (or 'Asiatic').¹⁹⁰ There were also major regional patterns – Cape Coloureds and Cape Malays made up almost a quarter of the population in the Cape Province.¹⁹¹ Assuming that the number of those involved in the struggle was proportional to their overall population numbers, the children of white and Indian activists are

¹⁸⁹ Whitney N. Laster Pirtle, "'Able to identify with anything': racial identity choices among 'coloureds' as shaped by the South African racial state," *Identities* 30, no. 3 (2023): 392.

¹⁹⁰ Akil Kokayi Khalfani and Tukufu Zuberi, "Racial classification and the modern census in South Africa, 1911–1996," *Race & Society* 4 (2001): 166.

¹⁹¹ South Africa, *Population Census of the Union of South Africa, 1960: Sample Tabulation* (Pretoria: Government Printer, 1963) London School of Economics Digital Library.

overrepresented in this study, while the children of African and Coloured activists are underrepresented.¹⁹²

Statistical information on the racial demographics of activism is nearly impossible to attain, considering activism's clandestine nature and the already discussed issues of defining activism. While whites certainly played an important role in activism, their perceived dominance also reflects on apartheid's media representations and publishing restrictions.¹⁹³ The early exodus of activists, who remained outspoken in exile, included primarily white and Indian activists, who had the financial/social means to leave. There were widespread beliefs that the ANC was dominated by white communists – claims that the apartheid state also amplified, as it suited their narrative of a communist onslaught.

Israel notes that during his research, he gained access more easily to white and Indian activists.¹⁹⁴ Although he was well connected to the London struggle communities through his parents, he was referred less often to black exiles, and they were more likely to decline an interview. This not only reflects on the much smaller numbers of black exiles in the UK, but also on the fractured exile communities (see Chapter 5). As Israel has done, I have drawn on previously recorded oral histories to counter this bias and placed special emphasis on race in my sampling method, ensuring that I reached out to interviewees via diverse starting contacts.¹⁹⁵

¹⁹² The fact that Coloured people are statistically underrepresented is also caused by my differentiation between Coloured people and people of mixed descent who grew up in exile.

¹⁹³ Saul Dubow, *Apartheid 1948-1994* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 126.

¹⁹⁴ Israel, *South African Political Exile*, 12.

¹⁹⁵ Israel, *South African Political Exile*, 12-3.

Lastly, rather than simply accepting this racial bias, I explored to what extent race (and gender) played a role in children's willingness to talk to researchers and publish memoirs, detailing some of my findings in Chapter 8.

Political Parties

Across both sets of oral histories, the majority of children's parents associated with the Congress Alliance. Emerging in the early 1950s, the Congress Alliance involved the ANC, South African Indian Congress (SAIC), South African Congress of Trade Unions (SACTU), the South African Coloured People's Organisation (SACPO) (later the Coloured People's Congress (CPC)), and Congress of Democrats (COD) (including many secret SACP members).¹⁹⁶ In exile – especially following the 1969 Morogoro Conference – the ANC emerged as the main umbrella organisation for these activists.¹⁹⁷ Grouping these parties reflects the fact that parents often aligned with more than one group, holding varied loyalties and social circles.

Although the PAC only broke from the ANC in 1958/9, I categorised them separately as their social circles differed vastly afterwards. In exile, social interactions between the PAC and ANC were largely shunned.¹⁹⁸

This ANC/Congress Alliance bias reflects several phenomena: 1. the ANC had a much larger membership than the PAC, 2. the exiled PAC lacked the coherence of ANC communities, as it failed to organise effectively, 3. the ANC created stronger welfare and

¹⁹⁶ Dubow, *Apartheid*, 69.

¹⁹⁷ Arianna Lissoni, "The South African Liberation Movements in Exile, c.1945-1970," PhD Thesis (University of London, 2008), 267.

¹⁹⁸ Shireen Hassim, *Women's Organizations and Democracy in South Africa: Contesting Authority* (Scottsville, South Africa, University of KwaZulu-Natal Press, 2006), 91; Sandwell, "Building a State in Exile," 151.

educational institutions to cater to its children, likely leading children to identify more strongly with the ANC, and 4. the ANC continues to dominate the historical and political post-apartheid narrative, while narratives of PAC activists and their children are marginalised.

By using previously recorded oral histories and published autobiographical writings, I was able to access more PAC, as well as Liberal Party (LP), narratives.¹⁹⁹

Class and Elites

All my interviews were conducted with interviewees who, by South African standards (or the countries in which they reside now), are considered middle class, if not upper middle class.

Yet, most activists (and their children) did not start as elites. This was certainly true for activists of colour, but even numerous white activists – despite being highly advantaged by the apartheid system – were from relatively poor, working-class backgrounds, often with a history of recent migration to South Africa. Some exceptions include Bram Fischer, who descended from an influential Afrikaner family, or Patrick Duncan, the son of the sixth Governor General of the Union of South Africa and married to a wealthy British aristocrat's daughter. Activists across races struggled to maintain employment amidst apartheid's repression; children experienced the financial consequences acutely, see Chapter 3.

¹⁹⁹ Peter Hain, *A Pretoria Boy: The Story of South Africa's 'Public Enemy Number One'* (London: Icon Books, 2021); Peter Hain, *Ad & Wal – Values, duties, sacrifice in Apartheid South Africa* (London: Biteback Publishing, 2014); Ngcobo, *Prodigal Daughters*.

Children's present-day middle-class status reflects on their social mobility since apartheid. Many activists and their children found work in post-apartheid South Africa in government or in business based on skills gained in exile (for example, through university scholarships) and their social networks (including, in some cases, nepotism).

Last, the snowball method, along with my own security concerns, likely reinforced the similarity in my interviewees' class background. To counter this bias, I drew on Majodina and de Sas Kropiwnicki's research to understand the experiences of children from different socio-economic statuses.

Structure and Argument

As apartheid repression intensified and anti-apartheid activism evolved, children faced increasing direct and indirect violence from apartheid agents. Shifts in secrecy requirements, international geopolitics, domestic developments in exile locations and in South Africa also shaped how much children were exposed to their parents' political thought and communities, were politicised, and ultimately integrated into their parents' movements, influencing their own pathways into activism. Alongside factors of race and gender, *when* children experienced childhood (and in some cases, *where* in exile) was thus crucial in determining these trajectories. Consequently, I argue that there is no single 'children of activists' experience or generation.

The home emerges as the primary site where children engaged with their parents' political activities – both as a space of psychological and physical warfare, and as a site of politicisation through exposure to political thought and activist-networks. Their stories disrupt the public/private dichotomy, showing the home as an arena of both activism and

state intrusion. For many, the boundary between the public/political and the private/personal was permanently blurred with politics remaining deeply personal until today.

Throughout, this thesis also critically examines the extent to which children of activists have challenged notions of childhood – while many children took on adult responsibilities, and their politicisation and political activity defied common ideas of childhood, their role in post-apartheid South Africa suggests that many of these children have remained ‘children’ in the way they are perceived and treated.

The experiences of these children represent a crucial legacy of apartheid (activism). While South Africanist scholars have frequently emphasised ‘the destruction of the family’ through apartheid’s influx control and labour patterns, this thesis suggests that the repression of anti-apartheid activism posed a further assault on the South African family.

Following the *Introduction* and an overview of the *Historical Context*, Chapters 3-7 take a thematic approach to the apartheid period from the late 1940s to 1990. Chapter 8 *Return and Reckoning*, also structured thematically, covers the period from 1990 to the present.

Chapter 3 *Experiencing the Repression of Activism* explores children’s interactions with the apartheid state and its violence as a consequence of their parents’ activism in South Africa. The argument centres on the home as the key site for experiencing their parents – and thus their own – repression. As repression increased in the late 1950s and throughout the 1960s, the home – traditionally seen as a place of safety – was invaded. Children were both directly and indirectly targeted by the state, as part of the state’s psychological and

physical warfare against activists. As their parents were detained, harassed and/or imprisoned, children increasingly engaged with apartheid agents and spaces, including in police stations and prisons. While younger children struggled with their parents' absences and the lack of information available to them, older children took on new responsibilities vis-à-vis their parents and siblings, assuming adult responsibilities. This chapter also explores how race impacted community support, suggesting that white children were more likely to be ostracised by their communities. Whereas children of colour generally received more community support, this support was limited by the state's retribution and tighter financial constraints.

Chapter 4 *Experiencing the Repression of Activism* posits exile as a further consequence of this repression. While children's routes into exile and experiences of their exile locations were shaped by geopolitical processes, the socio-political contexts of their exile destinations, and race, their experiences and narratives challenge common conceptualisations of exile by emphasising the role that education and possible border crossings played in their exile experience. Next, I discuss how children experienced the threat from Pretoria: while posing a very serious threat, particularly in the frontline states, children also expressed the possibility of these threats through their fears, nightmares, and imaginations. Parental absences continued into exile, replicating Apartheid South Africa's destruction of the family. Like in South Africa, older children took on new responsibilities, caring for their younger siblings and/or helping to provide a livelihood. Crucially, I argue that the ANC only started engaging institutionally with the education and care of children and youth following the Soweto Uprising; previously, children had been the concern of individual families and their informal support networks. The chapter also explores children's psychological difficulties, as a consequence of exile and through being exposed to their

parents' mental health struggles. Substance abuse was not only a way of dealing with their own difficulties, but also reflected their parents' behavioural patterns. While cases of sexual assault of children by members of the movement were isolated, these did appear throughout the period, exacerbated by the lack of supervision. Lastly, this chapter looks at the children who were left behind by parents fleeing into exile, highlighting their omission from the historical narrative.

Chapter 5 *Learning Activism* identifies five interconnected processes, through which children were politicised: 1. through interactions with their parents at home, 2. through the constant exposure to apartheid, 3. through 'participation by default', 4. in peripheral spaces in the home and the community, and 5. through children-specific groups or alternative sites of education. The home was not only a site of repression, as Chapter 3 argues, but also the main space in which children's politicisation occurred and where they interacted with their parent's political communities. Yet, children's experiences of these five processes were shaped by the changing levels of repression, as shown by tracing these five processes from the late 1940s to the 1980s in South Africa and exile. In exile, their specific location and associated communities furthermore played an important role in children's politicisation.

Chapter 6 *Sacrifice and the Political Family* takes a closer look at parents' decisions to have children as well as the narratives of sacrifice and the political family that were dominant in the liberation movements, from pre-illegality to exile. I argue that these narratives underline an 'emotional formation' which children 'learned' through their parents and the movement, underpinning their positioning within the struggle. This 'emotional formation' valued the collective over the personal and symbolically replaced the biological family with the political family. Activists' biological children were perceived as a necessary

sacrifice in the pursuit of liberation. While children placed a strong emphasis on this symbolic political family, their recollections also suggest that the biological family co-existed, cooperated, and clashed with this political family, as exemplified through two examples. I argue that it was the extent to which children were politicised and integrated into the political community, as shaped by the shifting political situation, which enabled them to accept this ‘emotional formation’ and, thus, cope with the apartheid state’s violence.

Chapter 7 *Becoming Activists* builds on the themes of politicisation and repression explored in the preceding chapters to explore children’s political pathways in adulthood. Despite children’s strong sense of justice, not all chose to follow in their parents’ footsteps. While some aligned themselves with alternative socio-political movements, others distanced themselves entirely from political life. This chapter argues that the transition from politically exposed childhoods to activist adulthood was impacted by the changing political context and children’s integration into their parents’ movement, which enabled or restricted children enacting their ‘disposition for activism’ within the South African liberation movement. The chapter also interrogates the label ‘child of activists’, suggesting that those who did integrate into liberation movements frequently eschewed this identity. Instead, they emphasised a broader political upbringing among activist communities – not solely within the nuclear family – as a way to distance themselves from perceived nepotism.

Chapter 8 *Return and Reckoning* explores South Africa’s transitional period and over three decades of majority rule in South Africa. I start by drawing out children’s decisions to and experiences of return. The chapter contributes to existing literature by examining those who chose *not* to return, challenging the dominant focus on ‘returnees’. For those who did

return, the chapter analyses their experiences of this ‘meeting of myth and reality’.²⁰⁰ Taking a memory studies approach, the chapter shows how activist children’s narratives continue to evolve in response to personal life stages, political disappointments, and post-apartheid inequalities. The chapter examines how children have voiced claims of neglect and sought justice and recognition for their parents’ achievements in the public sphere, revealing not only how the political remained deeply personal for them, but also how their attempts to assert their own narratives were contested when those narratives conflicted with the post-apartheid narrative. Furthermore, I introduce the concept of ‘political childhood’ as a framework for understanding how these individuals leverage their histories to critique the present, and how their struggle narratives articulate a vision of the South Africa that was not realised. I, then, examine the private processes that have shaped how children reckon with their parents, their past, and with South Africa itself. The chapter concludes by exploring how the post-apartheid era has reshaped these children’s identities.

²⁰⁰ De Sas Kropiwnicki, *Exile*, 209.

Chapter 2: Historical Context

What history can they claim? Their history is that of their parents, and their parents' history is not present – it is elsewhere. The drama of their parents' lives has overshadowed the small, daily, social problems of their own. They are aware of the enormity of the malign power that has shattered the continuity of their own lives. But they feel “small and inadequate in the face of something that is world-size”.²⁰¹

Political Activism in the late 1940s-1950s

The following chapter outlines the historical context from 1948 to 1994. Focusing specifically on anti-apartheid activism, the analysis generally commences with the National Party's (NP) 1948 electoral sweep. There had been opposition to racial segregation before 1948: the ANC had been founded in 1912, but only during the Second World War did the party emerge ‘as a modern, mass campaigning organization’, spurred on by a ‘new generation of assertive intellectuals and activists’, especially in the ANC Youth League (ANCYL), founded in 1943.²⁰² Other organisations, such as the Non-European Unity Movement (NEUM), the Natal Indian Congress (NIC), SAIC, and the Transvaal Indian Congress (TIC) also opposed racial segregation. Towards the late 1940s, some of these organisations moved towards further cooperation.²⁰³ The ANC, spurred on by the ANCYL, shifted from a more cautious organisation to a national, more militant movement through its adoption of the ANCYL's 1949 Programme of Action.²⁰⁴

In 1950, the *Suppression of Communism Act* banned the Communist Party of South Africa (CPSA), which secretly regrouped in 1953 as the SACP. The Defiance Campaign, organised by the ANC and other groups, saw 8,000 resisters arrested between June and December 1952, although it was called off when some protests turned violent.²⁰⁵ FEDSAW

²⁰¹ Bernstein, *Rift*, 434.

²⁰² Dubow, *Apartheid*, 38-9.

²⁰³ Dubow, *Apartheid*, 40.

²⁰⁴ Dubow, *Apartheid*, 39-40.

²⁰⁵ Dubow, *Apartheid*, 43-4.

formed in 1954, was a broad-based, multi-racial organisation opposing pass laws.²⁰⁶ FEDSAW's 1954 Women's Charter preceded the Freedom Charter. The latter was presented on 26 June 1955 at the Congress of People in Kliptown, southwest of Johannesburg. Nearly 3000 delegates from the ANC, SACPO (later CPC), SAIC, and the COD, including many members of the underground SACP, met to discuss the future of South Africa. The resulting Congress Alliance – also including SACTU – proved a 'highpoint of multi-racial opposition to apartheid'.²⁰⁷

The State's Clamp Down

Threatened by this cooperation, the state charged 156 activists from nearly 50 political organisations with 'high treason' in December 1956.²⁰⁸ By 1961, all defendants were acquitted – it proved an embarrassment for the state, even more so as the state provided activists across organisations a space to coordinate and voice their ideas publicly.²⁰⁹ Yet, the trial also disrupted political momentum and ultimately, by 1961, it 'had lost all significance on the political scene. It was a played-out drama bearing little relation to the surroundings in which it was enacted'.²¹⁰

In November 1958, the Africanists, under Robert Sobukwe, had split from the ANC and established the PAC in August 1959. On 21 March 1960, as part of a PAC anti-pass campaign, several thousands protesters presented themselves at the police station in Sharpeville when the police opened fire, (officially) killing 69 people.²¹¹ Nine days later,

²⁰⁶ Healy-Clancy, "Family Politics," 853.

²⁰⁷ Dubow, *Apartheid*, 69.

²⁰⁸ Dubow, *Apartheid*, 70.

²⁰⁹ Dubow, *Apartheid*, 71-2.

²¹⁰ Hilda Bernstein, *The World That Was Ours*, 3rd edition (London: Persephone Books (Persephone Classics), 2009 [1967]), 36-7.

²¹¹ Dubow, *Apartheid*, 74.

the government declared a state of emergency, and on 8 April, the ANC and PAC were banned under the newly passed *Unlawful Organisations Act*.²¹² 10,000 people were detained under emergency regulations.²¹³ In the aftermath of Sharpeville, it was primarily white, liberal groups, including the LP and the Black Sash, that openly resisted apartheid policies.²¹⁴ NEUM had played an important socio-political role in the 1950s, but by the 1960s its influence declined and most of its leaders had gone into exile.²¹⁵

According to Madeleine Fullard, the apartheid state established three major patterns, which escalated repression throughout the 1960s: 1. ‘the passage and implementation of legislation that made extraordinary state abuse lawful’, 2. the ‘commencement and entrenchment of torture of political opponents as common practice’, accompanied by the state’s ‘blanket of denial’, and 3. the ‘elevation of the security police to the position of political protector of the National Party, with unfettered power’.²¹⁶ The government increased its defence apparatus from \$55.8 million in 1960-1 to \$307.02 million in 1966-7.²¹⁷ In 1963, the secret Republican Intelligence (RI) was founded to infiltrate opposition groups, openly becoming the Bureau of State Security (BOSS) in 1969.²¹⁸ BOSS (until the late 1970s) was one of three branches involved in the repression of activism, alongside the SB of the South African Police (SAP) and the South African Defence Forces (SADF) intelligence and special forces.

²¹² Israel, *South African Political Exile*, 32; Dubow, *Apartheid*, 81; Madeleine Fullard, “State repression in the 1960s,” in *The Road to Democracy in South Africa, Volume 1, 1960-1970*, ed. South African Democracy Education Trust (Pretoria: UNISA Press, 2004), 344-5.

²¹³ Israel, *South African Political Exile*, 32.

²¹⁴ Martin Legassick and Chris Saunders, “Aboveground activity in the 1960s,” in *The Road to Democracy in South Africa, Volume 1, 1960-1970*, ed. South African Democracy Education Trust (Pretoria: UNISA Press, 2004), 672-3; Dubow, *Apartheid*, 126.

²¹⁵ Tom Lodge, “Rebellion: The Turning the Tide,” in *All, Here, and Now: Black Politics in South Africa in the 1990s*, eds. Tom Lodge and Bill Nasson (and Steven Mufson, Khehla Shubane and Nokwanda Sithole) (London: Hurst & Company, 1992), 26.

²¹⁶ Fullard, “State repression,” 390.

²¹⁷ Sifiso Mxolisi Ndlovu, “The ANC and the World,” in *The Road to Democracy in South Africa, Volume 1, 1960-1970*, ed. South African Democracy Education Trust (Pretoria: UNISA Press, 2004), 548.

²¹⁸ Howard Barrell, *MK: the ANC’s armed struggle* (London: Penguin Books, 1990), 12.

In 1961, the government announced the *General Law Amendment Act no. 39*, allowing for twelve days of detention.²¹⁹ The Sabotage Act in 1962 (*General Law Amendment Act no. 76*) provided sweeping powers to arrest those suspected of ‘sabotage’ and the possibility for further bannings and house arrests.²²⁰ In May 1963, the ‘90-Day Act’ (*General Law Amendment Act no. 37*) followed, allowing for detention without warrant, charge, or trial and the possibility of indefinite re-detentions after each 90 days, extended to 180 days in 1965 (*Criminal Procedure Amendment Act no. 95*).²²¹ The *Terrorism Act of 1967*, backdated to 1962, signified that ‘[e]ffectively, detainees were at the mercy of the security police, who were accountable only to the Minister.’²²² By 1970, around 568 people were listed, no longer able to communicate with each other or partake in political activities.²²³ This legal framework was accentuated by ‘extra-legal repression’ and ‘dirty tricks’, including prank calls, death threats, and attacks on homes and offices.²²⁴ Torture of detainees was definitely conducted from 1963, although TRC reports suggested even earlier cases; in September 1963, activist Looksmart Ngudle was the first to die in prison.²²⁵

The Congress Alliance received a near-fatal blow on 11 July 1963, when Liliesleaf, a farm in Johannesburg’s suburb, Rivonia, was raided and fifteen leaders were arrested. Eight leaders received life sentences at the Rivonia Trial in June 1964, only narrowly avoiding the death sentence. Over the next two years, most of the remaining leadership was captured. The arrest of Bram Fischer in 1965 effectively ended underground SACP

²¹⁹ Fullard, “State repression,” 344-5.

²²⁰ Fullard, “State repression,” 345; Fran Lisa Buntman, *Robben Island and Prisoner Resistance to Apartheid* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2003), 17.

²²¹ Fullard, “State repression,” 345-7.

²²² Fullard, “State repression,” 347-8; Buntman, *Robben Island*, 17.

²²³ Fullard, “State repression,” 351, 355.

²²⁴ Fullard, “State repression,” 350.

²²⁵ Fullard, “State repression,” 356.

structures in the country.²²⁶ The COD had been banned in 1962, and the LP dissolved itself in 1968 when faced with the *Prohibition of Political Interference Act*, which illegalised multi-racial organisations. ‘By 1965 the liberation movements in South Africa had been smashed and eviscerated’ – most activities were banned, detained, imprisoned, in exile, or killed.²²⁷

The Turn to the Armed Struggle and into Exile

Through this changing political arena, the ‘culture’ of the liberation movement changed – secrecy became tantamount and open political debate impossible.²²⁸ The 1960s were a ‘painful and sometimes clumsy process of transformation from a loosely structured mass organisation to a clandestine insurgent revolutionary élite.’²²⁹ The ANC had abandoned its policy of non-violence when it (reluctantly) stipulated the creation of MK, launching on 16 December 1961 through a series of sabotage acts.²³⁰ Officially separate organisations with partially overlapping leadership, MK effectively became the ANC’s armed wing.²³¹ The decision to keep MK and the ANC separate had been intended to

overcome some of the concerns within the ANC and its partners in the Congress Movement (...) around the turn to armed resistance, as well as the conditions of illegality under which the ANC had been operating since its banning by the apartheid regime in 1960, making holding a conference to formalize a shift in policy impossible.²³²

In practice, this separation ended by 1965.²³³ By the end of 1962, MK had conducted 134 acts of sabotage.²³⁴ By 1964, MK established its first camp in exile in Kongwa, Tanzania,

²²⁶ Vladimir Shubin, *ANC – A View From Moscow*, 2nd edition (Johannesburg: Jacana Media, 2008 [1999]), 57.

²²⁷ Dubow, *Apartheid*, 131.

²²⁸ Raymond Suttner, “Culture(s) of the African National Congress of South Africa: Imprint of Exile Experiences,” *Journal of Contemporary African Studies* 21, no. 2 (2003): 305.

²²⁹ Tom Lodge, *Black Politics in South Africa since 1945* (New York: Longman, 1983), viii.

²³⁰ Barrell, *MK*, 2; Lissoni, “MK.”

²³¹ Barrell, *MK*, 4.

²³² Lissoni, “MK.”

²³³ Shubin, *A View From Moscow*, 57.

²³⁴ Barrell, *MK*, 11.

and by 1965, about 800 MK soldiers were either in camps abroad or receiving training in the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) or China.²³⁵

After Sharpeville, the first major wave of exiles left South Africa, with subsequent major waves occurring in 1976-9, following the Soweto Uprising and in 1984-6, following the Township revolts and two consecutive states of emergencies.²³⁶ Between 30,000 and 60,000 people left South Africa in protest of apartheid until the 1990s.²³⁷

The PAC, under Potlako Leballo, reconstituted itself in exile in 1962 in Basutoland, where it allied with the Basutoland Congress Party (BCP) for their shared Pan-Africanism.²³⁸ Following the Paarl (21-22 November 1962) and Bashee River killings (5 February 1963) and Leballo's grand declarations of *Pogo's* (the PAC's armed wing) supposed membership of 155,000 across 1,000 cells, the government cracked down brutally: by 5 June 1963, 3,246 members had been arrested.²³⁹ Imprisoned PAC's president, Robert Sobukwe, due for release in 1960, was held indefinitely under the 'Sobukwe-Clause' until 1969, when he was released amidst rapidly deteriorating health.²⁴⁰

Leballo lacked Sobukwe's leadership style and the ensuing squabbles lost the PAC its credibility – it had been 'even more ill-equipped for illegality' than the ANC.²⁴¹ By early

²³⁵ Barrell, *MK*, 19; Gregory Houston, "International Solidarity: Introduction" in *The Road to Democracy in South Africa, Volume 3, International Solidarity, Part 1*, ed. South African Democracy Education Trust (Pretoria: UNISA Press, 2008), 35.

²³⁶ Israel, *South African Political Exile*, 6.

²³⁷ De Sas Kropiwnicki, *Exile*, 2.

²³⁸ Tefetso Henry Mthibane and Munyaradzi Mushonga, "Lesotho and the struggle for liberation in South Africa," in *The Road to Democracy in South Africa, Volume 5, African Solidarity*, ed. South African Democracy Education Trust (Pretoria: UNISA Press, 2013), 479.

²³⁹ Thomas Karis and Gwendolen M. Carter, *From Protest to Challenge: A Documentary History of African Politics in South Africa, 1882–1964, Volume 3: Challenge and Violence, 1953–1964* (Stanford, CA: Hoover Institution Press, 1977), 670.

²⁴⁰ Karis and Carter, *From Protest to Challenge, Volume 3*, 670.

²⁴¹ Clive Glaser, *The ANC Youth League*, 2nd ed. (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2013 [2012]), 73-4; Arianna Lissoni, "The Implosion of the Pan-Africanist Congress: Basutoland, c. 1962-1965," in *Southern*

1964, there were small PAC exile communities in Basutoland, Tanzania, Bechuanaland, and Swaziland, and the party had presences in London, New York, Accra, Cairo, and Algiers.²⁴² In 1965, Leballo moved the headquarters from Basutoland to Dar es Salaam.²⁴³ Amidst continuing leadership issues and dissatisfaction amongst its cadres, the PAC held a Conference in Moshi, Tanzania, from 19-22 September 1967, enabling Leballo to underline his power.²⁴⁴ After Moshi, the PAC established APLA with its High Command in Lusaka.²⁴⁵ Under pressure to act, APLA collaborated in 1968 with the Mozambique Revolutionary Committee (COREMO) to mount ‘Operation Villa Piri’ to infiltrate South Africa via Mozambique, but they were captured and most were killed.²⁴⁶ This defeat led to further disenchantment in the camps.²⁴⁷ The PAC was expelled from Zambia in 1968 due to ‘increasing disaffection of rank and file’ and Zambian claims that the PAC had plotted to overthrow President Kaunda.²⁴⁸ Allowed to return to Zambia between 1971 and 1973, the PAC was expelled again after the arrest of its members for assault.²⁴⁹ APLA troops were then sent to Tanzania.²⁵⁰ In 1974, the PAC had about 70 trained guerrillas, of which most had been in the camps since the mid-1960s – unarmed and ‘virtually living with their families in the camp at Chunya’.²⁵¹ Continued leadership squabbles throughout the 1970s – and particularly after Sobukwe died in 1978 – ensured that the PAC was incapable of integrating the Soweto refugees effectively.²⁵²

African Liberation Struggles – New local, regional and global perspectives, eds. Hilary Sapire and Chris Saunders (Cape Town: UCT Press, 2013), 33; Tom Lodge, “The Pan-Africanist Congress, 1959-1990,” in *The Long March: The Story of the Struggle for Liberation in South Africa*, eds. Ian Leinberg et al. (Pretoria: HAUM, 1994), 117.

²⁴² Thami ka Plaatjie, “The PAC in Exile,” in *The Road to Democracy in South Africa, Volume 2, 1970-1980*, ed. South African Democracy Education Trust (Pretoria: UNISA Press, 2006), 704.

²⁴³ Lissoni, “South African Liberation Movements,” 212, 234.

²⁴⁴ Lodge, “PAC,” 118; Lissoni, “South African Liberation Movements,” 238, 243.

²⁴⁵ Plaatjie, “PAC,” 715.

²⁴⁶ Plaatjie, “PAC,” 720; Lodge, “PAC,” 118.

²⁴⁷ Plaatjie, “PAC,” 729.

²⁴⁸ Lissoni, “South African Liberation Movements,” 246.

²⁴⁹ Lodge, “PAC,” 119.

²⁵⁰ Lodge, “PAC,” 119.

²⁵¹ Plaatjie, “PAC,” 773, 736.

²⁵² Lodge, “PAC,” 120.

ANC's Deputy President (and later Acting President) Oliver Tambo had left South Africa in 1960 in response to Sharpeville to form an External Mission.²⁵³ He intended to establish the ANC as South Africa's dominant liberation movement, despite the PAC initially being favoured by African states.²⁵⁴ Following demands for unity by the OAU, the PAC and the ANC briefly worked together under the South African United Front (SAUF) from 1960, but it was dissolved in March 1962 after relations had broken down months earlier.²⁵⁵ In 1961, Tambo had accepted Julius Nyerere's offer to establish an ANC mission in Dar es Salaam.²⁵⁶ Yet, even Nyerere was not immune to the pressures from Pretoria: in 1964, headquarters were moved to Morogoro in an effort to restrict liberation movements in Dar es Salaam, and in 1969, MK was expelled from Kongwa.²⁵⁷ The 1964 Rivonia Trial (and subsequent Little Rivonia Trial, which imprisoned the Second High Command) altered the External Mission's *raison d'être*, shifting ANC leadership into exile.²⁵⁸ During the 1960s, the ANC set up nine offices across Africa, Europe (particularly London), North America, and Asia, increasing to 41 by the late 1980s.²⁵⁹

The Congress Alliance struggled to continue its momentum into exile, in part because only some of its partners were banned, but also due to the strains exile placed on the Alliance's approach to race and participation.²⁶⁰ After high casualties in the Wankie and

²⁵³ Colin Bundy, "Cooking the rice outside the pot? The ANC and SACP in exile – 1960 to 1990," in *Treading the Waters of History – Perspectives on the ANC*, eds. Kwandiwe Kondlo et al. (Pretoria: Institute of South Africa, 2014), 54-5.

²⁵⁴ Arianna Lissoni, "Transformations in the ANC External Mission and Umkhonto we Sizwe, c. 1960–1969," *Journal of Southern African Studies* 35, no. 2 (2009): 288, 291-2.

²⁵⁵ Houston, "International Solidarity," 17.

²⁵⁶ Colin Bundy, "South Africa's African National Congress in Exile," *Oxford Research Encyclopaedia of African History*, 26 April 2018.

²⁵⁷ Lissoni, "South African Liberation Movements," 172.

²⁵⁸ Bundy, "ANC and SACP in exile," 54-5.

²⁵⁹ Houston, "International Solidarity," 17; Colin Bundy, "National Liberation and International Solidarity: Anatomy of a Special Relationship," in *Southern African Liberation Struggles – New local, regional and global perspectives*, eds. Hilary Sapire and Chris Saunders (Cape Town: UCT Press, 2013), 215.

²⁶⁰ Lissoni, "Transformations, 291-2, 300; Dubow, *Apartheid*, 135.

Sipolilo Campaigns in 1967 and 1968, Chris Hani and six other MK members accused the leadership of ‘rot in the ANC and the disintegration of MK’ in the Hani Memorandum.²⁶¹ This led to the Morogoro Consultative Conference in 1969, which resulted in the opening of the ANC (albeit not its National Executive Committee (NEC) until 1985) to all races, a restructuring of the organisation, and a shift to the left.²⁶² The focus had shifted from multi-racialism under the Congress Alliance to non-racialism under the ANC as an umbrella organisation.²⁶³

After Tanzania, the ANC incrementally moved to Lusaka.²⁶⁴ Most offices had moved by the mid-1970s, yet by 1981, Zambia still refused to admit that the ANC’s headquarters were in Lusaka.²⁶⁵ Following its independence from Portugal in the mid-1970s, the ANC established several MK bases in Angola. Throughout this period, the ANC’s movements across Africa were impacted by changing geopolitics, decolonisation, competition with the PAC, and Pretoria’s ‘stick and carrot’ approach to its neighbours.

The BCM and the Soweto Uprising

In South Africa, the BCM had emerged out of student politics, and the South African Students’ Organisation (SASO) – as a breakaway from the white-dominated, liberal National Union of South African Students (NUSAS) – was launched in July 1969.²⁶⁶ By the

²⁶¹ Bundy, “ANC in Exile” 5-6.

²⁶² Dubow, *Apartheid*, 146-150; Lissoni, “South African Liberation Movements,” 314.

²⁶³ Hilary Sapire and Chris Saunders, “Liberation Struggles in Southern Africa in Context,” in *Southern African Liberation Struggles – New local, regional and global perspectives*, eds. Hilary Sapire and Chris Saunders (Cape Town: UCT Press, 2013), 13.

²⁶⁴ Macmillan, *Lusaka Years*, 97.

²⁶⁵ Hugh Macmillan, “The African National Congress of South Africa in Zambia: The Culture of Exile and the Changing Relationship with Home, 1964–1990,” *Journal of Southern African Studies* 35, no. 2 (2009): 308.

²⁶⁶ Mbulelo Vizikhungo Mzamane et al., “The Black Consciousness Movement,” in *The Road to Democracy in South Africa, Volume 2, 1970-1980*, ed. South African Democracy Education Trust (Pretoria: UNISA Press, 2006), 100.

late 1960s, Black Consciousness (BC) ideology inspired a number of organisations, brought together by August 1971 at the Black People's Convention (BPC) in Bloemfontein.²⁶⁷ In March 1973, prominent leaders, including Steve Biko, were banned and restricted. After Pro-*Frente de Libertação de Moçambique* (FRELIMO) rallies in September 1974, the state escalated its activities against BC organisations – it had initially allowed BC organisations to operate relatively freely because its ideology seemingly aligned with the apartheid policy of separate developments.²⁶⁸

Meanwhile, mass protests erupted again in South Africa in 1973 during the Durban Miners' strike, involving over 100,0000 miners.²⁶⁹ On June 16, 1976, police opened fire on pupils in Soweto, protesting the enforcement of Afrikaans in schools. Over the next few months, the Soweto Uprising, influenced by BC ideas, spread nationwide with protests lasting till late 1977.²⁷⁰ Around 3,000 children and youth left South Africa in 1976-78.²⁷¹ Approximately 75% of exiles during this period joined the ANC; others joined the PAC or continued on their own.²⁷²

To accommodate these youth, ANC commenced the construction of SOMAFCO in 1977 on an abandoned sisal estate in Mazimbu in Morogoro, Tanzania.²⁷³ Ultimately, around 3,500 exiles lived at Mazimbu.²⁷⁴ In 1982, the Tanzanian government provided the ANC

²⁶⁷ Stephen M. Davis, *Apartheid's Rebels – Inside South Africa's Hidden War* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987), 24-5.

²⁶⁸ Gregory Houston and Bernard Magubane, "The ANC Political Underground in the 1970s," in *The Road to Democracy in South Africa, Volume 2, 1970-1980*, ed. South African Democracy Education Trust (Pretoria: UNISA Press, 2006), 380; Leslie Anne Hadfield, "Steve Biko and the Black Consciousness Movement," *Oxford Research Encyclopaedia of African History*, 27 February 2017.

²⁶⁹ Dubow, *Apartheid*, 172.

²⁷⁰ Davis, *Apartheid's Rebels*, 27.

²⁷¹ Barrell, *MK*, 33.

²⁷² Davis, *Apartheid's Rebels*, 57.

²⁷³ Morrow et al., *Education in Exile*, 19.

²⁷⁴ Seán Morrow, "Dakawa Development Centre: An African National Congress Settlement in Tanzania, 1982-1992," *African Affairs* 97 (1998): 499.

with a 2,800-hectare plot of land at Dakawa, 55 km north of Morogoro, for further development.²⁷⁵ PAC had established a transit camp in 1978 in Masuguru in Tanzania; by the early 1980s, this camp became less militarised – it aimed ‘to give a fuller family life to its members in exile’.²⁷⁶ By 1985, the camp accommodated approximately 1,500 people before it was closed down in 1993.²⁷⁷ The Tanzanian government also provided an area in Pongwe in Bagamoyo, where the PAC planned to provide educational and skill training facilities.²⁷⁸

In September 1977, Biko was killed in police custody. A month later, 18 BC organisations were banned in October 1977; afterwards, BCM's influence declined.²⁷⁹ In the 1980s, the resulting political vacuum inside South Africa was slowly filled by ‘Charterist activities’ – aligning with the 1955 Freedom Charter –, also due to the ANC’s increasing ‘armed propaganda’.²⁸⁰ Initially, ANC attacks incurred few civilian casualties; after the ANC conference in Kabwe, Zambia, in 1985, the organisation adopted a ‘people’s war’ with ‘the lines between so-called soft and hard targets becoming blurred.’²⁸¹ By 1987, MK was estimated to have around 10,000 combatants, primarily in Angola, with only 500 combatants inside South Africa.²⁸²

²⁷⁵ Morrow, “Dakawa,” 497.

²⁷⁶ Elias C.J. Tarimo and Neville Z. Reuben, “Tanzania’s solidarity within South Africa’s liberation,” in *The Road to Democracy in South Africa, Volume 5, African Solidarity*, ed. South African Democracy Education Trust (Pretoria: UNISA Press, 2013), 239-40.

²⁷⁷ Tarimo and Reuben, “Tanzania,” 240.

²⁷⁸ International Defence and Aid Fund, *Children under Apartheid* (London: International Defence and Aid Fund, 1980), 108.

²⁷⁹ Mzamane et al., “BCM,” 101.

²⁸⁰ Seekings, *Heroes or Villains?*, 29-30; Lodge, “Rebellion,” 44.

²⁸¹ Lodge, “Rebellion,” 177-179; Lissoni, “MK.”

²⁸² Lodge, “Rebellion,” 179.

Reform and Repression under Botha

Following P.W. Botha's election in 1978, the apartheid state commenced a 'cycle of insurrection, reform, and repression'.²⁸³ His government adopted a 'Total Strategy' to combat what they portrayed as a 'Total Onslaught' by satellites of the USSR.²⁸⁴ By 1980, nearly a fifth of state spending was on national security, further increasing to ¼ by 1986.²⁸⁵ In 1982, the government implemented the *Internal Security Act* – under Section 29 of the Act, suspects could be held incommunicado indefinitely.²⁸⁶ Botha attempted to offer 'limited political and institutional accommodation' by establishing a Tricameral Parliament, offering Coloured and Indian voters increased, but separate, political representation.²⁸⁷ In response, the Anti-South African Indian Council (Anti-SAIC) movement was set up. At the Transvaal Anti-SAIC Campaign's (TASC) first conference in January 1983, Reverend Alan Boesak called for the establishment of an 'united front' leading to the creation of the United Democratic Front (UDF).²⁸⁸ On 20 August 1983, around 1000 delegates and 500 observers from over 500 organisations met at Rocklands Community Centre in Mitchell's Plain, Cape Town, for the founding conference, followed by a public launch, with 6,000 to 15,000 attendees.²⁸⁹ The UDF comprised a federation of over 600 affiliate organisations, primarily youth groups, civic organisations, and women's organisations. Although distinct from the ANC, the UDF's formation 'marked Charterist domination of the deepening political opposition to the state.'²⁹⁰

²⁸³ Beinart, *Twentieth-Century South Africa*, 172.

²⁸⁴ Ellis, *External Mission*, 122.

²⁸⁵ Davis, *Apartheid's Rebels*, 180.

²⁸⁶ Else Schreiner, *Time Stretching Fear: The Detention and Solitary Confinement of 14 Anti-apartheid Trialists, 1987-1991* (Cape Town: Robben Island Museum, 2000), 3.

²⁸⁷ Lodge, "Rebellion," 31.

²⁸⁸ Jeremy Seekings, *UDF – A History of the United Democratic Front in South Africa 1983-1991* (Cape Town: David Philip Publishers, 2000), 49.

²⁸⁹ Seekings, *UDF*, 56-7.

²⁹⁰ Seekings, *Heroes or Villains?*, 30.

Youth and civic organisations had been increasing in number since the late 1970s, when the Congress of South African Students (COSAS) emerged as one of the first youth/student groups after the Soweto Uprising and the first to align itself with the Freedom Charter, and thus the ANC.²⁹¹ Its leaders were almost immediately detained.²⁹² Its launch was quickly overshadowed by the re-launch of the Azanian People's Organisation (AZAPO) in September 1979, which had first been formed in early 1978 but struggled to take off.²⁹³ The Azanian Students' Organisation (AZASO) was formed in November 1979 under BCM influence, but by 1981 was taken over by Charterists.²⁹⁴ COSAS and AZASO witnessed their 'baptism of fire' in 1980-1 when over 100,000 school students in Coloured and African schools and students on five black college campuses boycotted their classes from April 1980 to January 1981; initially in Cape Town, but soon spreading nationwide.²⁹⁵ After 1981, COSAS and AZASO also became involved in non-student-related issues, including the rent increase protests in the Vaal in April 1981.²⁹⁶ By May 1982, 20 youth congresses had sprung up in less than a year.²⁹⁷ In the mid-1980s, youth and students played a vital role in the township uprisings and continued educational boycotts in 1983-5. COSAS was banned in August 1985. In 1987, the charterist and highly militant South African Youth Congress (SAYCO) was established in secret as a national federal structure with ten regional youth congresses, 1200 affiliates, over half a million signed-up members and, according to SAYCO, a support base of two million.²⁹⁸

²⁹¹ Marks, *Young Warriors*, 35.

²⁹² Seekings, *UDF*, 35-6.

²⁹³ Seekings, *UDF*, 36.

²⁹⁴ Seekings, *UDF*, 38.

²⁹⁵ Lodge, "Rebellion," 36.

²⁹⁶ Lodge, "Rebellion," 36.

²⁹⁷ Lodge, "Rebellion," 37.

²⁹⁸ Seekings, *UDF*, 210.

Only days after the tricameral parliament elections in September 1984, the Vaal Uprising erupted, soon spreading across most of the country.²⁹⁹ Protests were caused by a mixture of local grievances tied to the implementation of the Koornhof Bills, including the *Black Local Authorities Act of 1982*, but were amplified by the economic situation and increasing unemployment rates, especially amongst youth.³⁰⁰ Most organisations involved saw themselves as acting under UDF banners, but ‘[b]y mid-1985 ‘it was becoming evident that the UDF hierarchy was unable to exert effective control over developments (...)’.³⁰¹ By mid-1985, around 600 people had been killed.³⁰² The government declared a partial state of emergency on 21 July 1985 for the Witwatersrand, the Eastern Cape and, later, the Western Cape.³⁰³ During the first state of emergency, approximately 20,000 people were arrested, and 8,000 people were placed in detention.³⁰⁴ The ANC responded to the government’s declaration ‘with a radio broadcast in which he [Tambo] called for a popular uprising: “We have to make apartheid unworkable and our country ungovernable.”’³⁰⁵ Dubow emphasises that Tambo’s call through Radio Freedom ‘is more accurately understood as an endorsement of what was already taking place on the ground than as an instruction.’³⁰⁶ In February 1985, several UDF leaders had been detained and by September 1985, Davis estimates that 56% of UDF national and regional officials had been either detained, charged, or killed.³⁰⁷

The state of emergency was lifted in March 1986, but a second national state of emergency was imposed on 12 June 1986.³⁰⁸ 1,200 activists were detained on its first day,

²⁹⁹ Seekings, *UDF*, 2.

³⁰⁰ Lodge, “Rebellion,” 30-1, 35.

³⁰¹ Lodge, “Rebellion,” 76; Seekings, *UDF*, 2.

³⁰² Seekings, *UDF*, 120

³⁰³ Lodge, “Rebellion,” 78.

³⁰⁴ Seekings, *Heroes or Villains?*, 52-3.

³⁰⁵ Dubow, *Apartheid*, 212.

³⁰⁶ Dubow, *Apartheid*, 212.

³⁰⁷ Davis, *Apartheid's Rebels*, 94.

³⁰⁸ Lodge, “Rebellion,” 87.

and by June 1987, 26,000 people had been detained.³⁰⁹ In May 1986, the Civil Cooperation Bureau (CCB) was established to assassinate activists. The second state of emergency had been largely effective in undermining and repressing mass activism – ‘[b]y early 1987 black resistance appeared to be at an end.’³¹⁰ Throughout 1986, the UDF had become increasingly restricted and was fully banned in February 1988.³¹¹ The state of emergency was renewed annually until 1990, although it was somewhat relaxed when FW de Klerk took over in 1989.³¹² In 1989, mass politics were able to reassert themselves due to the trade unions, church activism, the work of the UDF – now under the cover of the Mass Democratic Movement (MDM) – and the ‘continuing moral authority of the ANC’.³¹³

Negotiations to End Apartheid

The country was marred by escalating political violence, exacerbated through a state-funded ‘third force’: ‘Of the 5,000 or more people killed in political violence between 1984 and 1990 only around 10 per cent were members of the state security forces or the armed wings of the liberation movements.’³¹⁴ The state also faced a ‘stagnating economy and increasing challenges to its authority and legitimacy’.³¹⁵ Senior British and American officials started meeting with the ANC, as did South African business leaders, most importantly in Dakar in 1987 at a meeting organised by the Institute for Democratic Alternatives (IDASA).³¹⁶ Even the *Broederbond* and the Dutch Reformed Church – key pillars of apartheid – started seeing the system as untenable.³¹⁷ Mandela had seen the necessity for talks as early as 1985, and –

³⁰⁹ Elinor Sisulu, *Walter and Albertina Sisulu: In our lifetime*, 2nd edition (Cape Town: David Philip Publishers, 2003 [2002]), 496.

³¹⁰ Lodge, “Rebellion,” 101.

³¹¹ Seekings, *UDF*, 3.

³¹² Lodge, “Rebellion,” 87.

³¹³ Lodge, “Rebellion,” 111; Seekings, *UDF*, 3.

³¹⁴ Dubow, *Apartheid*, 258-9.

³¹⁵ Dubow, *Apartheid*, 242-3.

³¹⁶ Dubow, *Apartheid*, 244-5.

³¹⁷ Dubow, *Apartheid*, 245-6.

isolated from the Lusaka leadership – was able to ‘move out ahead of the flock’, commencing secret, informal meetings with the government.³¹⁸ By the late 1980s, international geopolitics also shifted: the Fall of the Berlin Wall in November 1989 and the subsequent collapse of the USSR dismantled Pretoria’s claim of fighting Soviet expansion.³¹⁹ Dubow writes:

In 1990, de Klerk had no intention of negotiating himself out of power. Rather, he gambled that there was now a unique opportunity to initiate a process which stood the best possible chance of preserving important aspects of white power and privilege. In this, he miscalculated (...) Processes of structural reforms could not easily be halted once they were initiated.³²⁰

On 2 February 1990, de Klerk caught the ANC by surprise when he announced the unbanning of political parties, the release of political prisoners, as well as provisions for South African exiles to return.³²¹

Despite the historic significance of his speech, the next four years were by no means a clear-cut line to majority rule, marred by continued political violence and Inkatha opposition:

In the six years leading up to 1990, around 5,000 died as a result of political violence; between 1990 and 1993 three times more people were killed. These statistics were an accurate reflection of the government’s fragmenting authority and the political vacuum that emerged in consequence.³²²

Bilateral negotiations between the government and the ANC, followed by ‘talks about talks’ which included the Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP), led to the Convention for a Democratic South Africa (CODESA) I and II, involving 20 different organisations, yet the process

³¹⁸ Nelson Mandela, *Long Walk to Freedom* (London: Abacus, 1995 [1994]), 627.

³¹⁹ Dubow, *Apartheid*, 264.

³²⁰ Dubow, *Apartheid*, 262-3, 265.

³²¹ Dubow, *Apartheid*, 265; Truth and Reconciliation Commission of South Africa, *Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, Volume 2* (Cape Town: Truth and Reconciliation Commission, 1998), 583.

³²² Dubow, *Apartheid*, 259, 268.

collapsed after the Boipatong Massacre in June 1992 and the Bisho Massacre two months later.³²³ Nonetheless, a *Record of Understanding* was signed in September 1992, and the NP

abandoned its de facto alliance with the IFP, through which it had hoped to secure enough electoral support to force a power-sharing arrangement with the ANC. Instead, the ANC and the government now co-operated closely while the IFP aligned itself with the coalition of bantustan governments and elements of the white right wing.³²⁴

This latter group – the Concerned South African Groups (COSAG) – walked out of talks in July 1993 and formed the Freedom Alliance.³²⁵ The IFP only joined the election, scheduled for late April 1994, at the last minute.³²⁶ The ANC won 62% of the national vote, falling just short of a two-thirds majority. The NP gained 20% of the vote, while Inkatha won 10% of the vote, although it secured over 50% of the vote in KwaZulu-Natal.³²⁷

While Bernstein's depiction at the start of this chapter positions the children of activists as 'small and inadequate in the face of something that is world-size,' overshadowed by the grand narrative of their parents' struggles, the chapters that follow complicate this view, demonstrating that children's lives were deeply entangled in South Africa's history and the liberation movements' enduring legacies.³²⁸

³²³ Dubow, *Apartheid*, 273.

³²⁴ Dubow, *Apartheid*, 273; Truth and Reconciliation Commission, *Report, Volume 2*, 584.

³²⁵ Truth and Reconciliation Commission, *Report, Volume 2*, 584.

³²⁶ Truth and Reconciliation Commission, *Report, Volume 2*, 584.

³²⁷ Human Rights Watch (HRW), *South Africa: Threats to a New Democracy: Continuing Violence in KwaZulu-Natal*, 1 May 1995, <https://www.refworld.org/reference/countryrep/hrw/1995/en/35589>.

³²⁸ Bernstein, *Rift*, 434.

Chapter 3: Experiencing the Repression of Activism – Children’s Interactions with the Apartheid State in South Africa from 1948-1990

And then an overwhelming memory was never feeling safe. Always, like you never knew, every time there was a knock on the door, what did it mean? So, it’s almost like we could never just relax. And I mean that went on for years. Right...right when I was quite a young child, I mean when I was four my dad was arrested on charges of High Treason, so... and then the house was always raided, so I always had that, that sense of lack of safety, yes, yes.³²⁹

Introduction

This chapter explores how children were affected by the repression of their parents’ activism and interacted with the apartheid state in South Africa. I start by emphasising the structural inequalities which provided the context through which children experienced their parents’ repression. The previous chapter traced some of the patterns of apartheid state repression – the level of repression children experienced from 1948-1990, thus, differed drastically. This chapter suggests that children became indirectly and directly targeted by the apartheid state’s repression of their parents, turning their homes into psychological and physical battlegrounds, leading to chronic feelings of insecurity and uncertainty. As their parents were increasingly detained and imprisoned, children interacted with apartheid agents, navigating apartheid spaces and their parents’ absence, including by taking on new roles and responsibilities, pushing them beyond usual conceptions of childhood. Finally, I examine community and informal support for activists’ children, noting that while white children often felt ostracised, children of colour received more community support – though such support was limited by scarcer resources and met with severe retribution.

Structural Inequalities

When Joseph Kotane was asked by Hilda Bernstein whether he knew his father, Moses Kotane, an ANC/SACP heavyweight, he responded:

³²⁹ Ruth Carneson, interviewed by author, Cape Town, 15 March 2023.

I..as..if anybody has gone through the history of the struggle in South Africa and my father's involvement, they would realise that for most of the time, my father was not at home and for the rest of time, I was at boarding school (...).³³⁰

Parental absence is a common theme across these children's narratives (see Chapter 3 and 4). While in the 1940s and early 1950s, their absences were primarily due to the intense workload of activists, by the late 1950s, parents were increasingly absent as they were detained, imprisoned, went into hiding or fled into exile.

Yet, parental absences and apartheid repression occurred within a wider, racially shaped context that requires acknowledgment. While all children suffered some levels of persecution due to their parents' activism, for children of colour, this persecution occurred at an intensified level and with more severe consequences for their livelihoods.³³¹ The majority of African children lived with one or no parents throughout their childhood, regardless of their parents' (lack of) political involvement.³³² Though common to African children, whether they came from political or non-political families, these absences did not preclude the possibility of trauma, as Zolani Ngwane suggests.³³³

Many activists had also rejected better paid and more stable positions to become politically active. Their activism impacted their ability to pursue paid employment, even before any repressive action was taken. When rejecting a visit by Lilian Ngoyi, President of

³³⁰ Joseph (Cotton) Kotane, interview by Hilda Bernstein, n.d., Hilda Bernstein Collection, MCA 7 – 1539, Mayibuye Archives, UWC.

³³¹ The BCM advocated for the term 'black' as an affirmative, unifying identity for all oppressed South African peoples (including Indians and Coloureds), while it perceived the apartheid-era term 'Non-White' or 'Non-European' as negative, passive, and imposed labels that reinforced apartheid's racial hierarchy by juxtaposing 'blacks' to 'whites'. I used the more current term 'people of colour' (or children of colour) as the BCM's 'black' would have been confusing for non-South Africanists.

³³² Katherine Hall and Dorrit Posel, "Fragmenting the Family? The Complexity of Household Migration Strategies in Post-apartheid South Africa," *IZA Journal of Development and Migration* 10, no.4 (2019): 7.

³³³ Zolani Ngwane, "Mandela and Tradition," in *The Cambridge Companion to Nelson Mandela*, ed. Rita Barnard (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 123, cited in Lena Englund, *South African Autobiography as Subjective History – Making Concessions to the Past* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2021), 187.

FEDSAW, to Cape Town in the mid-1950s, the Transvaal secretary replied: ‘I wish to point out to you the difficulty confronting the President. She is a person with a big family to support and has nobody helping her. We feel that a three week visit means to her three weeks of having no money to support her family.’³³⁴ As Iris Berger highlights, even before the Treason Trial, Lilian Ngoyi was struggling with the financial strains of activism.³³⁵ Spouses played a hugely supportive role; many (usually) wives refrained from politics to allow their husbands to continue their activism while they provided financially and emotionally.³³⁶ The PAC actively inhibited women from becoming active so they could support their families.³³⁷ By the late 1950s and 1960s, repeated trials, bannings, and house arrest made most sources of income impossible, even for whites.³³⁸ Employers were harassed by the SB, and activists lost their jobs. Consequently, children left school early to provide for their families.³³⁹

Thus, while all children experienced apartheid state repression (as detailed below), the colonial/apartheid system created a context which caused children of colour to be more acutely impacted, not just by the violence directed at them, but also the financial strain that activism and its consequences placed on families. This privilege of their white counterparts is acutely pointed out in children’s recollections. During a visit to a township in Christmas 1948, Lynn was startled by the desolation of the townships, yet ‘[w]hen we get home, I forget all about the township. Granny has packed the Christmas lunch for the beach.’³⁴⁰

³³⁴ Walker, *Women and Resistance*, 237.

³³⁵ Iris Berger, “Ngoyi, Lilian,” *Oxford Research Encyclopaedia of African History*, 28 February 2020.

³³⁶ Hazel Goldreich, interviewed by Glenn Frankel, August 12, 1997, Glenn Frankel Papers, University of Delaware, Newark, DE, used with interviewer’s permission; Jonny Steinberg, *Winnie & Nelson: Portrait of a Marriage* (Glasgow: William Collins, 2023), 73.

³³⁷ Truth and Reconciliation Commission of South Africa, “Sheila Masote,” *Truth and Reconciliation Commission of South Africa – Special Hearings: Women*, 28 July 1997, <https://www.justice.gov.za/trc/special/women/masote.htm>; Ngcobo, *Prodigal Daughters*, 121-3.

³³⁸ Hain, *Ad & Wal*, 141.

³³⁹ Hiralal, “Married to the Struggle,” 102.

³⁴⁰ Lynn Carneson-McGregor, *Homage to Hope: South African Memories of a Daughter of Anti-apartheid Activists* (London: Aspen, 1996), 31-2.

While she was deeply aware of the system's injustices, Lynn also had the luxury of returning to her middle-class life.

Deteriorating State Repression

Chapter 2 suggests an evolution of state repression of activism over time – when children experienced their childhood, thus played a key role in determining what kind of repression they were exposed to, and at what age they were exposed to this violence.

Despite the setback of the 1948 election and the repressive laws that came into force in the infant years of apartheid, 'the national liberation movement still appeared in a relatively strong position *vis-à-vis* the government.'³⁴¹ Communists and their families were targeted when the *Suppression of Communism Act* came into effect in July 1950. Their children – 'red diaper babies' – were ostracised.³⁴² Lynn recounted her attempts to play with her neighbour's son:

"Can I play with Julian please?" Mrs. Cash looks at me as if I have been very, very naughty, but I don't know what I've done. "No. You can't play here anymore. Filthy Communists. I don't want anything to do with the lot of you!" She turns around and bangs the door. I feel the door shaking, but then I realize it is me shaking. I turn round and walk slowly up the path to my house. My stomach feels very tight, like a closed fist. Tears are streaming down my face. I don't understand, I don't understand at all.³⁴³

The following day, she was beaten by her teacher:

"That is for having communist parents." Then she hit me on the other hand. "That's for having parents who are kaffir lovers. You will stay after school and write one hundred lines: "I must not love kaffirs." That will teach you." (...) During break time I walked around on my own because suddenly no one would play with me any more.³⁴⁴

³⁴¹ Walker, *Women and Resistance*, 165.

³⁴² Judy Kaplan, Linn Shapiro, *Red Diapers – Growing Up in the Communist Left* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1998).

³⁴³ Carneson-McGregor, *Homage to Hope*, 25. Throughout this thesis, I use first names for all individuals I interviewed myself, while using full names for other children. In a few exceptions, I have used full names for individuals I interviewed, when they are listed next to others whose full names are used.

³⁴⁴ Lynn Carneson-McGregor, *Red in the Rainbow: The Life and Times of Fred and Sarah Carneson* (Cape Town: Zebra Press, 2010), 115.

Nonetheless, activists and children alike commented on the general civility of the SB before the 1960s.³⁴⁵ Sheila Weinberg stated:

My parents always said that in the early days, the early days of the National Party government in other words, the interaction with the security police was very different because they were still under the influence of the United Party government, they were still gentlemen. They behaved well, they greeted, they were menschlich, and then there was a kind of change which obviously got worse and worse as the years progressed. (...) As things progressed it became a much more jackboot exercise, a kind of throwing things around.³⁴⁶

Walter Sisulu similarly commented that ‘(...) the Special Branch had a different tactic from what happened later. They could talk to you. So you could treat them as human beings.’³⁴⁷

The late 1950s marked a distinctive shift in the brutality of the SB, starting with the Treason Trial arrests in December 1956, followed four years later by the Sharpeville Massacre and the ensuing state of emergency.³⁴⁸

The period between 1964 and 1973 (arguably 1976) is generally seen as a period of ‘quiescence’ within South Africa, before activism erupted once more during the Soweto Uprising.³⁴⁹ In this heavily restrictive period, Kuben Naidoo’s parents were among the few remaining activists:

So, you had very few activists, very few in number and you know the police could be sophisticated enough to, you know, so my family used to get raided once or twice a year, right? I mean, there would be police cars parked outside our house for months on end. They could afford to do it because there’s only a few dozen activists.³⁵⁰

The 1980s were marked by violence and civil unrest – there were increasing concerns about the exposure to and effects of political violence on children of colour in the 1980s (regardless of their parents’ political activity). Meanwhile ‘[f]ar fewer white children have been victims

³⁴⁵ Walter Sisulu with George M. Houser and Herbert Shore, *I Will Go Singing: Walter Sisulu Speaks of His Life and the Struggle for Freedom in South Africa* (Cape Town: Robben Island Museum, 2001), 104-5.

³⁴⁶ Sheila Weinberg, interview by Padraig O’Malley, 16 September 2003, O’Malley – The Heart of Hope, Nelson Mandela Foundation.

³⁴⁷ Sisulu, *I Will Go Singing*, 104-5.

³⁴⁸ Fullard, “State repression,” 344-5.

³⁴⁹ Lissoni, “Transformations,” 287.

³⁵⁰ Kuben Naidoo, interviewed by author, online, 25 July and 2 August 2023.

of actual political violence; and most have experienced it in less direct ways.³⁵¹ Crucially, these changing levels of repression impacted the extent to which children could learn about their parents' activism, as Chapter 5 shows.

Children's Homes as Sites of Repression

In her seminal paper on 'struggle masculinities', Unterhalter argues that (male) activists evoked a strict separation between the home and the political in 'struggle-writing'.³⁵² Yet, Bridger emphasises that 'the homes of African families were rarely private spaces during apartheid; instead, they were subject to constant surveillance and the threat of intrusion in the forms of pass raids, forced removals, and midnight visits from security police.'³⁵³ Her research on young female activists in the 1980s disrupts the public-private dichotomy – the struggle vs the home.³⁵⁴ Debby Bonnin makes a similar point in her analysis of politically active women in the 1980s in Mpumalanga:

The concepts of the public and private seem to suggest a rigid set of socio-spatial practices, as if particular places have fixed social relationships and boundaries. But many of the sites commonly viewed as occupying one or other side of this dichotomy are in fact contested, fluid and uncertain.³⁵⁵

For activists' children, the home became a politicised and invaded space – a psychological and physical battleground where children were indirect and direct targets of state intimidation and repression. The experiences of children of activists thus underline feminist critiques of the public/private dichotomy.

³⁵¹ Andrew Dawes, "The Emotional Impact of Violence," in *Childhood & Adversity – Psychological Perspectives from South African research*, eds. Andrew Dawes and David Donald (Cape Town: David Philip Publishers, 1994), 177.

³⁵² Unterhalter, "The Work of the Nation," 167.

³⁵³ Emily Bridger, *Young Women against Apartheid – Gender, Youth and South Africa's Liberation Struggle* (Oxford: James Currey, 2021), 72.

³⁵⁴ Bridger, *Young Women against Apartheid*, 71.

³⁵⁵ Debby Bonnin, "Claiming Spaces, Changing Places: Political Violence and Women's Protests in KwaZulu-Natal," *Journal of Southern African Studies* 26, no. 2 (2000): 304.

Children of activists remember their homes to be under constant surveillance; some, particularly older children, recount being followed themselves.³⁵⁶ Children were conscious of the phones being tapped and knew to adjust their conversations.³⁵⁷ Linda commented:

Very conscious of it [the apartheid state], very conscious of apartheid, very conscious of being watched. We never spoke inside, if we wanted to say anything of any importance, that was anti anything, we would talk outside in the garden, we think that no one knew what we were saying.³⁵⁸

Children also experienced the SB's 'dirty tricks': homes were petrol bombed or shot at, so children often slept elsewhere.³⁵⁹ Random raids were a crucial part of this 'psychological warfare', rarely with the intent of finding incriminating evidence.³⁶⁰ The SB humiliated children by invading their privacy, reading their private letters, or going through their underwear drawers.³⁶¹ Zoya recalled:

There'd be a knock if you were lucky, but they'd just generally kick the door open and they'd have these massive torches, handheld torches, and they'd just flash everything and they'd just wreck the place, the books, everything would go flying, they'd be abusive (...) It was like a midnight knock, you know, out of nowhere, and you'd just know it was them. (...) It was a violent thing, but I actually didn't recognise the emotionally psychologically assault that it was because it was just the norm.³⁶²

Zoya's recollections highlight the distress that she felt as her home – supposedly a space of safety – was invaded, yet also suggests that children coped with the frequency of these raids by normalising their occurrences. This harassment of families often continued even after activists had been detained and/or imprisoned.³⁶³ While Unterhalter's research suggests that activists attempted to neatly separate their political work from their homes and families, the

³⁵⁶ Hain, *Pretoria Boy*, 2-3; La Guma, *In the Dark*, 119; Carneson-McGregor, *Homage to Hope*, 114, 116; Linda Shapiro, interviewed by author, Johannesburg, 17 January 2023; Sonya Lubner, interviewed by author, online, 16 June 2023.

³⁵⁷ Frances Bernstein, interviewed by Glenn Frankel, 14 March 1998, used with interviewer's permission.

³⁵⁸ Shapiro, interview.

³⁵⁹ Fullard, "State repression," 350; La Guma, *In the Dark*, 76-7; Hain, *Ad & Wal*, 125; Norma Kitson, *Where Sixpence Lives* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1986), 174-5; John Carneson, *The John and Ntombi Story – A Memoir of Their Love and Times* (Pretoria: The Grasp'd Image, 2022), 50.

³⁶⁰ Anné Mariè du Preez Bezdrob, *Winnie Mandela – a life* (Cape Town: Zebra Press, 2003), 74.

³⁶¹ Lubner, interview; Bernstein, *The World That Was Ours*, 60-1.

³⁶² Zoya Joseph, interview.

³⁶³ Calata and Calata, *My Father*, 182-3.

experiences of their children suggest that for children, the home had long become an arena of the struggle.

Children were also targeted directly to procure information and intimidate their parents. Trade union organiser Ray Alexander Simons wrote:

At 7 am on Tuesday 7 September 1954 the Special Branch raided the house. Jack took Mary and Tanya to school and Johan to our neighbours, the Carlins, so that the police couldn't question my son - they were in the habit of questioning children, who were in danger of telling things they shouldn't as they often picked up information in the house.³⁶⁴

Later, 4-year-old Johan returned early and was questioned.³⁶⁵ This practice became more frequent and violent throughout the 1960s, as the SB escalated its methods, so Max Sisulu was arrested in June 1963, aged 17, to question him regarding the whereabouts of his father, who had gone underground in April.³⁶⁶ During the 1960 emergency, Lynn, aged 16, was asked daily about her father:

They threatened to hurt Johnny and Ruthie [her siblings] if I did not give them information. They shone hot bright lights into my eyes, saying "You know, we can keep you locked up for as long as we want if we find that you are telling lies." Fifty years later, I still have trauma spots in my eyes from that time. I was quite proud that I said nothing.³⁶⁷

As Lynn and Max were both older, they were followed with more intensity.³⁶⁸ Yet, even at age six and three, Eugene and Barto La Guma were hounded by the SB at school, demanding answers about their father's whereabouts or whom their parents had been meeting.³⁶⁹ The SB came to their house and interrogated both children in the absence of their parents: while Barto managed to escape, they assaulted Eugene.³⁷⁰

³⁶⁴ Ray Alexander Simons, *All My Life and All My Strength: An Autobiography* (Johannesburg, STE Publishers, 2004), 276.

³⁶⁵ Alexander Simons, *All My Life*, 277.

³⁶⁶ Max Sisulu, interview by Julie Frederikse, 1987, AL2460 Tracing the Unbreakable Thread – Non-Racialism in South Africa, A19.15.1, SAHA.

³⁶⁷ Carneson-McGregor, *Red in the Rainbow*, 154.

³⁶⁸ Carneson-McGregor, *Red in the Rainbow*, 154.

³⁶⁹ La Guma, *In the Dark*, 114.

³⁷⁰ Barto La Guma, interview by Julie Frederikse, n.d., AL2460 Tracing the Unbreakable Thread – Non-Racialism in South Africa, A12.01, SAHA.

The SB also targeted older children, often young women, through romantic interactions.³⁷¹ Gerard Ludi was able to penetrate the white liberation circles in the early 1960s and deliver damning evidence at the Fischer trial, also because of his romantic involvement with Toni, the daughter of Rusty and Hilda Bernstein.³⁷² Toni recalled: ‘Through me, they could get to my parents.’³⁷³ As a teenage girl, Ruth was betrayed by a close friend, an older student, ‘Beth’.³⁷⁴ Ruth believed that the SB might have pressured her after receiving an illegal abortion. For Ruth, Beth’s betrayal was a ‘tipping point’:

I must not allow myself to get close to anyone because I do not know who I can trust, it is dangerous to talk to anyone. They might be an informer or could crack under torture. Any information could be dangerous. I am followed and watched wherever I go.³⁷⁵

Even in exile, children – like their parents – feared infiltration by informers: Zoya expressed severe distrust towards outsiders, terrified of accidentally becoming involved with a BOSS agent.³⁷⁶

Parental Detentions, Trials, and Imprisonment

As repression increased in frequency, children interacted increasingly with apartheid spaces, so Denis Hirson wrote: ‘My mother and I were also balancing on a piece of string, one end tied to our house and the other to a prison called the Old Fort in the middle of Johannesburg, where my father was being detained.’³⁷⁷ Bernstein suggests that at the height of political

³⁷¹ Toni Strasburg, interviewed by author, Cape Town, 27 March 2023; Lynn Carneson-McGregor, interviewed by author, Cape Town, 6 March 2023; Paul Joseph, *Slumboy from the Golden City* (London: Merlin Press, 2018), 153.

³⁷² Toni Strasburg, interviewed by Glenn Frankel, 2 August 1997, Glenn Frankel Papers, University of Delaware, Newark, DE, used with interviewer’s permission.

³⁷³ Strasburg, interview.

³⁷⁴ Ruth Carneson, interview.

³⁷⁵ Ruth Carneson, interview; Ruth Carneson, *Girl On the Edge: A Memoir*, Ebook (Cape Town: face2face, 2015), Ch. 17.

³⁷⁶ Zoya Joseph, interview.

³⁷⁷ Denis Hirson, *My Thirty-Minute Bar Mitzvah – A memoir* (Johannesburg: Jacana Media, 2022), 91.

arrests in the 1960s, there were 40,000-50,000 dependents of political prisoners (likely including political detainees); Canon Collins, head of IDAF, suggested that between 15,000-20,000 wives and children had breadwinners in jail in June 1965.³⁷⁸ In 1964, a Port Elizabeth newspaper wrote:

The most touching aspect of the arrest of three hundred-odd Africans on political charges in the Port Elizabeth area is the great distress and hardship suffered by the mothers and close on 1,000 children. As most of these political widows and orphans trudge up and down the city and townships, seeking shelter, food, clothes, medical care and comfort, they wonder at the lack of sympathy and response.³⁷⁹

Remembered vividly, their parents' arrest usually marked the beginning of a period of perceived abandonment and uncertainty for children. Shamim Meer remembered her father's arrest, aged seven, as 'probably my earliest memory'.³⁸⁰ Sonya's recollections highlight this pivotal moment:

So, it was the middle of the night and the door was smashed in and the police stormed in, and they were these big, brutish men and when they came to my room, they went through all my possessions and they took out my lingerie draw... my underwear drawer, and there were holding my panties and bras up and laughing and they were just...so revolting and intrusive, and there were like what you imagine Nazis to have been like. They were in charge, and they were brutes and my mother said to me, do not let them see you cry. And I didn't. I think, that was the moment – because I've had good therapy – so that was the moment I decided to just shut all those things down and not to cry and not to show my feelings and just to compartmentalise my life.³⁸¹

Thomson argues 'that an experience is much more likely to be remembered if it is perceived to be significant (worth remembering) and is therefore articulated into a memorializing form, most typically a story.'³⁸² Children likely have such vivid memories of raids and arrests, because they represented a symbolic starting point, as it did for Sonya.

³⁷⁸ Bernstein, Hilda, *For their triumphs and for their tears – Conditions and Resistance of Women in Apartheid South Africa* (London: International Defence Aid Fund, 1975), 52; Denis Herbstein, *White Lies – Canon Collins and the secret war against apartheid* (Oxford: James Currey, 2004), 122-3.

³⁷⁹ Bernstein, *For their triumphs*, 52.

³⁸⁰ Shamim T. Meer, interview by Julie Frederikse, August 1985, AL2460 Tracing the Unbreakable Thread – Non-Racialism in South Africa, A13.24, SAHA.

³⁸¹ Lubner, interview.

³⁸² Thomson, "Memory," 84.

The extent to which children understood their parents' detention and imprisonment mediated the impact their absence had on them. Younger children, who experienced their formative years during this period of repression, generally had a weaker understanding of the reasons for their parents' detention. In comparison, older children, who had experienced the political communities of the previous years had an improved understanding of their parents' activism (see Chapter 5).³⁸³ Parents entrusted certain information only to the eldest child, often with their potential future caring role in mind.³⁸⁴ Lynn reflected: 'Luckily for me, I was the oldest child. And I think as soon as I was able to understand anything, I was told about what was going on (...)'.³⁸⁵ Older children were, however, also more conscious of the possibility of torture and long-term consequences.³⁸⁶

Lacking information, younger children experienced their parents' detentions as abandonment. When her parents were detained, Shamim Meer believed that her 'parents were packing up to leave us children and disappear'.³⁸⁷ John Carneson wrote: 'Then in 1960, when I was nine, both of my parents abandoned me for a year – or at least it seemed that way to me.'³⁸⁸ The SB perpetuated this perception – when Blanche La Guma returned from her detention in 1963, her reception was frosty: 'But when I went to the boys to give them a big hug, to my great surprise they shied away from me. It was such a shock. In the days that followed, the boys completely ostracised me.'³⁸⁹ Weeks later, she discovered that the SB had visited Eugene, aged seven, at school, to inform him of their mother's 'abandonment'.³⁹⁰

³⁸³ 'Older children' generally refers to children who had their formative experiences prior to the mid-1950s.

³⁸⁴ Hain, *Ad & Wal*, 126, 135.

³⁸⁵ Carneson-McGregor, interview.

³⁸⁶ Skinner, Swartz, "Consequences for Preschool Children," 246; Carneson-McGregor, interview.

³⁸⁷ Meer, interview.

³⁸⁸ Carneson, *John and Ntombi*, 46.

³⁸⁹ La Guma, *In the Dark*, 108.

³⁹⁰ La Guma, *In the Dark*, 108.

Detention was used as a tool to intimidate and interrogate activists (and their relatives): the aim was to break down activists' morale and instil 'an atmosphere of hopelessness among them'.³⁹¹ During interrogations, the SB utilised information about activists' children and the threat of harming them to break activists.³⁹² While detained, Blanche La Guma was told that Eugene had a life-threatening chest infection – an effective lie considering his existing health issues.³⁹³ Authorities also threatened to send children to state-owned orphanages to psychologically destabilise detained activists.³⁹⁴

Activists were generally not allowed to receive visitors, although relatives could bring some supplies, particularly food, and pick up detainees' dirty laundry, forming a tense line of communication. Special permission had to be granted for limited visits, including by children. Rusty Bernstein, who, alongside his wife, Hilda, was detained during the 1960 emergency, recalled how so-called 'double detainees' were allowed visits by their children, following negotiations.³⁹⁵ Requests had previously been denied, as the government claimed it would damage children.³⁹⁶ Following a hunger strike by white female detainees in May 1960, children under the age of twelve were given a contact visit, while those over twelve received a behind-bars visit.³⁹⁷ These special permissions were however primarily granted to white children.³⁹⁸

³⁹¹ Andrew Thompson, "'Restoring hope where all hope was lost': Nelson Mandela, the ICRC and the protection of political detainees in apartheid South Africa," *International Review of the Red Cross* 98, no. 3 (2016): 814.

³⁹² Kitson, *Sixpence*, 157-9; Denis Goldberg, *The Mission: A Life for Freedom in South Africa* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2016), 95; La Guma, *In the Dark*, 101; Diane E.H. Russell, *Lives of Courage – Women for a new South Africa* (London: Virago Press, 1989), 75-6.

³⁹³ La Guma, *In the Dark*, 101, 102.

³⁹⁴ Goldberg, *The Mission*, 95; La Guma, *In the Dark*, 101.

³⁹⁵ Lionel Bernstein, *Memory Against Forgetting*, online edition (Johannesburg: Wits University Press, 2006 [1999]), 168, 172.

³⁹⁶ Bernstein, *Memory Against Forgetting*, 172.

³⁹⁷ Toni Strasburg, *Holding the Fort: A Family Torn Apart* (Cape Town: Kwela Books, 2019), 125.

³⁹⁸ Cedric Mayson, interview by Hilda Bernstein, n.d., Hilda Bernstein Collection, MCA 7 – 1592, Mayibuye Archives, UWC; Hirson, *Thirty-Minute Bar Mitzvah*, 93-6.

The SB also arrested (inactive) spouses and children to put pressure on activists.³⁹⁹ Caroline Motsoaledi, whose husband, Elias, was one of the Rivonia Trialists, was arrested during the tea break of the trial and held for 156 days, leaving behind seven children, including a six-month-old baby.⁴⁰⁰ During the Rivonia Trial which saw his father sentenced to life imprisonment, Lungi Sisulu was arrested for not carrying a pass, although he was too young to require one.⁴⁰¹ Mandela emphasised the psychological intention:

This was one of the state's most barbarous techniques of applying pressure: imprisoning the wives and children of freedom fighters. Many men in prison were able to handle anything the authorities did to them, but the thought of the state doing the same thing to their families was almost impossible to bear.⁴⁰²

In the 1980s, it became increasingly common for the state to arrest siblings, parents, and children of activists in lieu of their primary target.⁴⁰³

Swartz and Skinner note that following their parents' release from detention children's difficulties usually declined over time, depending on the conditions following release.⁴⁰⁴ Boothby argues that continued or 'chronic' political conflict was more likely to create a situation in which children struggle to cope.⁴⁰⁵ Yet, in South Africa, the continued insecurity around detention was a constant and purposefully designed feature of repression: children could not know for certain how long their parents would be detained or if they would not be immediately re-detained.⁴⁰⁶ Blanche La Guma noted the emergence of behavioural issues in her son upon her release:

After my return home Barto started behaving like a baby. Previously he used to play with the neighbours' children, go to nursery school, and even sleep over at a friend's house. But now he was insecure and leaned even more heavily on Eugene, who was

³⁹⁹ Sisulu, *Walter and Albertina Sisulu*, 243.

⁴⁰⁰ Sisulu, *Walter and Albertina Sisulu*, 243-44.

⁴⁰¹ Sisulu, *I Will Go Singing*, 129-30.

⁴⁰² Mandela, *Long Walk to Freedom*, 420.

⁴⁰³ Terry Shakinovsky and Sharon Cort, *The Knock on the Door – the Story of The Detainees' Parents Support Committee*, Ebook (Johannesburg, Picador Africa, 2018), Chapter 1.

⁴⁰⁴ Skinner and Swartz, "Consequences for Preschool Children," 255.

⁴⁰⁵ Neil Boothby, "Displaced Children: Psychological Theory and Practice from the Field," *Journal of Refugee Studies* 5, no. 2 (1992):106-122, cited in Israel, *South African Political Exile*, 41.

⁴⁰⁶ Skinner and Swartz, "Consequences for Preschool Children," 256.

quite patient and tender towards him. Even when I told Barto that I hadn't run away, he seemed to be afraid that I would. He wanted to be by my side all the time, following me around and even grabbing hold of me when I moved. (...) I had been worried that my detention would have a bad effect on the boys, but I had no idea it would hurt either of them in this way or to this extent.⁴⁰⁷

This insecure environment was further amplified by exile, continued harassment of families even in the absence of political family members (e.g., during imprisonment) and by the escalating levels of everyday violence in the 1980s.

Uncertainty also dominated the lead-up to the arrest, as children picked up on their parents' tensions. Swartz and Skinner suggest that 'the fear of a detention creates almost as much stress as the detention itself'.⁴⁰⁸ Linda developed a game to cope with this uncertainty:

And when my mother wouldn't be home, she was late or something, I would sit and I would remember, and there is no loss of memory on this, I would sit at the window on the floor, because it was a low area, and I would watch and I would count the cars and I would think 'If I get to a hundred cars, she is dead' (...) We always lived in fear. We'd know what we feared and quite honestly, when she went to jail, the fear would lift, because now there was nothing more to fear, she was in jail, she was wherever she was, that fear vanished.⁴⁰⁹

As Linda's recollections highlight, detention could feel almost reassuring for children: their worst fear had happened, but they were now certain of their parents' whereabouts.

Younger children rarely seemed to have attended their parents' trials – these often spanned weeks, if not years. Most children thus experienced their parents' trial as a continued absence. Albertina Sisulu remembered how during the Rivonia Trial, their youngest daughter, Nkuli,

was pining for her father. "Although Walter's political work often took him away from home, when he was at home he attended to the children. Nkuli really missed all that attention and she would often complain 'Ever since Daddy left home, no one has given me a bath!' That was not true of course, but it was her way of expressing how she missed her father."⁴¹⁰

⁴⁰⁷ La Guma, *In the Dark*, 108.

⁴⁰⁸ Skinner and Swartz, "Consequences for Preschool Children," 255.

⁴⁰⁹ Shapiro, interview.

⁴¹⁰ Sisulu, *Walter and Albertina Sisulu*, 242.

Trials were frequently moved to distant locations to avoid public attention. Some families relocated for the duration of trials, but this was financially impossible for others.⁴¹¹

Parents – and older siblings – also regulated the amount of information about trials that younger children were subjected to, particularly regarding the death sentence. About the Rivonia Trial, Albertina Sisulu recalled: ‘As a mother I did not want to scare them, but at the same time I did not want to give them false hope. After all, the lawyers had warned us to prepare for the worst.’⁴¹² Meanwhile, Walter Sisulu had informed his eldest son, Max, already in exile, of this possibility: ‘I am suggesting that you may expect anything.’⁴¹³ While Fred Carneson asked his wife to keep the news of his 1956 arrest and treason charge from his younger children (aged five and three), he was sure that Lynn, aged twelve, would ‘devour’ any news and support her mother.⁴¹⁴ Lynn’s recollection emphasise how troubling this knowledge was to her:

Sometimes I am so frightened that I [am] completely stiff and cold and it is impossible for me to move. My stomach feels like it is churning with acid. My throat is tight and scratchy. (...) Please, don’t let them kill him. All night I wonder if they kill him, how will they kill him. Will they hang him, or shoot him? I think it’s less pain with the electric chair like they have in America. All I see when I shut my eyes is Dad strapped to a chair and then jerking until he is dead.⁴¹⁵

Upon conviction, prisoners were transferred to racially and gender segregated prisons across the country.⁴¹⁶ Their families were theoretically eligible to receive state assistance:

(...) its means-tested maintenance grants for dependants were hardly generous. A maximum of £11 a month was on offer for white adults; £3 for Asians and coloureds; and £1 for urban Africans. For rural Africans, who suffered dearly when a

⁴¹¹ La Guma, *In the Dark*, 58.

⁴¹² Sisulu, *Walter and Albertina Sisulu*, 242.

⁴¹³ Sisulu, *Walter and Albertina Sisulu*, 244.

⁴¹⁴ Carneson-McGregor, *Red in the Rainbow*, 141-2.

⁴¹⁵ Carneson-McGregor, *Homage to Hope*, 95.

⁴¹⁶ Buntman, *Robben Island*, 3.

breadwinner was incarcerated, there was nothing. For those who could not produce a passbook, there was once again nothing.⁴¹⁷

Many dependents were not aware of this possibility or were too frightened to approach authorities.⁴¹⁸ In 1969, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) lamented that this financial assistance was not applied consistently to political prisoners; the DC also claimed that they had seen no evidence of this support actually being distributed.⁴¹⁹

Political prisoners were initially classed as D prisoners, enabling them to receive one visit and one letter every six months.⁴²⁰ Over time, political prisoners could move up the ranking system and receive letters and visits, first every three months and then monthly. Access to letters and visits was a privilege the state wielded as tools of power. For prisoners, these were crucial to their well-being and survival.⁴²¹ Letters were censored when containing information about other prisoners and political events and when exceeding the 500-word limit or arbitrarily withheld completely.⁴²² Prisoners could not receive letters from children active in the liberation movement in exile, although this policy was relaxed by the mid-1980s.⁴²³

Children over the age of two and under 16 were not allowed to visit prisons, despite prisoners' efforts to have this rule eased.⁴²⁴ In 1982, Robben Island allowed visits by

⁴¹⁷ Herbstein, *White Lies*, 45.

⁴¹⁸ Bernstein, *For their triumphs*, 52.

⁴¹⁹ Jacques Moreillon, *Moments with Madiba*, online edition (Johannesburg: Nelson Mandela Foundation, 2005), 41; Black Sash Cape Western Region, *Fact Paper on the Work of the Dependants' Conference*, 18 October 1972, Black Sash Archives, UCT Libraries, <https://www2.lib.uct.ac.za/blacksash/pdfs/cnf19721018.026.001.000.pdf>.

⁴²⁰ Mandela, *Long Walk to Freedom*, 472.

⁴²¹ Mandela, *Long Walk to Freedom*, 474; Paul Gready, *Writing as Resistance: Life Stories of Imprisonment, Exile, and Homecoming from Apartheid South Africa* (Washington D.C.: Lexington Books, 2003), 35.

⁴²² Dubow, *Apartheid*, 143; Mandela, *Long Walk to Freedom*, 475.

⁴²³ Sisulu, *Walter and Albertina Sisulu*, 305; Mark Gevisser, *A Legacy of Liberation – Thabo Mbeki and the Future of the South African Dream* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 148.

⁴²⁴ Moreillon, *Moments with Madiba*, 40; Mandela, *Long Walk to Freedom*, 559-60.

children under five.⁴²⁵ Children also circumvented the age regulations by altering birth documents.⁴²⁶ In May 1970, after turning 16, Lindiwe Sisulu visited her father on Robben Island for the first time in six years – the trip left her ‘bewildered’.⁴²⁷ Visitors spoke through a glass barrier across the noise of other visitors, Indres Naidoo (imprisoned from 1963-1973) described prisoners’ difficulties in communicating with their visitors:

We had to yell and scream to be heard on the other side, and the din was so great that as we begged our neighbours to lower their voices they begged us to do the same, but in no time we were all shouting at the tops of our voices again, repeating ourselves over and over, desperately trying to communicate.⁴²⁸

Mandela, Sisulu, Mhlaba, Mlangeni and Kathrada, who were transferred to Pollsmoor Prison on the mainland in 1982, were allowed contact visits in 1984.⁴²⁹ As Sobukwe’s imprisonment represented a legal exception, so did the rules for his family. On Robben Island, he was held separately in improved physical conditions but complete isolation. The family was allowed contact visits in a small interview room, and in 1967, Veronica and the children spent 14 days with him.⁴³⁰

Work, childcare, and financial constraints restricted relatives’ visits to political prisoners, especially as activists were often isolated in prisons far removed from their homes. For politically restricted spouses, these challenges were amplified, as special permission had to be requested, often only approved at 24 hours’ notice.⁴³¹ Restrictions on overnight stays applied, and visitors were surveilled and harassed by the SB. Due to these difficulties,

⁴²⁵ Thompson, “Restoring Hope,” 823.

⁴²⁶ du Preez Bezdob, *Winnie Mandela*, 169.

⁴²⁷ Sisulu, *Walter and Albertina Sisulu*, 329.

⁴²⁸ Indres Naidoo, *Island in Chains: Ten Years on Robben Island* (Cape Town: Penguin Random House, 1982), 114.

⁴²⁹ James Gregory with Bob Graham, *Goodbye Bafana – Nelson Mandela My Prisoner, My Friend* (London: Headline Book Publishing, 1995), 221-2; Mandela, *Long Walk to Freedom*, 615-6; Sisulu, *Walter and Albertina Sisulu*, 441.

⁴³⁰ Benjamin Pogrand, *How Can Man Die Better – The Life of Robert Sobukwe* (Johannesburg: Jonathan Ball Publishers, 1990), 279.

⁴³¹ du Preez Bezdob, *Winnie Mandela*, 125.

prisoners often received less visits than they were entitled to: the ICRC confirmed that ‘in 1973 there had been 438 visits for an average of 370 political detainees; in 1974 there had been 364 for some 340; and between 1 January and 20 April 1975, there had been 92 visits for 291 prisoners at the time of [their] visit’.⁴³² Frances Baard’s recollections on her time in prison emphasise the devastating impact her prolonged absence had on her children. In 1963, she spent a year in solitary confinement in 1963 before being sentenced to five years in prison:

I looked at the children standing at the gate and my heart was just as if it would fall down. It was too pathetic to leave children at that time of the night alone in the house. And so I left in the police car, and that was the last those children saw of me until after so many years. It was 10 years or so, a very long time, until I saw them again.⁴³³

In prison, she had no contact with her family and, post-release, she was banished to Pretoria, unable to visit her family in Port Elizabeth.⁴³⁴ Only after her banning order expired, was she able to locate her children, finding that police had chased them away from their house, taking all their belongings.

During a 1970 visit, the ICRC delegate Philip Zuger noted prisoners’ personal problems, including:

breaking up of family; eviction of family from home; loss of property due to eviction; deportation of family before the prisoner was released; lack of means for up-keep of family and for payment of school fees; lack of means for payment of insurance premiums and ensuing loss of entire insurance; [and] lack of professional opportunities at place of deportation.⁴³⁵

Prison correspondence and recollections reflect the challenges in upholding family relationships: in the late 1960s, Walter Sisulu regularly complained to Albertina that his

⁴³² Moreillon, *Moments with Madiba*, 107-8.

⁴³³ Frances Baard with Barbie Schreiner, *My Spirit is Not Banned – Frances Baard as told to Barbie Schreiner* (Harare: Zimbabwe Publishing House, 1986), 72-77.

⁴³⁴ Baard, *My Spirit*, 84-5.

⁴³⁵ Moreillon, *Moments with Madiba*, 47.

children were not writing him often enough.⁴³⁶ As the intense restrictions led to an ‘alienation of family feelings’, prisoners attempted to maintain a parental role, including by weighing in on career and education choices.⁴³⁷ At home, families tried to keep the memory of the imprisoned alive, through photographs and discussions.⁴³⁸ Prisoners’ continued participation in their family’s daily lives was not just an emotional but also a practical necessity: African women were legally regarded as minors and could not make any decisions without their husband’s consent.⁴³⁹ Upon their spouses’ imprisonment, African women often faced eviction as their right to stay in a city was usually based on their husband’s employment. Letters between Winnie and Nelson Mandela, particularly between 1969-1970, when both were imprisoned, highlight their difficulties in arranging a guardian for their daughters and handling tensions with Nelson’s first family.⁴⁴⁰ To activists, it was clear that the state’s intention was ‘to break down completely family relationships’.⁴⁴¹

Children who resided abroad were at the mercy of the regime when visiting imprisoned parents. Based in the UK, Steven Kitson visited his father every December since the age of 16, when he was legally able to do so.⁴⁴² While he had wanted to join the AAM in the UK, the ANC had advised against it: ‘Your duty is to be free to visit your dad. That’s your political task.’⁴⁴³ Despite his abstention from political activity, Steven – a British citizen – was detained and tortured in January 1982, only released after six days following public outrage in Britain.⁴⁴⁴

⁴³⁶ Sisulu, *Walter and Albertina Sisulu*, 298, 305.

⁴³⁷ Thompson, “Restoring Hope,” 824; Sisulu, *Walter and Albertina Sisulu*, 313; Winnie Mandela, *491 Days: Prisoner Number 1323/69* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2013), 55, 175-6.

⁴³⁸ Nazir Kathrada, interviewed by author, Johannesburg, 15 February 2023.

⁴³⁹ Meghan Healy-Clancy, “Women and Apartheid,” *Oxford Research Encyclopaedia of African History*, 28 June 2017.

⁴⁴⁰ Mandela, *491 Days*, 55, 100, 210.

⁴⁴¹ Mandela, *491 Days*, 100.

⁴⁴² Kitson, *Sixpence*, 247-8.

⁴⁴³ Kitson, *Sixpence*, 248.

⁴⁴⁴ Kitson, *Sixpence*, 249-51.

Children's Roles and Responsibilities

Aside from assisting parents in providing a livelihood, older, often female, children took on increased caring duties. Children felt deeply responsible for their younger siblings' physical and emotional welfare. Following her mother's arrest in 1960, Toni wrote:

I was acutely aware of my role as the eldest of four children and knew I needed to take responsibility for my younger siblings. I'd had previous experience. I was cool, calm and level-headed in a crisis, but also anxious about what was going to happen. In some ways I'd had to grow up quickly. That night, while helping my mother pack and then watching as both my parents were taken away, I began to assume the role of adult.⁴⁴⁵

After her parents fled into exile four years later, Toni and her husband cared for her siblings until their safe passage to the UK.⁴⁴⁶ Similarly, La Guma made the parental role clear to her oldest son, Eugene: 'When Alex was detained I told him, 'Each time Daddy goes, then you are the Daddy and Barto is the big Brother.'⁴⁴⁷ From the age of five, Eugene also ran errands and fielded his mother's midwifery-related phone calls. La Guma saw the effects of this responsibility on her two sons: 'Because Barto was younger and didn't have the responsibility that Eugene had, he took life easier. He was happy-go-lucky.'⁴⁴⁸ Toni and La Guma's recollections highlight how many children assumed parental roles, feeling that they had grown up faster than others their age. Their assumed roles and responsibilities thus challenged their notion of childhood. The experiences of Lynn, who supported her two younger siblings, suggest that for some children these responsibilities proved a heavy burden: 'I was taught from a very early age to take responsibility, which was... pushing me beyond my actual ability, I think.'⁴⁴⁹ Structural inequalities persisted here, too: while many white families were able to employ domestic workers, who took on maternal roles when

⁴⁴⁵ Strasburg, *Holding the Fort*, 11.

⁴⁴⁶ Toni Strasburg, *Fractured Lives* (Cape Town: Modajaji Books, 2013), 14.

⁴⁴⁷ La Guma, *In the Dark*, 112.

⁴⁴⁸ La Guma, *In the Dark*, 113.

⁴⁴⁹ Carneson-McGregor, interview.

parents were absent, African families lacked this support.⁴⁵⁰ Their position as older siblings, and often also as children who experienced a previously more overt political situation, created a generational divide not just between activists and children, but also between older and younger children/siblings.

In addition, children also took on practical roles as they encountered agents of apartheid. At home, they assisted their parents in the search for bugs.⁴⁵¹ They also acted as ‘early-warning system[s]’ and hid incriminating evidence.⁴⁵² During a trip, Ilse and Ruth concealed documents in their underwear after their father realised that they were being followed.⁴⁵³ While the police searched the car, Ilse and Ruth went to the bathroom:

As soon as we could we got to the toilets and spent a frantic ten minutes trying to flush torn documents down the resistant toilet. Torn pieces of paper containing bomb making instructions kept floating to the surface every time we flushed the toilet.⁴⁵⁴

As the excerpt from Gordimer’s *Burger’s Daughter* in the introduction underlines, children also supported their detained parents, practically and emotionally.⁴⁵⁵ Children delivered prison supplies and wrote letters; the latter was crucial for moral support.⁴⁵⁶ Through letters (and isolated visits), children assured their parents of their (sometimes fictional) welfare.

Toni wrote:

I always tried to be cheerful when I saw my mother [in prison] and told her news of the children and how we were managing. I didn’t want her to worry about us and tried to protect her. I never told her that Frances was sad and weepy and wouldn’t eat, and that Keith was clingy and woke me several times a night, or that Pat was withdrawn and hard to approach.⁴⁵⁷

⁴⁵⁰ Rusty and Hilda Bernstein, interviewed by Glenn Frankel, n.d. approx. 1996, Glenn Frankel Papers, University of Delaware, Newark, DE, used with interviewer’s permission.

⁴⁵¹ Carneson-McGregor, *Homage to Hope*, 114, 116; Hain, *Pretoria Boy*, 2-3; La Guma, *In the Dark*, 119.

⁴⁵² Issel-Davids, *Knocking on*, 47; Hain, *Ad & Wal*, 210.

⁴⁵³ Ilse Wilson and Ruth Eastwood, “We called him Bram,” written to be represented at the Bram Fischer Memorial Lecture at the Rhodes Trust, University of Oxford, not presented, n.d., provided by Ilse Wilson to author), 21-2.

⁴⁵⁴ Wilson, Eastwood, “We called him Bram,” 22.

⁴⁵⁵ Gordimer, *Burger’s Daughter*.

⁴⁵⁶ Zoya Joseph, interview; Sisulu, *Walter and Albertina*, 305-6; Letter from Frances to Rusty, Note by Tony, 11 May 1960, A4.1.3, A3299 Bernstein Papers, Historical Papers, Wits; Letter from Hilda to Patrick and Frances, n.d. [1960], A4.2.2, A3299 Bernstein Papers, Historical Papers, Wits.

⁴⁵⁷ Strasburg, *Holding the Fort*, 43.

To protect her mother, Toni actively withheld information about her siblings' difficulties. Older children also faced the responsibility of explaining the situation to their younger siblings.⁴⁵⁸ These acts pushed children further into the political sphere, intensifying their experiences of having grown up faster than others their age.

As they interacted with apartheid agents, children performed small acts of resistance, so Lynn recounted: 'Because I was fed up by all the stuff being searched every time I go. I brought a huge jigsaw puzzle – 2000 pieces, and wrote on the back of two pieces - "There are no secret messages in here. Have a good day."'. I know they will search each piece. I hope they will not take it out on Mom, but will see the joke.'⁴⁵⁹ These acts offered children a chance to impose their own agency and highlight how conscious children were of the SB's surveillance.

Furthermore, children highlighted their agency in direct negotiations with the state. They did so by strategically inferring children's position in society as innocent bystanders in need of care. Rodgers points out how children 'create powerful symbolic messages' by participating social movements as what she terms 'strategic participants'.⁴⁶⁰ Following a declaration by white prisoners to go on a hunger strike, a multi-racial group of children of activists protested outside the Johannesburg City Hall on 14 May 1960: 'Placards bearing words such as "I want my Mummy" and "Give us back our parents" were brandished around.'⁴⁶¹ The protest had been initiated by Toni, Ilse, and Barbara Harmel, although likely

⁴⁵⁸ Strasburg, *Holding the Fort*, 62.

⁴⁵⁹ Carneson-McGregor, *Homage to Hope*, 125.

⁴⁶⁰ Rodgers, *Children in Social Movements*, 1.

⁴⁶¹ Hannes Hasbroek, "'An absolute pillar of strength for her husband and the Struggle': Molly Fischer (1908-1964) – wife, mother and struggle activist, *New Contree* 65 (2012): 103.

with the help of AnnMarie Wolpe and Babette Brown (activists/spouses).⁴⁶² Essop Pahad, Ilse Fischer, Toni Bernstein and Mark Weinberg went inside the city hall to hand a petition to Mayor Alec Gorshel.⁴⁶³ In the meantime, the police arrested all children, arguing: ‘The children were taken into custody under the Children’s Act for their own protection. They had advertised that they were starving and it is the duty of the police to take care of people in want.’⁴⁶⁴ When Ilse called her father, Bram Fischer, for help, he was furious, believing they should have let the police ‘deal with the outrage at their having arrested a group of children.’⁴⁶⁵ Ilse reflected later: ‘Perhaps he expected too much of [me].’⁴⁶⁶ Nonetheless, the experience was empowering for the children, so Toni wrote:

We had found we had the power to stand up to the police and wanted to get involved in further activity. Learning how to get press publicity stood me in very good stead three years later during the Rivonia Trial and my parents’ escape.⁴⁶⁷

On 13 April 1964, Thabo Mbeki similarly evoked his position as a powerless child during his statement before the UN Special Committee Against Apartheid in London, drawing international attention to the potential death penalty in the Rivonia Trial: ‘Today we might be but weak children, spurred on by nothing other than the fear and grief of losing our fathers. In time yet we shall learn to die both for ourselves and for the millions.’⁴⁶⁸ That Thabo, aged 22, positioned himself as a child stood out particularly as he rarely inferred his relation publicly.⁴⁶⁹ Both cases highlight children’s efforts to use their societal position of innocence to garner support and sympathy domestically and internationally, although especially the former case suggests that the state was capable of countering this claim effectively.

⁴⁶² Strasburg, interview.

⁴⁶³ Strasburg, *Holding the Fort*, 129.

⁴⁶⁴ The Children’s Demonstration, n.d. [1960], A4.2.6.1.1, A3299 Bernstein Papers, Historical Papers, Wits.

⁴⁶⁵ Strasburg, *Holding the Fort*, 132.

⁴⁶⁶ Wilson, Eastwood, “We called him Bram,” 21.

⁴⁶⁷ Strasburg, *Holding the Fort*, 132.

⁴⁶⁸ Thabo Mbeki, *Africa – the time has come* (Cape Town: Tafelberg Publishers, 1998), 6.

⁴⁶⁹ Gevisser, *Legacy of Liberation*, 45-6.

The state also ruthlessly persecuted children who spoke up – aged seven, Leila Issel defiantly held a sign saying ‘Release My Father and All Detainees’ as part of a protest in the early 1980s.⁴⁷⁰ She was arrested and kept at Caledon Square in Cape Town for 24 hours.⁴⁷¹ The state initially meant to charge her under the *Terrorism Act*, but she was released after 24 hours when lawyers intervened.⁴⁷² The consequences for Leila were traumatic, as her mother recalled:

The next day, reporters from all over the world came to our house at 36 Kraai Road in Rocklands, to interview Leila. She was asked to tell them about the experience. I think that was the moment that Leila decided to block out everything that was happening to her. That was her way of surviving, of not remembering, because it was too intense for an 8 year-old to endure. She started to block out everything and refused to talk for a full two weeks.⁴⁷³

In addition, the SB also pursued Leila at school.⁴⁷⁴ At the UDF launch in August 1983, Leila spoke again in place of her banned father: ‘My father cannot be here today. My father supports the UDF and he wants to be free.’⁴⁷⁵

Death of Activist-Parents in South Africa

The death of their parents, especially in South Africa, was a real fear and possibility for children. After the death of Ngudle in detention in 1963, increasing numbers of detained activists were killed in dubious circumstances – some ‘slipped’, others fell out of the windows, many supposedly committed suicide. Throughout the 1970s, the Z-Squad of BOSS, and, after 1979, Section C1 of the SB (now infamously known by the name of its training farm, Vlakplaas) assassinated activists.

⁴⁷⁰ Russell, *Lives of Courage*, 309.

⁴⁷¹ Shahida Issel, *Knocking on... mothers and daughters in struggle in South Africa*, eds. Shirley Gunn and Sinazo Krwala (Cape Town: Human Rights Media Centre with Centre for Study of Violence and Reconciliation in Johannesburg, 2008), 32.

⁴⁷² Issel, *Knocking on*, 32-3.

⁴⁷³ Issel, *Knocking on*, 33.

⁴⁷⁴ Issel, *Knocking on*, 33.

⁴⁷⁵ Sisulu, *Walter and Albertina Sisulu*, 436.

In August 1977, Steve Biko was detained near Grahamstown, and subsequently tortured, before being loaded into a police care, severely injured, naked, and shackled, to be driven to the hospital in Pretoria, over 700 miles away, where he died in a cell on 12 September 1977.⁴⁷⁶ Biko's eldest son, Nkosinathi, was six when his father was killed.⁴⁷⁷ Biko's funeral was the first major political funeral in South Africa, attracting approximately 20,000 mourners; funerals became a major site of anti-apartheid expression (and repressive violence) in the 1980s.⁴⁷⁸ During the funeral, the Biko home in King Williams Town was swamped with activists. As the eldest child, Nkosinathi later saw himself as the 'custodian of the family's social infrastructure', both in line with Xhosa tradition and in his father's absence.⁴⁷⁹ He credited his mother with creating a 'scaffolding' of support for him and his younger brother, despite being consumed by the repeated inquests into Biko's death. Although Police minister Jimmy Kruger initially claimed that Biko died due to a hunger strike, domestic and international pressure led to a public inquest in 1977.⁴⁸⁰ Under highly disputed evidence, the inquest found that there had been no wrongdoing by police officers. In July 1979, the Biko family agreed to a settlement in the civil case against the state.

In June 1985, activists Matthew Goniwe, Fort Calata, Sparrow Mkhonto, and Sicelo Mhlauli – known as the Cradock Four – were abducted and killed by the SB near Port Elizabeth. A 1987 inquest failed to identify the killers; a further inquest in 1993 found the

⁴⁷⁶ Hadfield, "Biko and the BCM."

⁴⁷⁷ Nkosinathi Biko, interviewed by author, Johannesburg, 9 February 2023.

⁴⁷⁸ Davis, *Apartheid's Rebels*, 90.

⁴⁷⁹ Biko, interview.

⁴⁸⁰ Hadfield, "Biko and the BCM."

police responsible without naming any individuals.⁴⁸¹ Calata's son, Lukhanyo, was three years old when his father was killed and holds no memories of his father:

Instead, my first and only memory of him is of his funeral. (...) On that Saturday, I was just three years, eight months, and two days old. I remember it being bitterly cold. (...) I remember a moment when I clutched my mother's dress so tightly as she sat sobbing in the back of a slow-moving, blue Mitsubishi kombi. Its rear sliding door was open and it was surrounded by thousands of people. I also remember being terrified at the gravesite that the ground underneath me would cave in and that I would fall through it as it shook from the force of toyi-toyiing comrades. (...) Despite many desperate attempts over the years to conjure up memories of my father alive, I just don't seem to have any. My most fervent wish is that I will remember something about him – irrespective of what that memory is, just as long as it is of him alive.⁴⁸²

At the funeral, attended by over 60,000 people, UDF activist Victoria Mxenge declared: 'Go well, peacemakers. Tell your great-grandfathers we are coming because we are prepared to die for Africa.'⁴⁸³ It was an ominous speech – two weeks later, Mxenge was killed in front of her children on their driveway in Umlazi, Durban, leaving them orphaned. Her husband, Griffiths Mxenge, had been assassinated four years prior. At her memorial service 300 Inkatha supporters attacked the mourners.⁴⁸⁴ 17 people were killed and 200 injured; shops were looted and burned. Afterwards, '(...) Inkatha supporters danced around Mxenge's house, threatening to burn it down and kill her orphaned children'.⁴⁸⁵

The Biko, Mxenge, and Calata family, alongside the Ribeiro family (who lost their parents in December 1986 to gunmen), battled for years to gain justice. This was taken to the TRC, although not satisfactorily resolved, see Chapter 8.

⁴⁸¹ Foundation for Human Rights, "The Cradock Four," *The Unfinished Business of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission*, accessed 23 August 2025, <https://unfinishedtrc.co.za/the-cradock-four/#2143hgfsda>.

⁴⁸² Calata and Calata, *My Father*, 43-4.

⁴⁸³ Calata and Calata, *My Father*, 9; Seekings, *UDF*, 148.

⁴⁸⁴ Sisulu, *Walter and Albertina Sisulu*, 473.

⁴⁸⁵ Sisulu, *Walter and Albertina Sisulu*, 473.

Psychological State of Parents

Psychological studies on children in conflict situations highlight the importance of the remaining caregiver's well-being, as their anxieties can be reflected in children, increasing the risk of emotional difficulties.⁴⁸⁶ Children of detainees/prisoners became particularly attached to the remaining caregiver – usually their mothers – who found themselves under intense financial and emotional pressure, often having experienced violence themselves.⁴⁸⁷ Norma Kitson wrote: 'I realised that when children lose one parent, they lose both. The remaining parent is out at work or, in the home, too preoccupied with keeping things going to spend much time with the children.'⁴⁸⁸ Linda recounted the intensity of her father and the pressure that was placed onto him, while facing restrictions himself:

Those were terrible three year while my mother was in prison because my father was a very intense man, and he cut out all the pictures from the newspapers and all the articles and made these scrapbooks and looked after my mother's ailing and aging father and had no life, he would go to work – we didn't have much money – he went to work, the odd work that he could get...⁴⁸⁹

Activist-parents were also psychologically impacted by their experiences of solitary confinement, detention, torture, and harassment – children experienced the consequences acutely.⁴⁹⁰ Activists, especially following release, were often placed under house arrest, although some were able to leave the house between 6 am and 6 pm on weekdays to pursue employment. This isolation was emotionally taxing on activists. Released activists were either barred from work or found it impossible to find employment, often becoming entirely

⁴⁸⁶ Lea Baider and Eva Rosenfeld, "Effects of parental fears on children in wartime," *Social Casework*, 55 (1974): 497-503; Avner Ziv et al., "Children's psychological reactions to wartime stress," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 30, no.1 (1974), 24-30; Skinner and Swartz, "Consequences for Preschool Children," 244-45. Skinner and Swartz do not find caregiver's anxieties to have produced individual factors causing variance in their sample but credit this divergence from other research to the 'lack of distinct differentiation within the sample'.

⁴⁸⁷ Callinicos, *Oliver Tambo*, 423; Pogrund, *Sobukwe*, 249.

⁴⁸⁸ Kitson, *Sixpence*, 171, 175.

⁴⁸⁹ Shapiro, interview.

⁴⁹⁰ Shapiro, interview; Deborah Levy, "My Frozen Father," *Granta*, 22 December 2008, <https://granta.com/my-frozen-father/>.

reliant on international and community support.⁴⁹¹ Leila described how her father, Johnny Issel, as a consequence of his imprisonment and torture in the 1970s, beat her mother and his children:

He was taking what was being done to him by the system and he was enforcing *his* law in our house. She could not even do the shopping freely. There were restrictions in our house. We had our own restrictions, our own banning orders, our own house arrest; the restrictions that were enforced outside, we had inside.⁴⁹²

She attested to the ubiquity of this pattern, stating that men ‘in almost every second household in Kraai Road, Rocklands, where we lived, beat up their wives but the next morning they fought for women’s liberation.’⁴⁹³ At the TRC, Sheila Masote, daughter of Zeph Mothopeng (founding member of the PAC) harrowingly narrated the effects of her father’s political activities on her mother, who was not politically involved.⁴⁹⁴ Scarred by her own experiences of abuse as a child, the abuses by the state due to her husband’s involvement, and his absence, Sheila’s mother abused her as a child. This trauma held transgenerational consequences: ‘I also bashed my son. I almost killed my son.’⁴⁹⁵ Aged six, her son attempted suicide: ‘That is what my son went through. I went through the same. I did it. I don’t know what it is. I have done lots to my daughter.’⁴⁹⁶ Gender further impacted Sheila’s position: as the only daughter, she cared for her mother, while her brothers left the traumatising home.

For some children, house arrest offered a rare opportunity to spend time with their parents and increased feelings of certainty.⁴⁹⁷ Nkosinathi recounted how his father ‘had perhaps a little bit more time’ after his banning, teaching his son how to fly a kite.⁴⁹⁸ Until the early 1980s, it was also common to banish ex-political prisoners and activists to remote

⁴⁹¹ Buntman, *Robben Island*, 79.

⁴⁹² Issel-Davids, *Knocking on*, 50-1.

⁴⁹³ Issel-Davids, *Knocking on*, 50-1.

⁴⁹⁴ TRC, “Sheila Masote.”

⁴⁹⁵ TRC, “Sheila Masote.”

⁴⁹⁶ TRC, “Sheila Masote.”

⁴⁹⁷ Merle Ruff, interviewed by author, Johannesburg, 24 January 2023.

⁴⁹⁸ Biko, interview.

areas. Intended to isolate them from political events, this act took activists – and their families – away from their support systems into desolate areas. In 1978, Amnesty International reported that

it has become regular practice to send political prisoners to specified “resettlement areas” when they are released from prison, regardless of where they lived before. (...) There, they have no opportunity of obtaining paid employment and have no chance of starting a new life. They are kept under surveillance and constantly harassed by the police.⁴⁹⁹

Banished individuals received a small allowance to support them. Biko had been eligible for this state support yet rejected it: in a letter to his local magistrate, he lambasted it as ‘blood money’.⁵⁰⁰ In May 1977, Winnie Mandela, accompanied by her 16-year-old daughter, Zindzi, was banished to Brandfort, a small town in the Free State.⁵⁰¹ They were allocated a tiny house:

That first night naturally we hadn’t washed, there isn’t a drop of water - suddenly our house in Soweto seemed like a palace; we didn’t have a bucket, not even a morsel of food. We couldn’t cook. There was no stove. We were just dumped between these four walls. It was bitterly cold. We cuddled up on one mattress to get some sleep.⁵⁰²

Zindzi developed signs of depression, but her mother was reluctant to let her return to Soweto:

In the early years of our exile, Zindzi wanted to go away and couldn't understand why I didn't let her go. I needed her physically. (...) I literally couldn't let her out of my clutches, clinging to perhaps the last semblance of a family unit.⁵⁰³

During these periods children became a ‘steadying anchor’, providing crucial social interaction, support, and routine to their restricted parents.⁵⁰⁴

⁴⁹⁹ Amnesty International, *Political Imprisonment in South Africa: An Amnesty International Report* (London: Amnesty International Publications, 1978), cited in Buntman, *Robben Island*, 36.

⁵⁰⁰ Biko, interview.

⁵⁰¹ Winnie Mandela, *Part of My Soul Went With Him* (London, New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1985), 23-25.

⁵⁰² Mandela, *Part of My Soul*, 25.

⁵⁰³ Mandela, *491 Days*, 41.

⁵⁰⁴ Bernstein, *The World That Was Ours*, 6.

Community Support and Ostracisation

Race played a key role in mitigating how children experienced community support. Children of colour generally experienced extensive community support for their parents' commitment. La Guma recalled: 'My neighbours felt tremendously angry. They had the greatest respect for us, and even though they didn't take part in the struggle as deeply as Alex and I did, they supported us.'⁵⁰⁵ Comparing families of non-political and political prisoners, Swartz and Skinner also found that '[w]hereas imprisonment is socially unacceptable, detention is not, because of its political nature. The community generally will side with the detainee in the conflict and come to the support of the family.'⁵⁰⁶ When political detention increased social acceptability, children's feelings of guilt and shame decreased.

This support was, however, drastically impeded by communities' financial challenges, shaped by apartheid's laws, and the continued repression of those assisting these families (even after activists' imprisonment) instilled fear, leaving them isolated.⁵⁰⁷ Winnie Mandela recalled: 'For me just to find somebody who would register my child was something, because that meant this person would have a dossier opened at John Vorster Square.'⁵⁰⁸ Sheila Masote testified at the TRC:

I had no trust at that stage. It went. The church, I couldn't trust, because I didn't belong. Why [sic] all this happening to my family? Why [sic] all this happening to Orlando West? My friends and my neighbours, they got away from me, because the special branch always came to my home. They harassed my family. They went to the family, to the neighbours, to the children I played with and they threatened their parents.⁵⁰⁹

Meanwhile, white children were ostracised for their parents' political involvement.

Joe Slovo argued:

⁵⁰⁵ La Guma, *In the Dark*, 78.

⁵⁰⁶ Skinner and Swartz, "Consequences for Preschool Children," 256.

⁵⁰⁷ Sisulu, *Walter and Albertina Sisulu*, 227; Amina Cachalia, *When Hope and History Rhyme* (Johannesburg: Picador Africa, 2013), 144-5.

⁵⁰⁸ Mandela, *Part of My Soul*, 89.

⁵⁰⁹ TRC, "Sheila Masote."

I think we just kept our kids in ignorance and, therefore, they were bewildered and isolated from their own society. Because it's not like a black kid. In a sense, they suffered more than black kids at some level. They had no support, you see. A black kid whose parents get arrested becomes a hero in the school. A white kid, whose parents get arrested, is a subject of derision – communist scum.⁵¹⁰

Sonya and her sisters became 'pariahs by association':

I felt intense SHAME, and was shunned by many people – both friends and family. How I hated knowing that people were whispering about me. Our house was surveilled, our phone was bugged – I never felt free, or even carefree. I walled off my feelings, and none of my friends discussed the situation with me.⁵¹¹

While they received support from their aunt and uncle, many children were cut off from their extended family, who disagreed with their politics or feared repercussions.⁵¹² Children were bullied at school, lost friends, and were openly shunned in the street.⁵¹³ Those who could, sent their children to private schools, which were less government-controlled.⁵¹⁴ The SB also visited the parents of children's friends.⁵¹⁵ Ruth emphasised her total feeling of isolation:

It has become too dangerous for other people to be seen talking to us. People would rather cross to the other side of the street than be seen greeting us. Our friends disappear, they leave the country or are arrested. We have become almost completely isolated.⁵¹⁶

As activists increasingly fled into exile in the early 1960s, remaining children and activists felt further isolated, so Ilse recalled: 'The second half of the '60s were awful, awful, awful. Things had been smashed. I mean, if you weren't in jail, you were in exile and there was no activity.'⁵¹⁷

⁵¹⁰ Alan Wieder, *Ruth First and Joe Slovo in the Fight Against Apartheid* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2013), 64.

⁵¹¹ Sonya Lubner, "A Life Untold" (unpublished chapter, provided to the author, 16 June 2023).

⁵¹² Hain, *Ad & Wal*, 145-6.

⁵¹³ Ruth Carneson, interview; Kitson, *Sixpence*, 175; Peta Wolpe, interviewed by author, Cape Town, 2 April 2023; Hirson, *Thirty-Minute Bar Mitzvah*, 103.

⁵¹⁴ Kitson, *Sixpence*, 175; Wilson, interview; Mandela, *Long Walk to Freedom*, 199.

⁵¹⁵ Wilson, interview.

⁵¹⁶ Carneson, *Girl On the Edge*, Ch.11.

⁵¹⁷ Wilson, interview.

Activists and supporters also set up informal support networks, providing jobs to fellow activists, and sharing other necessities.⁵¹⁸ During the Defiance Campaign in 1952, Frances Baard was specifically told by the ANC to refrain from defying: ‘So I was told that I must not go and defy. I must stay at home and look after these children and houses that people have left.’⁵¹⁹ Amina Cachalia’s mother started a support system for the children of treason trialists.⁵²⁰ AnnMarie Wolpe organised regular dinners for the older children of detainees in 1960.⁵²¹ Individual supporters also used their own networks for children to receive educational support, clothes, or general financial help: the Sobukwe family was assisted by journalist Benjamin Pogrud, who supported them with his own money and organised the search for donors.⁵²²

Although a comprehensive analysis of formal support structures lies beyond the scope of this thesis, it is nevertheless important to acknowledge some of the formal organisations – often evolving from informal networks – that played a significant role in supporting the children of activists.⁵²³ IDAF was set up in 1956 by Canon John Collins of St Paul’s Cathedral as the British Defence and Aid Fund (BDAF) to support detainees during the Treason Trial with defence costs, before rapidly expanding to cover defence and welfare costs of activists and their families following the Sharpeville Massacre.⁵²⁴ By the time IDAF closed down in May 1991, over £100 million had been channelled to political detainees and their families for legal support and welfare, reaching 45,000 dependents.⁵²⁵

⁵¹⁸ Sisulu, *Walter and Albertina Sisulu*, 242; Archie Sibeko with Joyce Leeson, *Freedom in our lifetime* (Durban: Indicator Press, University of Natal, 1996), 45-6.

⁵¹⁹ Baard, *My Spirit*, 41-2.

⁵²⁰ Cachalia, *When Hope and History Rhyme*, 118.

⁵²¹ Strasburg, interview.

⁵²² Pogrud, *Sobukwe*, 221.

⁵²³ The decision to exclude research on these organisations was also driven by archival constraints, as both the IDAF welfare collection at the Mayibuye Archives at UWC and the Cowley Papers at UCT were unavailable during my fieldwork.

⁵²⁴ Herbstein, *White Lies*, 11, 36.

⁵²⁵ Herbstein, *White Lies*, 327-8.

Other organisations that supported activists' families included the ICRC and Amnesty, but also the Black Sash from the late 1950s onwards, the Dependants' Conference (DC) after 1963, and the Human Rights Committee (HRC) after 1973.⁵²⁶ In the 1970s, the Western Province Council of Churches (WPCC) developed Cowley House in Cape Town to accommodate the families of political prisoners during visits to Robben Island; previously, WPCC employee, David Viti, had informally opened his home to these families.⁵²⁷ Further support originated in the BCM's ideology of self-help: in 1972, the Black Community Programmes (BCP) were founded, which set up the Zimele Trust to support families of political detainees in the Eastern Cape.⁵²⁸ In the 1980s, the Detainees' Parents Support Committee (DPSC) became a key player for detainee support, including family assistance.⁵²⁹ For their work, these organisations and its employees were pursued with fervour – in South Africa and in exile.⁵³⁰

Conclusion

This chapter emphasised the changing levels of repression, impacting the extent to which children were exposed to violence over time. The experiences of children support the work of feminist scholars who have long critiqued the public/private dichotomy, situating children's homes as a key site of repression: a space of supposed safety, which became a

⁵²⁶ Legassick, Saunders, "Aboveground activity," 673; Jo MacRobert, "'Ungadinwa Nangomso – Don't Get Tired Tomorrow': A History of the Black Sash Advice Office in Cape Town 1958 to 1980," MA Thesis (University of Cape Town, 1993), abstract; Glenn Moss, *The New Radicals – A Generational Memoir of the 1970s*, Ebook (Johannesburg: Jacana, 2014).

⁵²⁷ Cowley House Papers, BC 1039, UCT, Cape Town.

⁵²⁸ Mzamane et al., "BCM," 135; Zimele Trust Fund Budget Proposals for 1976, 1977, 1978, n.d., Box 10, Folder 987, A2675 Karis-Gerhart Collection, Historical Papers, Wits.

⁵²⁹ Shakinovksy and Cort, *DPSC*, Ch.2.

⁵³⁰ Al Cook, "The International Defence and Aid Fund for Southern Africa," in *The Road to Democracy in South Africa, Volume 3, International Solidarity, Part 1*, ed. South African Democracy Education Trust (Pretoria: UNISA Press, 2008), 183; Johan Kinghorn, "The churches against apartheid," in *The Long March: The Story of the Struggle for Liberation in South Africa*, eds. Ian Leinberg et al. (Pretoria, HAUM, 1994), 152.

psychological and physical battleground. Through their parents' repression, children became indirect victims of the state's repression, yet they were also targeted directly in the state's attempt to procure information and to intimidate their parents. As parents were detained and imprisoned, uncertainty and a lack of safety pervaded their children's lives – it is the chronicity of this uncertain environment that also impacted children's long-term psychological issues. Exposure to their parents' psychological states – amidst their bannings, house arrests, detention, torture, and imprisonment – played a role in fuelling children's sense of uncertainty and distress. For younger children, not being able to understand the political situation was particularly difficult – lacking this context, they perceived their parents' absence as abandonment. Through the censoring of letters and limitations on family visits, the state aimed to demoralise activists by breaking down their familial relationships. Particularly older children took on practical and emotional roles and responsibilities vis-à-vis their parents, younger siblings and in interactions with apartheid agents; consequently, many felt they had grown up faster than others their age, taking on the role of adults.

Race emerged as a central theme to this chapter, shaping not only the broader context in which children experienced this repression (particularly regarding parents' absences and financial challenges), but also impacting how violently the apartheid state treated children, the type of support, including through domestic workers and communities, was available, and the extent to which children were ostracised by their peers, extended families, and communities.

Exile was a further consequence of this repression and will be discussed in the following chapter. Both chapters emphasise the importance of children's political understanding in enabling children to cope with this repression, whether in South Africa or

in exile. Together, Chapters 3 and 4 form the groundwork for Chapters 5 and 6, which explore how children were politicised and the extent to which the liberation movements incorporated these children into their own ranks.

Chapter 4: Experiencing the Repression of Activism – Experiences of Exile from 1948-1990

Exile is strangely compelling to think about but terrible to experience. It is the unhealable rift forced between a human being and a native place, between the self and its true home: its essential sadness can never be surmounted.⁵³¹

Then I went to England and that was worse. [laughs] Because I had complete loss of identity or anything familiar. I mean South Africa was awful but at least it was familiar and I knew it...⁵³²

Introduction

This chapter examines children’s experience of exile as a further consequence of the apartheid state’s repression. It begins by tracing children’s departures into exile across Africa, the UK, and lesser-frequented exile locations, showing how geopolitical processes, host-state politics, and racial dynamics shaped their journeys and everyday lives. I argue that children’s narratives challenge common conceptualisations of exile, shedding new light on the experiences of the second-generation exiles. For children who had witnessed violence in South Africa, feelings of fear and uncertainty persisted in exile – manifesting as nightmares, fantasies, but also through the constant threat of real violence. As it had done in South Africa, surveillance, burglaries, and even car or letter bombs turned their homes into battlegrounds once more, particularly in the frontline states. Family fragmentation and parental absences continued into exile, forcing spouses and children to assume new – or ongoing – caregiving and supportive roles. Only after the Soweto Uprising did the ANC begin establishing educational and welfare institutions to address this fragmentation and other children-related issues; until then, care remained the responsibility of individual families. Exile also exacerbated parents’ psychological struggles, contributing to high levels of depression, substance abuse, and domestic violence. Children experienced these issues acutely,

⁵³¹ Edward W. Said, “Reflections on Exile,” *Granta Magazine*, 1 September 1984, <https://granta.com/reflections-on-exile/>.

⁵³² Ruth Carneson, interview.

mirroring their parents' coping behaviours. The chapter concludes by turning to the children and spouses left behind in South Africa, exploring the long-term emotional and psychological consequences of separation and absence.

Building on the previous chapter's examination of apartheid's repression of children in South Africa, this chapter extends the analysis beyond South Africa's borders. As before, the extent to which children understood the reasons for their exile shaped how they coped with the uncertainties of exile. Chapters 5 and 6 explore how children came to understand their parents' activism.

Routes into Exile

Some of apartheid's earliest repressive laws illegalised cross-racial love through the *Mixed Marriages Act* (1949) and the *Immorality Act* (1950). Affected activists – if financially able – left South Africa, effectively exiled. They anticipated permanent resettlement abroad, and as a result, their experiences in exile were less influenced by the 'myth of return'.⁵³³ Nonetheless, the 1950s were generally a pre-exile phase.⁵³⁴ Following Sharpeville and the state of emergency, thousands left South Africa. Despite this, in the early 1960s, exile was perceived by many activists as betrayal – especially amongst Whites, exile was considered the 'easy option'.⁵³⁵ Activists experienced socio-political pressure to accept the party line – even when this clashed with their children's needs.⁵³⁶ Older children were deeply conscious

⁵³³ Anand Pillay, interviewed by author, online, 16 June 2023. The 'myth of return' has been applied extensively to exile contexts. In the context of second-generation exiles in South Africa, see Mark Israel's *South African Political Exile* and "South African War Resisters and the Ideologies of Return from Exile," *Journal of Refugee Studies* 13, no. 1 (2000): 26-42, as well as Zosa de Sas Kropiwnicki's "The Meeting of Myths and Realities: The "Homecoming" of Second-Generation Exiles in Post-Apartheid South Africa," *Refuge: Canada's Journal on Refugees* 30, no. 2 (2014), 79-92. For examples of research on the 'myth of return' in other contexts, see particularly Muhammad Anwar, *The myth of return: Pakistanis in Britain* (London: Heinemann, 1979).

⁵³⁴ Israel, *South African Political Exile*, 30.

⁵³⁵ Israel, *South African Political Exile*, 29, 48, 50.

⁵³⁶ Israel, *South African Political Exile*, 48; La Guma, *In the Dark*, 116.

of this perception of betrayal. Lynn, who left in 1962 to pursue her education in the UK, wrote:

WHAT IS TRULY THE RIGHT THING TO DO? Is it to be able to cross the sea, to explore the unknown. (...) To be free to study, to travel, to visit countries, to meet people and go places - or
Is it to stay and fight. To suffer alongside my people. To say NO. To face my fear. To change this country. To prove we can all live together equally. To stick it out. (...) To support Mom and Dad. To stay and look after John and Ruth. Is the real me more able to make a contribution here or there? ⁵³⁷ [paragraph break in original]

By 1969, the socio-political pressure to remain had eased: ‘few people had many qualms about leaving. There was little for them to do if they stayed (...).’⁵³⁸

Activist-families’ routes into exile were determined by geo-political processes – particularly decolonisation – and kinship networks. Substantial numbers of political refugees entered South Africa’s neighbouring states – from Bechuanaland/Botswana, Basutoland/Lesotho and Swaziland, some passed to Tanzania, which became independent in 1961 (as Tanganyika), as well as Zambia, which gained independence in 1964.⁵³⁹ Following the fall of the Salazar regime in Portugal in 1974, Mozambique and Angola opened up to the liberation movements, and the ANC moved swiftly into both countries, moving the majority of MK into camps in Angola.⁵⁴⁰ Southern Rhodesia remained hostile until independence in 1980. Prior to independence, the ANC had interacted primarily with the Zimbabwe African People’s Union (ZAPU); faced with the Zimbabwe African National Union – Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF) in power, the ANC rapidly attempted to improve relations.⁵⁴¹ Neighbouring countries performed a tightrope act in handling these refugees

⁵³⁷ Carneson-McGregor, *Homage to Hope*, 146-7.

⁵³⁸ Israel, *South African Political Exile*, 52.

⁵³⁹ Simpson, “ANC in Swaziland,” 90; Tarimo and Reuben, “Tanzania,” 216; Neil Parsons, “The pipeline: Botswana’s reception of refugees, 1956-68,” *Social Dynamics* 34, no.1 (2008), 19.

⁵⁴⁰ Davis, *Apartheid’s Rebels*, 46.

⁵⁴¹ Davis, *Apartheid’s Rebels*, 68.

under threat from Pretoria, who used a ‘stick and carrot approach’ when dealing with its economically dependent neighbours.⁵⁴²

Smaller numbers of activists and their families also moved to less-frequented locations, such as the USA and Eastern Bloc states, including the German Democratic Republic (GDR) (often specifically for educational purposes), and Kenya, India, Egypt, and Algeria to assist party work.⁵⁴³ These locations offered arrivals limited exposure to an exile community, particularly in the early years of exile.⁵⁴⁴ In the 1960s, few African countries were willing to accept non-Africans, and especially white members of the liberation movement, wary of their (supposed) ties to communism.⁵⁴⁵ Exceptions included the Turok family in Dar es Salaam, and the Simons in Lusaka.⁵⁴⁶ In the 1980s, families like the Rabkins and the Maharajs also settled in Lusaka.⁵⁴⁷

Zambia appealed to exiles because of the geographical likeness to South Africa and due to Zambia’s generally welcoming approach to South Africans.⁵⁴⁸ Throughout the 1960s, most ANC members in Zambia were MK men – a ‘relatively small and still rather beleaguered community’.⁵⁴⁹ The small numbers of official ANC and PAC members were augmented by the presence of other South Africans, particularly teachers, who were politically inclined/active, often with families. Their children remember their early years in

⁵⁴² Lissoni, “South African Liberation Movements,” 278; Davis, *Apartheid’s Rebels*, 38-9.

⁵⁴³ Hans-Georg Schleicher, “The German Democratic Republic and the South African liberation struggle,” in *The Road to Democracy in South Africa, Volume 3, International Solidarity, Part 1*, ed. South African Democracy Education Trust (Pretoria: UNISA Press, 2008), 1071.

⁵⁴⁴ Alex Duncan, interviewed by author, Oxford, 4 May 2023.

⁵⁴⁵ Macmillan, “Culture of Exile,” 309; Lissoni, “South African Liberation Movements,” 154.

⁵⁴⁶ Ben Turok, *Nothing But the Truth: Behind the ANC’s Struggle Politics* (Johannesburg: Jonathan Ball Publishers, 2003), 199; Alexander Simons, *All my Life*, 310.

⁵⁴⁷ Macmillan, “Culture of Exile,” 320.

⁵⁴⁸ Bernstein, *Rift*, 327-8.

⁵⁴⁹ Macmillan, “Culture of Exile,” 318.

Zambia as quasi-idyllic, often deeply integrated into the Zambian community.⁵⁵⁰ Unlike other liberation movements, most ANC members in Lusaka lived amongst Zambian residents in high-density compounds for protection.⁵⁵¹ This arrangement continued through the 1970s and 1980s, but as their numbers grew, it greatly increased risks for local residents.⁵⁵² Macmillan discusses the early to mid-1970s as a difficult period in the ANC's time in Lusaka, with the lowest number of members in 1972-3.⁵⁵³ In 1975, the ANC grew concerned that an expulsion was imminent as the Zambian President, Kenneth Kaunda, met with the South African Prime Minister, John Vorster, at Victoria Falls in August.⁵⁵⁴ While the Zambian ANC community was augmented by the Soweto recruits, ANC numbers remained relatively low till the late 1970s.⁵⁵⁵ In the 1980s, Lusaka hosted a thriving exile ANC community, now as the primary liberation movement in the country, and despite security threats, with extensive provisions for the children of activists (some of which the next chapter will discuss).⁵⁵⁶ Macmillan highlights how Zambia was 'an island of relative peace, stability and non-racialism – in spite of economic hardships that were often attributed to the sacrifices made for the liberation of others'.⁵⁵⁷ Children recalled particularly the care the Kaunda government provided to them: '(...) Kenneth Kaunda was the president, so very sympathetic to South Africa. And they really looked after us, they really really did.'⁵⁵⁸

Children of PAC members experienced Zambia as more tumultuous, reflecting the PAC's testy relationship with the Zambian government. Kethiwe's family came to Lusaka via Swaziland in 1965 and while Kethiwe, as the youngest, remembered primarily the

⁵⁵⁰ Ntombi Langa-Royds, interviewed by author, 29 January 2023, Johannesburg.

⁵⁵¹ Macmillan, "Culture of Exile," 320.

⁵⁵² Macmillan, "Culture of Exile," 319.

⁵⁵³ Macmillan, "Culture of Exile," 317.

⁵⁵⁴ Macmillan, "Culture of Exile," 317.

⁵⁵⁵ Macmillan, "Culture of Exile," 317.

⁵⁵⁶ Macmillan, "Culture of Exile," 318.

⁵⁵⁷ Macmillan, "Culture of Exile," 307.

⁵⁵⁸ Langa-Royds, interview.

freedom of playing in the streets of Lusaka, her older sisters remembered the darker reality of Zambian police raids on their home.⁵⁵⁹ Kethiwe's father, A.B. Ngcobo, had been one of the PAC men detained by its own military wing, which factored into the PAC's expulsion in 1968.⁵⁶⁰ The family joined Ngcobo in the UK in 1969.

After Mozambican independence in 1975, the FRELIMO government welcomed the ANC, offering a socialist vision for a liberated South Africa. Here, South Africans were able to establish a lively community, remembered by children as almost utopian.⁵⁶¹ FRELIMO's political welcome also translated into an overall acceptance by Mozambicans.⁵⁶² Maputo's ANC community was disrupted when, on 16 March 1984, the Nkomati Accords – a non-aggression pact between Pretoria and Maputo – were signed. This reduced the ANC presence to only ten individuals, constituting a diplomatic mission.⁵⁶³ Maputo had been forced to sign the agreement following South Africa's funding of *Resistência Nacional Moçambicana* (RENAMO); when it became evident that Pretoria had continued its backing, Maputo re-engaged with the ANC.⁵⁶⁴

The majority of white exiles moved to the UK. The liberation movements' offices in London, the presence of anticolonial and anti-apartheid organisations, shared language, connected histories, educational and professional opportunities, existing contacts, as well as immigration advantages, proved attractive. Even after South Africa's 1962 exit from the Commonwealth and the ending of the transitional period in 1965, South African immigration

⁵⁵⁹ Kethiwe Ngcobo, interviewed by author, Johannesburg, 7 February 2023.

⁵⁶⁰ Ngcobo, interview; Macmillan, "Culture of Exile," 310.

⁵⁶¹ Phola Mabizela-Mabaso, interviewed by author, Pretoria, 3 February 2023; Stephanie, interviewed by author, Johannesburg, 13 February 2023 (pseudonymised).

⁵⁶² Mabizela-Mabaso, interview.

⁵⁶³ Macmillan, *Lusaka Years*, 157.

⁵⁶⁴ Shubin, *A View From Moscow*, 200-202.

to the UK did not change significantly, gradually increasing throughout the 1960s.⁵⁶⁵ Out of romanticised notions of imperial kinship, Britain was reluctant to enforce stricter immigration – instead, their system implicitly facilitated white immigration from South Africa through a ‘kith or kin’ principle.⁵⁶⁶ Israel highlights how ‘knowledgeable and articulate would-be migrants’ could evade British immigration barriers, particularly if they were white.⁵⁶⁷ There was, however, also a small, ‘politically significant’ group of activists of colour.⁵⁶⁸ By 1991, about 70,000 South Africans resided in the UK, although most had not experienced state repression.⁵⁶⁹

Exiles built their livelihoods in London by using their networks and connections, including regarding employment (e.g. the insurance company Abbey Life, which in 1969 employed 30 South Africans, mostly political exiles), housing, childcare and psychological support.⁵⁷⁰ The La Gumas moved in with close comrades Reg and Hettie September to alleviate pressures on housing and childcare.⁵⁷¹ White families benefited from larger and better-connected networks; Paul Joseph wrote:

For Blacks it’s not the same. There are other cultural problems here as well, and they are not desperate to get involved in that culture. What they are desperate to do is to survive, within the framework of the British system in that they would like to get a decent job, get a house, get a profession.⁵⁷²

As children arrived in the UK, the change in climate and context from South Africa proved drastic. Ruth and her mother left South Africa in 1967 at the advice of a psychiatrist following Ruth’s first attempted suicide. She wrote:

This city is so vast and confusing, I feel like I could be lost forever. In London I expected to find bright colours and parties every day but instead I find the colour

⁵⁶⁵ Israel, *South African Political Exile*, 86, 89-91.

⁵⁶⁶ Israel, *South African Political Exile*, 5, 93, 97-8, 100-1.

⁵⁶⁷ Israel, *South African Political Exile*, 102-3.

⁵⁶⁸ Israel, *South African Political Exile*, 89.

⁵⁶⁹ Israel, *South African Political Exile*, 1.

⁵⁷⁰ Israel, *South African Political Exile*, 121.

⁵⁷¹ La Guma, *In the Dark*, 132-3.

⁵⁷² Israel, *South African Political Exile*, 125.

grey, and endless rain. I feel lost and rootless, struggling to find my way through this maze of buildings, traffic and cold, bad weather. My fragile sense of self has disappeared and exile, and the loss of my country and family, fragment me. I lose all connection to myself in this strange city. How will I ever put the pieces together again?⁵⁷³

In London, she made several more suicide attempts.⁵⁷⁴ Kethiwe came to England via Zambia and expressed similar feelings of disconnection:

So really, I begin to understand exile when I reach England and that is a... I suppose a traumatic incident, in the sense, that I'm plucked out... I don't even really know cognitively, I think, that I was plucked out (...) I remember school, I remember being an outsider (...).⁵⁷⁵

For children, schools became a key site of embarrassment, marginalisation, and lasting difficulties with the British system. Although many eventually made friends with British children (and, often, the children of other immigrant groups), they initially struggled to integrate.⁵⁷⁶ For Zoya, this was impacted by her immigration status – issues with her documentation meant she did not enrol at school in London until she was eight years old.⁵⁷⁷ The Wolpes were ridiculed for their last name, as Tessa recounted: 'I couldn't cope with the fact that we were different, I couldn't cope with this name of ours, I wanted to be accepted.'⁵⁷⁸ After showing initial academic potential, she dropped out of school, started stealing and drinking at age 14, and struggled to find a career – until today, she struggles with her self-esteem in educational contexts. Robyn Slovo recalled being a 'troublemaker' and 'problem child' even at school in South Africa.⁵⁷⁹ By the time she was 14, now in the UK, she started taking drugs, struggling with addiction until the age of 33.

⁵⁷³ Carneson, *Girl On the Edge*, Ch.19.

⁵⁷⁴ Carneson, *Girl On the Edge*, Ch.21.

⁵⁷⁵ Ngcobo, interview.

⁵⁷⁶ Ruth Carneson, interview; Peta Wolpe, interview; Tessa Wolpe, interviewed by author, Cape Town, 13 March 2023.

⁵⁷⁷ Zoya Joseph, interview.

⁵⁷⁸ Tessa Wolpe, interview.

⁵⁷⁹ Robyn Slovo, interview by Hilda Bernstein, 1991, Hilda Bernstein Collection, MCA 7 – 1700, Mayibuye Archives, UWC.

Racism by their peers and in society was a constant feature of children's lives in the UK, particularly at boarding schools, which they attended while their parents were on assignments.⁵⁸⁰ Kethiwe highlighted the impact of Enoch Powell's River of Blood Speech in 1968 on her lack of belonging, while Nadia recounted the activities of the National Front.⁵⁸¹ Nadia also emphasised the ubiquity of racism during her childhood in a North London suburb:

(...) we'd get comments from parents from some of the children in the street saying, you know, you can go back to the jungle or, you know, that kind of thing or you cook with onions, they're so smelly, you know, like an onion was seen as exotic.⁵⁸²

Reva recalled her early days in London in the mid-1960s to early 1970s:

So, Finchley at that time was fairly white, Jewish. (...) and it was quite a bit of sort of condescending racism and (...) I always wanted to you know have blue eyes, fit in, be Jewish. I went to synagogue.⁵⁸³

Especially for the children who had previously spent time in other exile locations, such as Lusaka and Maputo, where racism played less of a role, the sudden exposure was a shock.⁵⁸⁴

These places' geopolitical and social contexts are crucial to understanding the development of activists' communities as a key space for children's politicisation, see Chapter 5.

Conceptualising Exile as Experienced by Children

Exile as a category is 'imagined, constructed, negotiated, and defended', as Israel argues.⁵⁸⁵

Exile is often conceptualised into three stages (or, sometimes, characteristics): 'forced exit',

⁵⁸⁰ Letebele Masemola-Jones, interviewed by author, Cape Town, 29 March 2023; Busisiwe Chaane, interviewed by author, Johannesburg, 30 January 2023.

⁵⁸¹ Ngcobo, interview; Nadia Joseph, interviewed by author, online, 5 September 2023.

⁵⁸² Nadia Joseph, interview.

⁵⁸³ Reva, interviewed by author, Johannesburg, 19 January 2023 (pseudonymised).

⁵⁸⁴ Chaane, interview; Elizabeth, interviewed by author, Johannesburg, 4 March 2023 (pseudonymised).

⁵⁸⁵ Israel, *South African Political Exile*, 140.

‘dissenting voice’, and the ‘struggle to return’.⁵⁸⁶ Israel rejects this categorisation as ‘no more than an unproblematized idealization of exile – a view of exile that perhaps owes more to romanticism than detailed ethnographic work’.⁵⁸⁷ He regards exile as a ‘subjective state’, specifically ‘forged, in part, by physical and symbolic violence in the arenas of exit, displacement and return.’⁵⁸⁸ He argues that ‘forced exit’ as an essential stage is too simple:

It [Force or violence] may be physical, economic or psychological. It can be deployed directly at the person who leaves or at someone else, perhaps someone close to the migrant. It may even be undirected, diffuse and incidental. Indeed, violence might have been inflicted, or it may simply hang over the potential victim as a threat, real or imaginary.⁵⁸⁹

South Africans, thus, left in response to a complex interplay of economic, social, and political forces.⁵⁹⁰

Many children left at a young age, yet their childhood in South Africa and the moments of departure remain vivid memories. Reva was just under three years old when she and her mother joined her father in the UK in 1967.⁵⁹¹ She holds no memories of South Africa but recalled: ‘I think I remember the plane, I sort of have these memories because it must have been a stressful time (...)’.⁵⁹² Ntombi remembered:

So, I have some memories of my life before four, but the most distinctive one (...) is that I remember leaving the night we left and the stuff that had to go on (...) I remember getting into the car. I don’t know how we got over the border. I don’t have any recollection of all that stuff.⁵⁹³

De Sas Kropiwnicki argues that children retained these vivid memories due to a mixture of memory and imagination, as well as ‘the difficulty that second-generation exiles faced in deconstructing “new creations” composed from the individual and the collective – direct and

⁵⁸⁶ Ma Shu-Yun, “The Exit, Voice and Struggle to Return of Chinese Political Exiles,” *Pacific Affairs* 66 (1993): 368-385, cited in Israel, *South African Political Exile*, 7.

⁵⁸⁷ Israel, *South African Political Exile*, 7.

⁵⁸⁸ Israel, *South African Political Exile*, 7, 17.

⁵⁸⁹ Israel, *South African Political Exile*, 53.

⁵⁹⁰ Israel, *South African Political Exile*, 53.

⁵⁹¹ Reva, interview.

⁵⁹² Reva, interview.

⁵⁹³ Langa-Royds, interview.

appropriated – memories.’⁵⁹⁴ Departure into exile represented a crucial moment, interplaying with the memories of a wider South African exile collective.⁵⁹⁵ This pivotal moment is emphasised by Ruth:

As the plane takes off, I see Table Mountain and the sea disappear into the distance and I am plummeted into exile. My life splits in two, a point of no return. I might never be allowed to go home again. I am flying to England, a new land, not out of choice but out of fear.⁵⁹⁶

For some children, their departures into exile posed a great escape, so Adelaide Tambo crossed to Swaziland on foot in 1960, disguised as a peasant woman.⁵⁹⁷ Over three months, she travelled with two toddlers from Swaziland via Belgian Congo, where they were arrested, to Ghana and then to the UK.⁵⁹⁸ When Laurretta Ngcobo and her three daughters travelled from Swaziland to Zambia, following her exit from South Africa in 1963, they were held at gunpoint – a traumatising event for Kethiwe’s older siblings.⁵⁹⁹ These narratives of the ‘great escape’ dominated, becoming a ‘badge of honour’ for exiles.⁶⁰⁰

As activists left in secrecy, often in dangerous circumstances, or under false pretences, their children were sometimes only able to join them at a later stage. Aged seven, Zoya and her sister, Tanya (18 months old), travelled to the UK to join their mother.⁶⁰¹ Her mother, Adelaide Joseph, had visited Europe to seek care for Zoya’s disabled twin brother, Anand.⁶⁰² As the situation in South Africa deteriorated, Adelaide was advised to remain in the UK, effectively exiling her until the 1990s.⁶⁰³ Zoya and Tanya left suddenly; little was communicated to Zoya: she could not understand why her grandmother was crying.⁶⁰⁴ On

⁵⁹⁴ De Sas Kropiwnicki, *Exile*, 58.

⁵⁹⁵ De Sas Kropiwnicki, *Exile*, 58.

⁵⁹⁶ Carneson, *Girl On the Edge*, Ch.19.

⁵⁹⁷ Du Preez Bezdrob, *Winnie Mandela*, 86-7.

⁵⁹⁸ Du Preez Bezdrob, *Winnie Mandela*, 86-7.

⁵⁹⁹ Ngcobo, interview.

⁶⁰⁰ Israel, *South African Political Exile*, 59.

⁶⁰¹ Zoya Joseph, interview; Israel, *South African Political Exile*, 68.

⁶⁰² Zoya Joseph, interview.

⁶⁰³ Israel, *South African Political Exile*, 66.

⁶⁰⁴ Nadia Joseph, interview.

the plane, she felt abandoned and struggled with the pressure of being responsible for Tanya. Only later, did she discover that her father had arranged for a friend to supervise them.⁶⁰⁵ Peta, who left South Africa in 1963, aged six, alongside her little sister, remembered the flight similarly: ‘I don’t have a memory of being nurtured or cared on that flight (...)’⁶⁰⁶ Like Zoya, she felt abandoned, under pressure to look after her sister. Her parents had arranged for someone to keep an eye on them, but this was not her reality.

Yet, not all children viewed their departures from South Africa as the first stage of exile: their narratives further substantiate Israel’s critique of exile conceptualisations. Particularly, Lesotho and Swaziland were considered to be culturally so similar that children often did not see their time there as exile. Moeletsi Mbeki, who spent much of his schooling in Lesotho, discussed only his departure from Lesotho to the UK as ‘to go to exile, so to speak’.⁶⁰⁷ Zola was born in Swaziland in 1967 and spent his childhood in a strong South African community; despite secrecy regulations, he was friends with other children of activists, conscious of being ‘children of South Africa’, yet, for him ‘going to SOMAFCO [in 1981] was like going to exile’.⁶⁰⁸

Other parents made a conscious decision not to inflict a state of exile on their children, so Peter Hain wrote:

As we were to discover, many South African exiles in Britain lived a kind of limbo existence - waiting to return. That was their choice and their dream. But my parents were determined to put down roots, to get involved in the community and to make a new future. We must not be outsiders: Britain was now our home, they made clear to me.⁶⁰⁹

⁶⁰⁵ Zoya Joseph, interview; Joseph, *Slumboy*, 176.

⁶⁰⁶ Peta Wolpe, interview.

⁶⁰⁷ Moeletsi Mbeki, interview by Wolfie Kodesh, 13 March 1993, Oral History of Exiles Project, MCA6 – 315, Mayibuye Archives, UWC.

⁶⁰⁸ Zola Maseko, interviewed by author, online, 13 June 2023.

⁶⁰⁹ Hain, *Pretoria Boy*, 76.

Anand and Deenan also emphasised the importance of their parents' stance in shaping their sense of belonging in the UK.⁶¹⁰

Children's departures into 'exile' were also shaped by parents' hope for better education and opportunities for their children outside of Bantu education.⁶¹¹ Ntombi was born in 1962 in Johannesburg to a single mother:

(...) so she then spoke to her younger brother, who was then going into exile, to say "I'm a divorced mother, I'm on my own, I've got this child, there is no hope for South Africa, there is no hope for black children, black girls in South Africa, best to go with this child and perhaps, she'll have a better start, you know better trajectory, so to speak". So, I got smuggled out of the country in 1966 with my aunt (...).⁶¹²

Her uncle and aunt officially adopted her in Zambia.⁶¹³ For older children, who had already become politically active, educational opportunities also facilitated an exit when they needed to escape arrest (see more in Chapter 7).

Boarding schools outside South African borders offered parents the opportunity to move their children out of harm's way while enabling access to improved education. Swaneng Hill School in Bechuanaland was started in 1963 by anti-apartheid activists Patrick and Elizabeth van Rensburg.⁶¹⁴ The school placed great emphasis on self-reliance in its pedagogy and was attended, for example, by the children of Godfrey and Irene Beck, while they were refugees in Bechuanaland/Botswana.⁶¹⁵ In the same year, Michael Stern, a former Johannesburg teacher, founded Waterford in Swaziland as a mixed-race school. Through

⁶¹⁰ Anand Pillay, interview; Deenan Pillay, interviewed by author, online, 13 June 2023.

⁶¹¹ Chaane, interview; Langa-Royds, interview; Themba, interviewed by author, Johannesburg, 17 February 2023 (pseudonymised).

⁶¹² Langa-Royds, interview.

⁶¹³ Langa-Royds, interview.

⁶¹⁴ Swaneng Hill School, *Report on Swaneng Hill School and other Projects*, Serowe Bechuanaland (Serowe: Swaneng Hill School, approx. 1966), 5.

⁶¹⁵ Othnell E. Beck, interview by Esther Levitan, 1990, Hilda Bernstein Collection, MCA 7 – 1457, Mayibuye Archives, UWC; *The Swaneng Story*, WordPress blog, accessed 23 August 2025, <https://theswanengstory.wordpress.com/>.

Eleanor Birley, wife of Sir Robert Birley (former headmaster of Eton College and visiting Professor at Wits), Zenani and Zindzi Mandela were sent to Waterford in 1971.⁶¹⁶ Unable to find schooling in Johannesburg, they had previously been sent to the Convent of Our Lady of Sorrows in Swaziland, where they were deeply unhappy.⁶¹⁷ Other students of Waterford – often assisted through donations – included the Sisulu children, Patrick Bernstein, Coco and Ghaleb Cachalia (children of Yusuf and Amina Cachalia), Desmond Tutu’s daughters, as well as Xolile Guma, Samuel Guma’s son.⁶¹⁸ Children perceived these educational movements with some trepidation – Patrick Bernstein saw his schooling at Waterford as an easy option for his parents.⁶¹⁹ Ntombikayise Carneson (née Lukhele) attended boarding school after joining her father, who worked for the ANC, in Swaziland.⁶²⁰ Her father rarely visited, so, aged 16, she confronted him and cut ties, declaring her association with her mother’s family – an ‘almost unthinkable step for a child to take’.⁶²¹

The apartheid regime actively restricted children’s educational movements. Coco and Ghaleb Cachalia attended Waterford in the early 1970s.⁶²² Ghaleb’s passport was due to expire when he planned to travel to London, but South African authorities advised him to go on his existing passport and apply for a new passport from the UK. When his new passport was refused, he was stranded in the UK, unable to return to Waterford. The government told his mother that they opposed children of colour’s access to schooling

⁶¹⁶ du Preez Bezdrob, *Winnie Mandela*, 133.

⁶¹⁷ du Preez Bezdrob, *Winnie Mandela*, 133.

⁶¹⁸ Cachalia, *When Hope and History Rhyme*, 226-7; John Daniel, “Teaching Politics in Exile: A Memoir from Swaziland 1973–1985,” *Politikon* 40, no.3 (2013): 449; Patrick Bernstein, interviewed by Glenn Frankel, August 10, 1997, Glenn Frankel Papers, University of Delaware, Newark, DE, used with interviewer’s permission.

⁶¹⁹ Patrick Bernstein, interview.

⁶²⁰ Carneson, *John and Ntombi*, 50.

⁶²¹ Carneson, *John and Ntombi*, 52-4.

⁶²² Cachalia, *When Hope and History Rhyme*, 226-7.

outside of South Africa, but she believed that he was also being punished for his parents' actions.⁶²³

I will now turn towards the 'struggle to return' as conceptual feature of exile.⁶²⁴ Some activist-families left legally on their own passports, but most used foreign passports (many whites had British passports), received an exit permit, or left illegally. Most were consequently stripped of their South African citizenship. Reva's mother's passport was confiscated only a few days before their departure – both her children had been on this passport.⁶²⁵ On an exit permit, they flew to the UK, where Reva received 'a British travel document for refugees... brown thing (...) valid for all countries except South Africa.'⁶²⁶ As children were usually on their parents' passports, they too became stateless, reliant on refugee documentation.

Yet, unlike their parents, who were generally unable to return, children crossed the border more frequently to visit extended family or a relative in prison, challenging this idea of the 'struggle to return'. Some were added to non-activists' passports or used other names (their married names after marriage, their mother's maiden names, etc.) to enable these crossings.⁶²⁷ Zola Maseko occasionally returned to South Africa from Swaziland on another woman's passport.⁶²⁸ In some cases, children were able to keep/receive their own passports, even when their parents could not.⁶²⁹ Visits allowed children to (re)connect with their extended families and experience 'home', furthermore offering parents a connection to

⁶²³ Cachalia, *When Hope and History Rhyme*, 229.

⁶²⁴ I will discuss the second characteristic of exile 'dissenting voice' in Chapter 5, albeit it outside this conceptual framework.

⁶²⁵ Reva, interview.

⁶²⁶ Reva, interview.

⁶²⁷ Strasburg, interview; Carneson-McGregor, interview.

⁶²⁸ Maseko, interview.

⁶²⁹ Carmel Chetty, *Prodigal Daughters: Stories of South African Women in Exile*, ed. Lauretta Ngcobo (Durban: University of KwaZulu Natal Press, 2012), 63.

South Africa.⁶³⁰ Carmel Chetty's son, who had retained his passport, represented his exiled parents at family events.⁶³¹ Ntombi's biological mother could occasionally visit her exiled daughter.⁶³²

The ANC dictated its members' communications with and movements to South Africa, although its official stance varied over the decades. Initially, any communication and cross-border movement were forbidden. Some families circumvented these rules, as Sheila Weinberg recalled:

You were forbidden from communicating with your family. It was a hardship for a lot of people and people like my mother who was I suppose maybe less disciplined she used to write letters, mail them to London and then somebody else would re-envelope them and mail them here. So she was writing to me all the time that she shouldn't have been doing so.⁶³³

This seems to have changed over time, as in December 1980, the ANC Working Committee discontinued the 'recent policy of allowing comrades to meet their parents or relatives in the forward areas like Botswana, Swaziland, etc. This decision was primarily prompted by consideration of security and to a less extent [sic] by financial needs.'⁶³⁴ Exemptions (medical reasons, death, or burial) were assessed case-by-case. The risk had become too high as the state forced relatives to bring along informants in the guise of an 'uncle' or pressure their exiled relatives to return.⁶³⁵ In the same missive, members were also requested to cease writing letters to South Africa to avoid leaking valuable information. This decision was reaffirmed around 1983, adding psychological reasons to the exemptions.⁶³⁶ But in

⁶³⁰ Nomsa Judith Mkhwanazi, *Prodigal Daughters: Stories of South African Women in Exile*, ed. Laurreta Ngcobo (Durban: University of KwaZulu Natal Press, 2012), 96.

⁶³¹ Chetty, *Prodigal Daughters*, 63.

⁶³² Langa-Royds, interview.

⁶³³ Weinberg, interview; Sibeko, *Freedom*, 101.

⁶³⁴ Letter by Joe Nhlanhla, Administrative Secretary to Connie Dlingea, ANC Luanda, 19 December [likely 1980], Box 2 & 3, A2675 Karis-Gerhart Collection, Historical Papers, Wits. [italics added by author for emphasis]

⁶³⁵ Letter by Joe Nhlanhla to Connie Dlingea, 19 December [likely 1980], A2675 Karis-Gerhart Collection.

⁶³⁶ Recommendations on Discipline, n.a., n.d. [approx. 1983], Box 5, Folder 53-58, A2675 Karis-Gerhart Collection, Historical Papers, Wits.

1987, the Regional Women's Conference adopted the recommendation: 'Family ties in exile should be maintained. Families at home seeking to contact their members in exile should be given maximum assistance', highlighting a change in the embargo.⁶³⁷

Not only the apartheid state, but also the liberation movements made use of these cross-border activities. On her first and only visit to Apartheid South Africa at age 14, exile-born Nadia clandestinely delivered a letter to Zindzi Mandela.⁶³⁸ Themba occasionally visited her family in South Africa until the age of 14 (around 1984), when her father informed her that she could either remain in South Africa or stay in exile – as a teenager, the risk of arrest was too high.⁶³⁹

Children's 'return' to South Africa during the transitional phase and following the end of apartheid will be discussed in Chapter 8.

Experiences of Apartheid's Violence in Exile

The previous chapter discussed some of the violence that children experienced at the hand of apartheid agents in South Africa. For children, exile rarely represented a break from violence and uncertainty. This continuity was in part perceived – a psychological consequence of their experiences in South Africa – but, based on location and period, also very real.

For Zoya, this continuity in uncertainty and fear was reflected in the continuity of her daily life: her family mixed with similar people in London and their home in Notting

⁶³⁷ Recommendations adopted by the Regional Women's Conference – East Africa (Mazimbu), 24-26 July 1987, Box 7-8, Folder 79, 82, 83, A2675 Karis-Gerhart Collection, Historical Papers, Wits.

⁶³⁸ Nadia Joseph, interview.

⁶³⁹ Themba, interview.

Hill was similarly destitute to their home in Johannesburg.⁶⁴⁰ Her feelings of insecurity were amplified after her father encountered a BOSS agent on a British train platform. When he experienced nightmares and sweats for weeks, Zoya was told he was suffering from the flu, but she understood what had happened. She always feared her father would be killed: ‘There was no difference (...) it just came with me.’⁶⁴¹ Up until today, ‘[feeling] safe remains a concern’.⁶⁴² Her sister, Nadia, experienced the UK as a safer place, perhaps also because she – having been born in exile – had never experienced the levels of persecution that Zoya had experienced in South Africa.⁶⁴³

Children expressed their fears through their nightmares and imagination. Nicholas recalled:

I used to imagine that there would be a guy on the other side of the street with a gun and I would crawl on the floor because I was convinced that if I stood up and opened the curtains he would shoot me in the head so I had these visualisations where I would literally crawl to my cupboard and gradually poke my head out above (...) the window and when it was clear I would open the curtains.⁶⁴⁴

His sister, Tessa, had frequent nightmares of men chasing her father in black coats; she and her siblings were convinced that they could see a face in the window at night.⁶⁴⁵ Children also struggled to adapt to the altered security situation in exile; when Ruth and her mother visited a friend and talked about South Africa, Ruth panicked:

The questions go on and on. My stomach is in knots and I am white as a sheet, my hands are clenched and trembling as I hear another knock on the door. This is not safe, why is Mum answering their questions? Perhaps we are being watched. The people here don’t understand that this is a dangerous situation. Perhaps the police will raid the flat. I feel sick.⁶⁴⁶

⁶⁴⁰ Zoya Joseph, interview.

⁶⁴¹ Zoya Joseph, interview.

⁶⁴² Zoya Joseph, interview.

⁶⁴³ Nadia Joseph, interview.

⁶⁴⁴ Nicholas Wolpe, interviewed by author, Johannesburg, 24 January 2023.

⁶⁴⁵ Tessa Wolpe, interview.

⁶⁴⁶ Carneson, *Girl On the Edge*, Ch.20.

Children constantly feared their parents' death.⁶⁴⁷ Dali Tambo recalled: '(...) that was another side of the constant thought in my head, (...) I never thought my father would live to see South Africa free. I always expected him to be assassinated in a way, I mentally prepared myself.'⁶⁴⁸ In August 1982, Ruth First was assassinated by a letter bomb in Maputo; her daughter, Gillian, remembered: 'It had come, that moment I'd been expecting my whole life. One of my parents was dead. Not naturally: one of them had been killed. I knew that. What I didn't know was which one.'⁶⁴⁹

These fears and fantasies were grounded in the real threat of violence that followed South Africans into exile. The distance between the UK and South Africa offered some assurance, although from 1965 onwards 'political exiles were subject to a range of symbolic and physical violence from the South African government', including misinformation, infiltration, intelligence gathering, 'surveillance, bugging, interception of mail, burglary, arson attacks, kidnap plots, blackmail and bombing'.⁶⁵⁰ On 14 March 1982, the London ANC office in Penton Street was bombed (although only one person was injured).⁶⁵¹ After 1984, Pretoria waged a 'covert war of harassment, disruption and terror' across Europe, including an arson attack on the AAM offices in July 1985, the bombing of the ANC office in Stockholm in 1986 (no deaths), and the assassination of ANC Chief Representative Dulcie September in March 1988 in Paris.⁶⁵² Children were directly threatened – in 1971, Norma Kitson was told by the SB: 'That's a nice boy you've got there – your son. I heard he was run down at Henly's Corner in London some time ago. I don't know if you thought that was

⁶⁴⁷ Israel, *South African Political Exile*, 194.

⁶⁴⁸ Dali Tambo, interview by Hilda Bernstein, 1990, Hilda Bernstein Collection, MCA 7 – 1708, Mayibuye Archives, UWC.

⁶⁴⁹ Gillian Slovo, *Every Secret Thing: My Family, My Country* (London: Little, Brown and Co, 1997), 15.

⁶⁵⁰ Israel, *South African Political Exile*, 184.

⁶⁵¹ Israel, *South African Political Exile*, 193.

⁶⁵² Israel, *South African Political Exile*, 193.

an accident.⁶⁵³ 11 years later, her son, Steven, was detained and tortured while visiting his imprisoned father in South Africa (see Chapter 3).⁶⁵⁴ As in South Africa, children were highly conscious of the possibility of their homes being tapped and bugged; many regularly checked under the cars for bombs.⁶⁵⁵ In protest, Zoya screamed or burped into the phone, but did not share her fears with others, afraid of sounding paranoid.⁶⁵⁶

In frontline/African states, the security risk was drastically increased. Davis argues that the ANC used South Africa's border states as temporary bases whenever this was geopolitically possible, but established permanent bases in an 'outer arc of "sanctuary states"'.⁶⁵⁷ Even here, it spread itself across three states – the military in Angola, the political headquarters in Zambia, and the educational/training compounds in Tanzania.⁶⁵⁸ Throughout the 1960s, several cross-border abductions occurred and in 1964, South Africa bombed a refugee centre in Francistown (no deaths).⁶⁵⁹ In February 1974, the BC activist Abraham Tiro was assassinated via a parcel bomb in Botswana, soon after another parcel bomb killed Boy Mvemve (nom de guerre John Dube) in Lusaka, also injuring Max Sisulu.⁶⁶⁰ In August 1981, ANC Chief representative in Harare, Joe Gqabi, was murdered in his driveway in Salisbury.⁶⁶¹

⁶⁵³ Kitson, *Sixpence*, 196

⁶⁵⁴ Kitson, *Sixpence*, 250-1.

⁶⁵⁵ Peta Wolpe, interview; Andrew Kasrils, interviewed by author, Johannesburg, 20 January 2023; Reva, interview; Nadine Nannan, interviewed by author, Cape Town, 1 April 2023.

⁶⁵⁶ Zoya Joseph, interview.

⁶⁵⁷ Davis, *Apartheid's Rebels*, 46.

⁶⁵⁸ Davis, *Apartheid's Rebels*, 47.

⁶⁵⁹ Sifiso Mxolisi Ndlovu, "The ANC in exile, 1960-1970," in *The Road to Democracy in South Africa, Volume 1, 1960-1970*, ed. South African Democracy Education Trust (Pretoria: UNISA Press, 2004), 425.

⁶⁶⁰ Gordon Winter, *Inside Boss – South Africa's Secret Police* (London: Allen Lane Penguin Books, 1981), 564.

⁶⁶¹ Sisulu, *Walter and Albertina Sisulu*, 424.

Children were witnesses and casualties of these assassinations. In June 1982, the ANC Deputy Chief Representative in Swaziland, Petrus ‘Nzima’ Nyawose and his wife, Jabulile, were assassinated by a car bomb, which their children witnessed.⁶⁶² On 28 June 1984, Jeanette Schoon and her six-year-old daughter, Katryn, were killed by a letter bomb in Angola. Her two-year-old son, Fritz, survived.⁶⁶³ When his father, Marius, found him, Fritz was ‘rigid’ and barely spoke. After the incident, Fritz was attacked by monkeys – he was in hysterics for hours and, afterwards, continued to imagine their presence. Father and son eventually moved to Ireland, but Fritz developed epilepsy as a consequence of witnessing the assassination. His father reflected:

He can’t - well, he can’t talk about what he actually saw - that is blotted out completely. Now he virtually never talks about Jennie. I’ve been told by a comrade who spent a long time working in Mozambique, a very highly trained paediatrician, that he’s actually accepted Jennie’s death because we [are] certain that he actually saw Jennie, even though she was, to use his terms, broken, it was still Jennie – but Katryn just disintegrated – he actually didn’t see Katryn – and he talks about Katryn all the time. He talks about Katryn, oh, not every day any more but at least once a week, whereas he virtually never talks about Jennie.⁶⁶⁴

Activists’ homes were frequently robbed and surveilled – as in South Africa, children’s homes were thus psychological and physical battlegrounds. Children were highly vigilant and were trained by their parents to recognise and somewhat handle these threats; Phola recalled: ‘I remember being taught at an early age to be very vigilant about my surroundings, learning to recognise a limpet mine and a weapon (...)’.⁶⁶⁵ Paul Mohamed in Botswana recalled:

I was taught to be on my toes all the times. We practiced being prepared to get my brothers together and to divide ourselves, because any car that came might be a car with bombs, from the Death Squads. As one of seven years old I had an experience of one of fourteen years old. I had to grow up fast.⁶⁶⁶

⁶⁶² Sisulu, *Walter and Albertina Sisulu*, 424.

⁶⁶³ Marius Schoon, interview by Hilda Bernstein, 1991, Hilda Bernstein Collection, MCA 7 – 1677, Mayibuye Archives, UWC.

⁶⁶⁴ Marius Schoon, interview by Julie Frederikse, 1986, AL2460 Tracing the Unbreakable Thread – Non-Racialism in South Africa, A19.05.1, SAHA.

⁶⁶⁵ Mabizela-Mabaso, interview.

⁶⁶⁶ Bernstein, *Rift*, 494.

Paul's recollections echo the experiences of older children of activists, discussed in the previous chapter, who took on increased adult responsibility in response to apartheid's repression. Children frequently slept at other homes – for many children, these dispersals were exciting, while others actively resisted their constant movements.⁶⁶⁷ Parents tried to 'hide the dangers of and secrets of the underground struggle behind a smoke screen of play and adventure'.⁶⁶⁸ Children also normalised these security threats as a coping mechanism.

Maureen's home in Lusaka was bombed in the 1980s:

So, I clear the dining table, I was carrying plates to the kitchen and as I was walking in the passage, I heard this loud BANG and my mother just screamed and said 'RUN'. I just managed to take the plates to the kitchen, I don't know if the plates broke, the whole place was dark. That bomb destroyed 21 houses in the street, it was so powerful, it could have killed us.⁶⁶⁹

Despite this, she affirmed: 'But otherwise, we had a normal upbringing.'⁶⁷⁰

Pretoria also launched several bigger campaigns into neighbouring countries, some of which they publicly acknowledged, including the Matola Raid in January 1981 in Mozambique, the Maseru raid in 1982 in Lesotho, the 1985 killings in Gaborone of 12 people, and a triple strike in 1986 on targets in Zambia, Botswana, and Zimbabwe.⁶⁷¹ The Maseru raid on 9 December, 1982, was South Africa's deadliest raid in exile – 30 South Africans and 12 Basotho were killed, including a four-year-old child.⁶⁷² General Constand Viljoen, Chief of the SADF, claimed that soldiers had orders not to harm women and children, but activist Phyllis Naidoo argued that children were killed intentionally.⁶⁷³ 15-year-old Manyano Ondala recounted:

⁶⁶⁷ Hani, *Hani's Daughter*, 15; Sechaba Mogale and Nkuli Kgositsile, interviewed by author, 3 March 2023, Johannesburg.

⁶⁶⁸ Mogale, Kgositsile, interview; De Sas Kropiwnicki, *Exile*, 78.

⁶⁶⁹ Maureen McNabb, interviewed by author, Cape Town, 1 April 2023.

⁶⁷⁰ McNabb, interview.

⁶⁷¹ Davis, *Apartheid's Rebels*, 42-3.

⁶⁷² Sisulu, *Walter and Albertina Sisulu*, 428.

⁶⁷³ Phyllis Naidoo, *Le Rona Re Batho – An Account of the 1982 Maseru Massacre* [sic](Johannesburg, Phyllis Naidoo, 1992), 11.

On hearing the shooting I crawled under the bed. A boer said there was no one in the room and left but a Black, comrade turned traitor, said, “No, they are inside” and broke down his door and entered. His torchlight did not pick me up. (...) I stayed under the bed until my comrades called out to me.⁶⁷⁴

Matsobane and Kananelo Sexwale (aged ten and eight, respectively) were seriously injured in the raid.⁶⁷⁵ They survived because their father had prepared them:

(...) because we knew that they [the LLA] were working with the Boers and everything, we kind of prepared already.. well my parents prepared us for.. just in case, they might [work] to the extent that they come and bomb ANC members, member’s houses, so he used to play little games, army games, kind of like with a handgrenade and throw it and like say if I took the handgrenade and threw it towards whoever it was I was playing with at the time and shout “Down!” and we’d all go down.⁶⁷⁶

The Lesotho Liberation Army (LLA) had colluded with Pretoria against the Lesotho government and claimed a further raid on two houses in Maseru on 20 December 1985, killing nine ANC members.⁶⁷⁷

Parental Absences and Family Separation

Families continued to be separated in exile, as parents were sent on dangerous assignments, while children (sometimes with one parent) remained in safer areas. While Tambo travelled frequently for his work and spent much of his time in Lusaka, his family remained in London.⁶⁷⁸ Andrew’s father, Ronnie, initially lived with his wife, Eleanor, and two sons in London but was later sent to Angola:

The family news is “Hey, kids. Dad’s got to now go to Angola”. (...) And, so you know, that was this in a family sense at that age learning he’s going away and will only see him now and again. And that would be from then on once a year, maybe for a couple of weeks. The longest gap it ever was was two years. So, and it was at that exact time that we, me and my brother, were also given a puppy, which in retrospect, you know, that was very clever [both laugh].⁶⁷⁹

⁶⁷⁴ Naidoo, *Maseru Massacre*, 78.

⁶⁷⁵ Matsobane Sexwale, interview by Hilda Bernstein, 1990, Hilda Bernstein Collection, MCA 7 – 1688, Mayibuye Archives, UWC; Mabuza, *Conversations with Tambo*, 76-7.

⁶⁷⁶ Sexwale, interview.

⁶⁷⁷ Mothibe, Mushonga, “Lesotho,” 500.

⁶⁷⁸ Macmillan, *Lusaka Years*, 97.

⁶⁷⁹ Andrew Kasrils, interview.

The separation was extremely difficult for his two sons, but also for Eleanor, who struggled under the pressures of raising her sons while being the sole provider.⁶⁸⁰ Sandwell argues that ‘the separation produced by exile in some ways repeated the destruction of family life that apartheid and its migrant labour regimes imposed on black South Africans.’⁶⁸¹

The ANC relied on most members to keep up full-time employment as they paid only a small stipend to its full-time functionaries.⁶⁸² In some cases, spouses – usually women – were told that their employment constituted their contribution: when Zarina Maharaj arrived in Lusaka in 1980, ANC Treasurer General Thomas Nkobi told her that she should support her family so that the ANC would not need to support them while Mac was underground.⁶⁸³ Sandwell suggests that ‘most women who entered exile in the 1960s and 1970s had to choose between family life and political commitments.’⁶⁸⁴ This placed spouses under intense pressures, in a situation akin to single-parent households.⁶⁸⁵

As in South Africa, children took on supportive roles within their families, and consequently grew up faster. Norma Kitson recalled that her children ‘behaved older than their contemporaries. They did not have time for games and toys. (...) I felt guilty that my children were missing out this stage of growing up which, in Britain, is considered vital to normal development.’⁶⁸⁶ Zoya described herself as a ‘sibling-parent’, explaining: ‘(...) they

⁶⁸⁰ Andrew Kasrils, interview; Eleanor Kasrils, interview by Hilda Bernstein, 1990, Hilda Bernstein Collection, MCA 7 – 1529, Mayibuye Archives, UWC.

⁶⁸¹ Rachel Sandwell, “‘Love I cannot begin to explain’: The politics of reproduction in the ANC in exile, 1976-1990,” *Journal of Southern African Studies* 41, no. 1 (2015): 72.

⁶⁸² Zarina Maharaj, *Dancing to a Different Rhythm* (Cape Town: Zebra Press, 2006), 129.

⁶⁸³ Maharaj, *Dancing to a Different Rhythm*, 15.

⁶⁸⁴ Sandwell, “‘Love I cannot begin to explain,” 72.

⁶⁸⁵ Eleanor Kasrils, interview.

⁶⁸⁶ Kitson, *Sixpence*, 192.

see me as an awful parent, and I understand that, because I wasn't the ideal.'⁶⁸⁷ Children also psychologically supported their exiled parents.⁶⁸⁸

While parents took up scholarships, underwent training, or were sent on assignments, some children were raised by family members in exile – Sechaba was raised by his grandparents in Lusaka, while his mother studied in the USSR on an ANC scholarship.⁶⁸⁹ On her occasional visits, he found it difficult to connect with her. Nkuli spent her childhood across Swaziland, Mozambique, Kenya, and Tanzania, 'passed around like a DHL parcel'.⁶⁹⁰ Later, her stepfather Willie Kgositsile's position at the university in Dar es Salaam offered the family some stability. For Zola, his father's physical absence, as well as his mother's emotional absence, was psychologically harrowing:

(...) as a child between 0 and 10, there was always this, just this uncertainty, you know, and this feeling of not belonging, not settled in a family, as a family, absent father, emotionally absent mother, emotionally absent father even though he tried.⁶⁹¹

Israel emphasises children's separation from their parents as a factor in children's emotional instability; research on conflict contexts further supports this.⁶⁹²

Lodge argues that the ANC became a 'state-in-exile':

It is an army, an educational system, a department of foreign affairs, a mini economy, a source of moral hegemony, in short, a government (...) it is a state-in-exile, and only in exile could such a state have been constructed.⁶⁹³

⁶⁸⁷ Zoya Joseph, interview.

⁶⁸⁸ David Max Brown, interviewed by author, Cape Town, 3 April 2023.

⁶⁸⁹ Mogale, Kgositsile, interview.

⁶⁹⁰ Mogale, Kgositsile, interview.

⁶⁹¹ Maseko, interview.

⁶⁹² R. M. Fraser, "The Cost of Commotion: an Analysis of the Psychiatric Sequelae of the 1969 Belfast Riots," *British Journal of Psychiatry* 118, no. 544 (1971): 257-264; Lea Baider and Eva Rosenfeld, "Effects of Parental Fears on Children in Wartime," *Social Casework* 55, no. 8 (1974): 497-503; Norman Garmezay and Michael Rutter, "Acute Reactions to Stress," in *Child and Adolescent Psychiatry*, 2nd edition, eds. Michael Rutter and Lionel Hersov (Oxford: Blackwell, 1985), 152-176, all cited in Israel, "Living with 'A World Apart'."

⁶⁹³ Tom Lodge, "State of Exile: The ANC of South Africa, 1976-86," *Third World Quarterly* 9, no. 1 (1987): 27.

The ANC built up several children-focused institutions, which grew in size throughout the 1980s. Constructions on SOMAFCO started in 1977, and by 1978, teaching commenced, although the complex was officially only opened in 1985.⁶⁹⁴ SOMAFCO was created to provide political training and general education for Soweto recruits, many of whom were barely politicised or followed BCM ideology, and now had to be brought into the ANC party line. In addition, many had received limited education under Bantu Education or lacked the educational certificates required for scholarships.⁶⁹⁵ Over the next few years, the complex acquired a primary and secondary school, a nursery, a hospital, and a furniture factory.⁶⁹⁶ In 1982, the Dakawa Development Centre opened 55 km north of Mazimbu: it provided vocational training, acted as a transit camp for students joining SOMAFCO, as well as a rehabilitation space, and later even hosted a cultural centre.⁶⁹⁷

The ANC came to perceive its role in childhood development:

We should be aware that children learn from the movement, the growing child must have a clear and planned upbringing. This will contribute towards the development of the child's natural powers and an awareness of his responsibilities towards the larger South African community of which he will eventually be a member in the liberated South Africa.⁶⁹⁸

By the late 1970s, the Women's Section was responsible for the welfare of ANC members, including their children.⁶⁹⁹ In 1978, the Women's Section East Africa (WSEA) contacted the Women's Secretariat in Lusaka about childcare regarding the concerning number of

⁶⁹⁴ Morrow et al., *Education in Exile*, 10.

⁶⁹⁵ Shubin, *A View From Moscow*, 128.

⁶⁹⁶ Morrow et al., *Education in Exile*, 10-11.

⁶⁹⁷ Morrow, "Dakawa," 497.

⁶⁹⁸ The Role of Residential Care in the Liberation Struggle, by Mabel Choabi at the First Conference of ANC Women in the External Mission (n.d.), Box 2, Folder 6, ANC Lusaka Collection, UFH, cited in de Sas Kropiwnicki, *Exile*, 75.

⁶⁹⁹ Shireen Hassim, "Complicating history: The ANC and feminism in the twentieth century," in *Treading the Waters of History – Perspectives on the ANC*, eds. Kwandiwe Kondlo et al. (Pretoria: Institute of South Africa, 2014), 95; Report of the Women's Secretariat to the Office of the Secretary General, January, 1985, Year of the Cadre, by Gertrude Shope, Head of Women's Section, received 27 June 1985, Box 128, Folder 239-240, Subject Files, ANC Lusaka Mission, UFH.

pregnancies at SOMAFCO.⁷⁰⁰ From 1979, a number of residential homes in Morogoro – named the ‘Charlotte’s’ (after activist Charlotte Maxeke) – were used, before the creche and nursery section were moved to the Mazimbu complex.⁷⁰¹ Sandwell emphasises that although the WS had initially intended to send all women to the Charlottes, in practice, only military women or unmarried women were sent there, while children of elite activists or married couples were raised in the family unit.⁷⁰² In January 1984, the African National Congress Women’s Section (ANCWS) opened the Dora Tamana Creche in Lusaka.⁷⁰³ The issue of pregnancies and the treatment of young mothers became one of the central debates on the role of women in the struggle, discipline, and political commitment within the ANC in the 1980s, as Hassim and Sandwell discuss.⁷⁰⁴

It is the study of these institutions that has dominated academic output on questions of childhood, gender, and maternity in exile. Yet, this focus overshadows the fact that the ANC only started engaging with the questions of childhood in consequence of the Soweto outflux.⁷⁰⁵ In 1989, the ANCWS argued that ‘[t]he problem of children is relatively new in the ANC’, yet activists had been raising children in exile since the early 1950s.⁷⁰⁶ The children who experienced exile before the mid-1970s lacked the structures that later children experienced, yet this aspect is usually excluded from the few analyses of childhood in exile. Before the mid-1970s, their care was primarily perceived as the families’ responsibility,

⁷⁰⁰ Sandwell, “Love I cannot begin to explain,” 69.

⁷⁰¹ Sandwell, “Love I cannot begin to explain,” 72; Morrow et al., *Education in Exile*, 41-2.

⁷⁰² Sandwell, “Love I cannot begin to explain,” 73.

⁷⁰³ Hassim, *Women's Organizations*, 89; Project Proposal: Alternative Accommodation [sic] and needs for the ANC Dora Tamana Creche, Women’s Section, n.d., Box 93, Folder 17, Mittah Seperepere, ANC Lusaka Mission, UFH.

⁷⁰⁴ Sandwell, “Building a State in Exile”, Shireen Hassim, *The ANC Women’s League: Sex, Gender and Politics* (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 2015).

⁷⁰⁵ Séan Morrow et al. “Education in Exile: The African National Congress’s Solomon Mahlangu Freedom College (SOMAFCO) and Dakawa Development Centre in Tanzania: 1978 to 1992,” in *The History of Education Under Apartheid 1948-1994 – The Doors of Learning and Culture Shall be Opened*, ed. Peter Kallway (Cape Town: Pearson Education South Africa, 2002), 158.

⁷⁰⁶ Women Children and Family in a Future Constitutional Order, 8-12 December 1989, Lusaka, I2.1.3., AL2457 Original SAHA Collection, SAHA, Wits, Johannesburg.

relying on informal support.⁷⁰⁷ As this thesis focuses on activists pre-Soweto, and as other scholars have already investigated this matter in more detail, I will not dwell further on the Charlottes.

Psychological Distress and Substance Abuse in Exile

In the previous chapter, I discussed how activist-parents' psychological distress impacted their children's ability to cope. Their parents' distress was greatly exacerbated by exile.⁷⁰⁸ Tom Hain reflected how his parents' childcare approach changed in exile – while they had previously been caring and attentive, they became overwhelmed by the demands of exile and struggled to pay attention to their children.⁷⁰⁹ A survey, conducted by a Tanzanian psychiatrist and two ANC doctors, investigating the period from 1978-1982, found that amongst 4,000 ANC members in Tanzania and Zambia, there were 28 cases of schizophrenia, 27 cases of depression, 13 cases of anxiety neurosis, 16 cases of epilepsy, 17 cases of substance abuse, and 8 reported cases of suicide, and furthermore noted the frequency of alcoholism.⁷¹⁰ Sandwell also discusses the occurrence of domestic violence and 'wife-bashing'.⁷¹¹

This greatly impacted children, so Zoya recounted: 'Loads of the kids fell away by the roadside because their parents were traumatised.'⁷¹² The ANC acknowledged the impact activists' psychological states had on their children – in the minutes of an ANC meeting in 1989, children in exile are described as victims of apartheid because of 'the traumas and

⁷⁰⁷ Sandwell, "Building a State in Exile," 114.

⁷⁰⁸ De Sas Kropiwnicki, *Exile*, 128.

⁷⁰⁹ Hain, *Ad & Wal*, 273-5.

⁷¹⁰ Paper no. 22 – Background of a South African Exile with Psychiatric (Mental) Problems and Suggestions on Solutions, by Dr Ike Nzo, National Preparatory Committee Papers, Second African National Congress Women's Conference, September 1987, Box 92, Folder 10-14, Mittah Seperepere, ANC Lusaka Mission, UFH.

⁷¹¹ Sandwell, "Building a State in Exile," 270.

⁷¹² Zoya Joseph, interview.

psychological damage that the system has had on the parents [which] are reflected in the children'.⁷¹³ Children mirrored their parents' drinking, normalised within the ANC and its community 'under the guise of politics'.⁷¹⁴ Zoya volunteered at the ANC office in Penton Street; when she arrived, it often resembled a 'shebeen'.⁷¹⁵ As a teenager, she frequently led drunk ANC members home. Sechaba started drinking as a teenager as part of the 'ritual' of politics and alcohol that he and his peers copied from their parents.⁷¹⁶ Drinking was widespread at SOMAFCO, so Zola recounted: 'I was drinking very heavily from Tanzania because Tanzania, that's what we all did was drink.'⁷¹⁷

Children also credited the lack of supervision for enabling this behaviour.⁷¹⁸ An interviewee told de Sas Kropiwnicki,

that his mother was simply not able to cope with the care of her three children while working full time, so they were left to "run wild," which included truancy, drug use and criminal activity: "From the age of about 13 the drug use and the criminal activity and the violence just increased and it got more and more involved and more and more dangerous."⁷¹⁹

De Sas Kropiwnicki frames children's substance abuse and other behavioural problems, including theft and violence, as attempts to gain parental attention.⁷²⁰ An ANC document argued that a child stealing small amounts of money from their father was an indicator of jealousy:

Moreover on thinking back over this incident, this person thinks that as there were many children in her house, she was not just stealing money but love. Psychologists have found that many children who steal are deprived of love and attention and they

⁷¹³ The Proceedings of the meeting on "Women, children and family in a future constitutional order, 8th-12th", December 1989, Box 24, Folder 185, ANC Lusaka Mission, UFH, cited in de Sas Kropiwnicki, *Exile*, 129-30.

⁷¹⁴ Zoya Joseph, interview.

⁷¹⁵ Zoya Joseph, interview.

⁷¹⁶ Mogale, Kgotsitsile, interview.

⁷¹⁷ Maseko, interview.

⁷¹⁸ Ruth Carneson, interview.

⁷¹⁹ De Sas Kropiwnicki, *Exile*, 124.

⁷²⁰ De Sas Kropiwnicki, *Exile*, 124.

take money or objects to compensate. They may steal from children who they think are loved more than they are - children of whom they are jealous.⁷²¹

Other children emphasised the element of rebellion towards their parents in their actions.⁷²²

The ANC did not officially tackle mental health until the 1980s, in line with their general expansion of social services following the Soweto Uprising. In 1979, the ANC appealed for doctors to support SOMAFCO and its camps with medical issues (not including psychological issues, at this point).⁷²³ Activist Dr Freddy Reddy was the only one to head the call.⁷²⁴ When Reddy approached Tambo regarding psychological issues, Tambo responded: 'When we planned the revolution we did not think of psychiatric problems or mental health problems. We thought we'd just have a revolution but I didn't envisage the development of social and other problems.'⁷²⁵ Reddy treated ANC members in Mazimbu, Dakawa, and the camps. In 1985, Reddy visited SOMAFCO for several weeks, treating 45 students.⁷²⁶ The aforementioned survey by a Tanzanian psychiatrist and two ANC doctors was initiated in 1982 and released in 1987.⁷²⁷ In 1987, the ANC set up the Welfare Committee.⁷²⁸ In late 1988, clinical psychologist, Dr Zonke Majodina, visited SOMAFCO, upon the request of the ANC Health Secretariat.⁷²⁹ She found that only a third of students were able to cope with the situation of exile, while others used denial and avoidance as defence mechanisms, and heavy drinking to escape reality. Symptoms noted were anxiety,

⁷²¹ Notes from our Discussion on Behavior Problems and Disciplines, n.d., n.a., Box 15, Folder 66-75, ANC London Mission, UFH.

⁷²² Robyn Slovo, interview; Ruth Carneson, interview.

⁷²³ Freddy Reddy, interview by Pdraig O'Malley, 20 May 2004, O'Malley – The Heart of Hope, Nelson Mandela Foundation.

⁷²⁴ Reddy, interview.

⁷²⁵ Reddy, interview.

⁷²⁶ SOMAFCO Secondary Division Report, by Mohammed Tikly, approx. 1986, Box 128, Folder 239-240, Subject Files, ANC Lusaka Mission, UFH. Most of these were likely Soweto activists.

⁷²⁷ Paper no. 22 – Background of a South African Exile with Psychiatric (Mental) Problems and Suggestions on Solutions, 1987, ANC Lusaka Mission.

⁷²⁸ Macmillan, *Lusaka Years*, 183.

⁷²⁹ Report of Working Visit to Mazimbu August to September 1988, by Zonke Majodina, approx. late 1988, Box 11, Addition 2, ANC Lusaka Mission, UFH.

forgetfulness, depression, feelings of helplessness, loneliness, sleep disturbance, lack of concentration in school, difficulty in keeping social relationships, and paranoid feelings. She urged the implementation of a counselling service for SOMAFCO's students.

Sexual Assault in Exile

Children also became victims of sexual assault in exile. In 2005, Fezekile Ntsukela Kuzwayo (under the pseudonym of 'Khwezi') accused Zuma (later to become President of South Africa) of raping her earlier that year. She had sought him out for advice, perceiving him as an 'Uncle' (see Chapters 5 and 6). Her father, Judson Kuzwayo, had been an ANC/MK member and spent 10 years in Robben Island, alongside Zuma, before dying in a car accident in 1985. Fezekile had grown up in exile communities in Zambia, Zimbabwe and Swaziland. Court evidence suggested that Fezekile was raped three times as a child – at age five, twelve and thirteen – by ANC comrades.⁷³⁰ One of the comrades who had raped her had been an MK comrade who stayed with them at their home in 1987 to provide protection – Fezekile had perceived him as a brother.⁷³¹ In each of these three cases, the ANC was aware of the accusation and the matter was dealt with in ANC kangaroo courts.⁷³² Yet, the evidence of Fezekile's sexual assault during childhood was used to dismiss her allegations in court, insinuating her overt sexuality, as Hassim investigates in closer detail.⁷³³

Her case was not an isolated incident. When James Hadebe, an NEC member based in Dar es Salaam, resigned in 1968, one of his complaints regarded the claims of sexual

⁷³⁰ Redi Tlhabi, *Khwezi – The remarkable story of Fezekile Ntsukela Kuzwayo* (Johannesburg: Jonathan Ball Publishers, 2017), 73-4.

⁷³¹ Fezeka Kuzwayo, interview by Rachidi Molapo, 29 July 1994, Oral History of Exiles Project, MCA6-445, Mayibuye Archives, UWC.

⁷³² Tlhabi, *Fezekile Kuzwayo*, 73-4.

⁷³³ Shireen Hassim, "Democracy's Shadows: Sexual Rights and Gender Politics in the Rape Trial of Jacob Zuma," *African Studies* 68, no. 1 (2009): 59.

harassment that his daughter, Judith, had made against Alfred Kgokong, Robert Resha and Tennison Makiwane.⁷³⁴ A letter by Monica Pambo to the ANC Secretary General in 1982 described her concerns regarding her niece's treatment by the family that had cared for her:

The Pemas in particular Cde A. Pemba decided to dishonour the agreement as pointed above. There was an outcry of horror from all members of the organization in particular the Women Section for the abuse of Nomthandazo. In short he wanted to turn the young Nomthandazo into a Woman.⁷³⁵

Fezekile's childhood friend Kimmy underlined the prevalence of sexual assault in exile and particularly its surrounding silences, suggesting how rare it was that the cases of Fezekile, Judith, and Nomthandazo were reported:

"There are things that happened, that we did not talk about. You did not tell your mother, you know, you were not brave enough to speak," she confides. "Why not?" "It felt futile to report it. It was overwhelming. There were bigger things at stake and certain things had to be put aside." "Pain had to be delayed?" "Yes. There was a war going on and maybe everyone felt, we will deal with it later, let's just get this bigger fight out of the way." "That seems so unfair." "It was very unfair. But, sad as it is, I have to think of it that way. Otherwise, it would be too traumatic for me to think that the adults around us were uncaring. I have to believe that they had planned to address it sometime, somehow. To think that they did not care... well, that would be traumatic, devastating."⁷³⁶

In 'Prodigal Daughters', Busisiwe Chaane discussed the sexual advances from comrades she had 'regarded as *bhuti*' ('uncle' or 'older brother').⁷³⁷ She wrote:

Does this sound fanciful, made up or imagined? I wish it were, but this did happen to me and I managed to make good my escape each time. But to how many others has this also happened? (...) These are some of the things we would prefer not to talk about when we reminisce about our time in exile.⁷³⁸

Few children have spoken out about personal experiences of sexual violence, although several mentioned that they knew people who had been sexually harassed/assaulted. In line with my *Research Methods and Methodology*, I did not ask interviewees about sexual violence directly, unless they had previously mentioned it elsewhere, and so there were few

⁷³⁴ Ndlovu, "The ANC in exile," 451.

⁷³⁵ Letter by Monica Pambo to the Secretary General, 30 November 1982, Box 132-3, Subject Files, ANC Lusaka Mission, UFH.

⁷³⁶ Tlhabi, *Fezekile Kuzwayo*, 73-4.

⁷³⁷ Busisiwe Chaane, *Prodigal Daughters: Stories of South African Women in Exile*, ed. Lauretta Ngcobo (Durban: University of KwaZulu Natal Press, 2012), 47.

⁷³⁸ Chaane, *Prodigal Daughters*, 47.

discussions about sexual violence. Sandwell points out that no women testified at the TRC about being raped in ANC camps, although the ANC's official submission admitted to having executed several members for rape.⁷³⁹ Following the Zuma rape trial, sexual violence in exile was more openly discussed, yet it remains 'a touchy subject'.⁷⁴⁰ Perhaps Fezekile's public humiliation and abuse during the trial in 2005-2006 is indicative of the fear that these victims experienced in reporting their own sexual assault or addressing the issue more generally. It is also possible that victims of sexual assault did not want to be accused of tarnishing the movement's reputation.

De Sas Kropiwnicki argues that sexual assault in exile occurred due to a lack of parental supervision, a general close proximity between people within the 'family of the ANC', often sleeping in rooms together in ever-changing safe houses, and due to the presence of men with 'idle' time.⁷⁴¹ She argues that parents' discussion of their children in terms of sacrifice (see Chapter 6) meant that children lacked protection and were unable to report sexual/physical violence.⁷⁴² Similarly, Ivan Pillay, an activist and close friend of the Kuzwayos, argued that the ANC's closing ranks and secrecy led to the covering up of Fezekile's sexual assault.⁷⁴³

Those Left Behind

As activists fled into exile, some children were 'left behind'. As argued previously, psychological research about separation in early childhood during conflict suggests that children generally fare better when they remain close to their parents and siblings even in

⁷³⁹ Sandwell, "Building a State in Exile," 161.

⁷⁴⁰ Sandwell, "Building a State in Exile," 341-2.

⁷⁴¹ De Sas Kropiwnicki, *Exile*, 144.

⁷⁴² De Sas Kropiwnicki, *Exile*, 149.

⁷⁴³ Tlhabi, *Fezekile Kuzwayo*, 29.

violent circumstances. When Ruth Mompoti left for military training in 1962, she expected to return within a few months, but as events unfurled, she was told to stay in exile – she did not see her two sons again until 1972: ‘But it took a very long time – ten years. Ten years! Ten years of real agony. Sometimes I would be so sick, just because of the children.’⁷⁴⁴ Zubeida and Moosa Moolla’s two children were sent back to South Africa when Zubeida struggled to raise two young kids, while Moosa was undergoing military training.⁷⁴⁵ For their children, this caused ‘unimaginable trauma’ and it remains ‘(...) one of the most difficult parts of our family’s history to write and talk openly about.’⁷⁴⁶

The government also utilised the threat of withholding children to pressure activists. Pamela Nomvete’s parents left for the UK, leaving Pamela’s older sister behind.⁷⁴⁷ They intended to send for her as soon as they established their home, but the government destroyed her birth certificate, and it took the family five years to be reunited.⁷⁴⁸ The children’s extended family sometimes colluded with the government in this matter. De Sas Kropiwnicki notes how one of her interviewees, ‘Phumla’ recalled that ‘her distraught mother tried her best to facilitate her eldest son’s travel to Tanzania, but her family in South Africa refused to let him go because they were reliant on the stipend, she sent them every month to sustain his well-being.’⁷⁴⁹ When Eleanor Kasrils was exiled in 1963, she left her daughter, Brigid, behind. Kasrils’ parents and Brigid’s father, disapproving of her politics, refused to let Brigid go.⁷⁵⁰ Eleanor and her husband, Ronnie, initially went to Tanzania, but then relocated to the UK to appease Eleanor’s parents, who had refused to send Brigid to

⁷⁴⁴ Bernstein, *Rift*, 18-20.

⁷⁴⁵ Afzal Moolla, “My Family: A Historical Journey through the Seasons,” *South African History Online*, n.d., <https://www.sahistory.org.za/archive/my-family-historical-journey-through-seasons-afzal-moolla>.

⁷⁴⁶ Moolla, “My Family.”

⁷⁴⁷ Pamela Nomvete, *Dancing to the Beat of the Drum – In Search of My Spiritual Home* (Bloomington, IN: Author House, 2012), 1.

⁷⁴⁸ Nomvete, *Dancing to the Beat*, 2.

⁷⁴⁹ De Sas Kropiwnicki, *Exile*, 118. All of de Sas Kropiwnicki’s interviewees are pseudonymised.

⁷⁵⁰ Bernstein, *Rift*, 92-3.

another African country.⁷⁵¹ Eleanor's parents censored her letters to Brigid, and the two were only reunited ten years later. Brigid remembered:

I think it took a long time before we actually developed any relationship really. I think she wasn't really a mother, I don't think. So I think it was very difficult for quite some years because there were a lot of issues that had to be worked through and I don't even know if we've talked about all of them yet. In fact I don't think we have. No we haven't.⁷⁵²

Eleanor stated: 'I think our relationship has had a lot of difficulties because...well, ten years is a long time; but I really don't want to talk about that. But we are very close, very close.'⁷⁵³

Her reluctance to discuss this topic is echoed by other families; Miriam Omar, who left one son behind in 1967, told Mark Israel: 'It's very bad to talk about it, its traumatic to talk about it. You have to put it out of your mind now. It shouldn't happen again, it shouldn't happen to anyone.'⁷⁵⁴ De Sas Kropiwnicki's research also highlights the occurrence of (sexual) abuse by caregivers in South Africa.⁷⁵⁵

Spouses – usually wives – were also left behind in South Africa, traumatised by the abandonment and burden placed on them. Winston Ngcayiya, who had sheltered Wilton Mkwayi, and fled into exile after Mkwayi's arrest in 1964, tried to facilitate his wife joining him for years: 'It was not until one of Ngcayiya's sons, who was five years old when his father left, went into exile that Ngcayiya learned what happened to his wife. She never recovered from the pain of being abandoned and died sad and lonely.'⁷⁵⁶ Archie Sibeko described the burden his brother, Themba, was facing, raising Sibeko's children, alongside

⁷⁵¹ Ronnie Kasrils, *Armed & Dangerous: From Undercover Struggle to Freedom*, 3rd edition (Johannesburg: Jonathan Ball Publishers: 2004 [1993]), 73.

⁷⁵² Garth & Brigid Strachan, interview by Hilda Bernstein, n.d., Hilda Bernstein Collection, MCA 7 – 1705, Mayibuye Archives, UWC.

⁷⁵³ Bernstein, *Rift*, 92-3.

⁷⁵⁴ Israel, *South African Political Exile*, 40.

⁷⁵⁵ De Sas Kropiwnicki, *Exile*, 119.

⁷⁵⁶ Ndlovu, "The ANC in exile," 428.

his four own children, while facing constant harassment first for Sibeko's involvement and his own work, and later their sons' involvement in the student uprising.⁷⁵⁷ Sibeko wrote:

For security reasons I was never mentioned in their new home and they never heard from their mother. They must have wondered why they were abandoned. Perhaps they were not even sure who they were. I know now that they felt the absence of their parents very deeply, and I think this cast a shadow over them.⁷⁵⁸

There are few direct testimonies by these children, requiring researchers to read between the lines, relying on their parents' or other relatives' accounts. Their silences speak of the trauma that parents and children experienced through the separation, and perhaps also of their disconnect from the struggle.

Conclusion

This chapter examined children's experiences of exile as a direct consequence of the apartheid state's repression, extending the discussion on how children experienced their parents' activism and its repression from Chapter 3. Geopolitical processes, kinship networks, and local contexts shaped children's journeys into exile and their integration. While Lusaka (for the ANC) and Maputo (until 1984) offered relative welcome and support, London children were exposed to racism and social ostracism.

Children's narratives further complicate simplistic conceptualisations of exile, especially regarding their 'forced exit' and 'struggle to return'. Often, educational opportunities influenced children's move into exile, and especially neighbouring and culturally similar countries like Swaziland and Lesotho were not perceived as exile by children. Parental stances on integration also played a role in how children constructed their idea of exile. Unlike their parents (and conventional conceptualisations of exile), children

⁷⁵⁷ Sibeko, *Freedom*, 110.

⁷⁵⁸ Sibeko, *Freedom*, 110.

also travelled to South Africa more frequently – as children, they were able to dodge border restrictions more effectively. Examining exile through a children-centric lens thus demands its academic reconceptualisation.

The sense of uncertainty and violence children had experienced in South Africa continued into exile. I explored children's fears and how these manifested themselves through imagination and nightmares. Children, particularly in the frontline states, were also exposed to threats of violence, experiencing these primarily in the home, which were burgled, surveilled, raided, or attacked. Parents prepared their children for this violence, including through play.

Apartheid's fragmentation of family life continued in exile, as children were separated from their parents, who underwent military training or were sent on assignments. Only following the Soweto Uprising did the ANC engage with children-centred issues – before, it was primarily up to individual families to care for their children. As spouses were placed under increased pressure to provide and faced psychological difficulties, children took on supportive roles, similar to their roles and responsibilities in South Africa, which challenged conceptions of childhood, leaving many to believe that they had grown up faster than others their age.

Children were also exposed to their parents' trauma, psychological illnesses, substance abuse, and domestic violence. Children mirrored their parents' behaviours, and – exacerbated through a lack of supervision – children engaged in substance abuse and alcoholism. Moreover, the sexual abuse of children in exile occurred within a broader context of silence and neglect, rendering these experiences difficult to disclose even decades

later. Finally, the chapter considered the lasting impact of separation on children and spouses who remained in South Africa, underlining the emotional toll of exile on both sides of the border.

In sum, this chapter has shown that children's experiences of exile were shaped by a complex interplay of geo-political contexts, individual families' decisions, and institutional shortcomings. As in the previous chapter, children's capacity to cope with their displacement was closely tied to how they understood their families' activism and the broader struggle. The next two chapters will explore how children came to comprehend their parents' political engagement and were politicised.

Chapter 5: Learning Activism – Children’s Politicisation in South Africa and Exile

My sisters and I are freedom’s children, born into the ANC and nurtured within a revolutionary community whose sole purpose is to fight apartheid. We are raised on a diet of communist propaganda and schooled in radical Africanist discourse, in the shadows of our father’s hope and our mother’s practicality.⁷⁵⁹

Introduction

The previous two chapters introduced the idea that political understanding was crucial for children to cope with the repression they faced in South Africa and in exile. This chapter explores children’s politicisation within the South African struggle.

I start the chapter thematically, highlighting five interconnected politicisation processes, 1. through interactions with their parents and in the home, 2. through exposure to apartheid’s violence, 3. through ‘participation by default’, 4. in peripheral spaces, and 5. through children-specific groups or alternative sites of education. These five processes highlight that children’s politicisation occurred primarily in two overlapping spaces: the home and the community. Through these five processes, all children gained a strong sense of justice and a ‘different frame of reference’ to their peers.⁷⁶⁰

Yet, these five processes were drastically impacted by the changing levels of repression, and whether children lived in exile (specifically, also where in exile) or in South Africa. After a brief discussion of how secrecy impacted children by drawing on transgenerational trauma and family secrecy research, I apply a chronological approach to

⁷⁵⁹ Sisonke Msimang, *Always Another Country: A Memoir of Exile and Home*, 2nd edition (London: World Editions, 2018 [2017]), 14-5.

⁷⁶⁰ Carneson-McGregor, interview.

trace these processes from the late 1940s to the late 1980s, first in South Africa and then in exile.

During the late 1940s to late 1950s, the more overt political situation allowed for discussions at home, participation by default at parents' political events, and the establishment of children-specific groups and alternative educational sites. Consequently, children had a grounded understanding of their parents' politics and felt involved in their political communities. As repression increased towards the 1960s and secrecy became tantamount, children became excluded from their parents' struggle. By the late 1970s and 1980s, children became more exposed to their parents' grassroots-driven initiatives again and became involved in youth and student organisations as activists themselves.

Turning towards exile, time (as the ANC's 'state-in-exile' project evolved) and location played a key role in children's politicisation, and ultimately their sense of belonging.⁷⁶¹ By looking at four case studies – London, Lusaka, Maputo, and Mazimbu – I explore how children experienced vastly different levels of political community, suggesting that children in Lusaka, Maputo and Mazimbu were much more deeply integrated into the liberation movement than London's children were.

Home and Community: Children's Politicisation

Drawing on feminist research, childhood scholars focus on 'children's everyday experiences of social change' over formal political participation to understand children's politicisation.⁷⁶² For children of activists, their politicisation occurred primarily in the home – here, they were exposed not only to their parents' ideas, but also interacted with other

⁷⁶¹ Lodge, "State of Exile," 27.

⁷⁶² Moss, "Children's Political Engagement in Everyday Life," 24.

activists. Building on the previous two chapters, the home, traditionally seen as separate from the public (and thus the political), is centred as a key arena.

Politicisation scholars have explored the transmission of political values and trust, partisanship, as well as other related concepts within families.⁷⁶³ Jennings et al.'s standard transmission model 'views parent-child similarity as an outcome of social influence and learning processes operating within the home', although they also emphasise other factors, including school context, socio-economic status, and social milieu.⁷⁶⁴ They argue that,

parents *can* have an enormous degree of influence on the political learning that takes place in pre-adulthood. If parents are politically engaged and frequently discuss politics with the child, transmission rates rise substantially, particularly on topics of general political significance and salience.⁷⁶⁵ [italics in original]

Within the home and outside, via their families, and through interactions with the political communities, children were politicised through five interconnected and overarching processes of politicisation: firstly, through direct interactions with their parents, secondly, through exposure to apartheid's violence, thirdly, through participation by default, fourthly, through what I term the 'peripheral spaces' of activism, and, lastly through children-specific initiatives, including youth clubs or alternatives sites of education. As these worked in conjunction with each other and were deeply affected by the changing political contexts, they will, first, each be introduced, before discussing how these played out over time in South Africa and exile.

Firstly, parents directly spoke to their children about their political ideologies – children frequently emphasised the role of the dinner table or 'Sunday Lunch' as a space for

⁷⁶³ Jennings et al., "Politics across Generations," 784.

⁷⁶⁴ Jennings et al., "Politics across Generations," 783.

⁷⁶⁵ Jennings et al., "Politics across Generations," 795.

political discussion.⁷⁶⁶ Kethiwe recalled her mother's 'subliminal education': 'My mother was very good at being oppositional to my father [laugh] and stoking up questions (...)'.⁷⁶⁷ Ilse's parents discussed their ideas from a 'humanitarian point of view', while remaining more secretive about their personal involvements.⁷⁶⁸ Letebele emphasised: 'I learned everything I knew about South African politics at home.'⁷⁶⁹ Parents encouraged their children to read political material and listen to Radio Freedom, the ANC's radio, as Themba recalled of her time in Lusaka.⁷⁷⁰ The Mabaso home was raided in October 1984:

They found banned books and cassettes on bookshelves, and posters of liberation leaders on the walls of the children's bedrooms. One of the policemen looked around and commented with disgust: "Hierdie huis stink politiek [This house stinks of politics]".⁷⁷¹

This also included parents imbuing politics into their children's names – Fort Calata's grandfather had been detained in the Fort in Johannesburg before the Treason Trial.⁷⁷² Other children received Russian names: Zoya Naidoo was named after Zoya Kosmodemyanskaya, a Soviet war hero, executed by the Nazis.⁷⁷³ Dawes argues that '[t]his way of naming the child is a politically symbolic act and is instrumental in constructing the child's political subjectivity from birth'.⁷⁷⁴

Secondly, children were politicised through the constant exposure to apartheid's violence, both through the injustices perpetrated against people of colour and the persecution

⁷⁶⁶ Carneson-McGregor, interview; Tessa Wolpe, interview; Chaane, interview; Ngcobo, interview; Nicholas Claude, interviewed by author, Johannesburg, 23 January 2023; Ntantala, *A Life's Mosaic*, 139.

⁷⁶⁷ Ngcobo, interview.

⁷⁶⁸ Wilson, interview.

⁷⁶⁹ Masemola-Jones, interview.

⁷⁷⁰ Kuben Naidoo, interview; Themba, interview.

⁷⁷¹ Sunday Times, "Children Who Took Up Arms in the Fight for Freedom," *Sunday Times*, 20 June 2004, <https://www.timeslive.co.za/sunday-times/lifestyle/2004-06-20-children-who-took-up-arms-in-the-fight-for-freedom/>.

⁷⁷² Calata and Calata, *My Father*, 47.

⁷⁷³ Ismail Vadi, *Thambi Naidoo and Family – Struggle for a Non-Racial Democracy in South Africa* (Johannesburg: Ahmed Kathrada Foundation, 2021), 233.

⁷⁷⁴ Andrew Dawes, "The Effects of Political Violence on Children: A Consideration of South African and Related Studies," *International Journal of Psychology* 25, no. 1 (1990): 24. See also de Sas Kropiwnicki, *Exile*, 82.

of their parents.⁷⁷⁵ From a young age, children knew that the apartheid government, and the police, were the enemy.⁷⁷⁶ Walter Sisulu recalled:

Well, it was not even necessary to teach them. You see, the police would surround my house with cars and motorbikes right through the night. So every white man who came in was regarded as a policeman. That already made my children, as they grew up, to be hostile to policemen. (...) They learn from that. Oppression means this.⁷⁷⁷

Children of colour saw the consequences of apartheid daily, as Joseph Kotane recalled:

WE could see for ourselves as we grew up and gradually we felt that we should part-take in the solutions of the problems of our country. Now as a youngster I was looking at it from a different point of view. WE wanted to fight. We wanted to face this force - this reactionary force that was confronting us with our revolutionary force.⁷⁷⁸ [capitalised punctuations in original]

Parents of white children fostered an understanding of apartheid by taking their children to townships.⁷⁷⁹

Thirdly, participation by default, as defined by Rodgers (see *Literature Review*), describes how children accompany their parents to political events, often in the absence of alternative childcare.⁷⁸⁰ Children were not intentionally involved, although parents might have hoped that this led to their politicisation. Children of activists attended their parents' meetings and demonstrations, both in South Africa and in exile, subject to changing secrecy regulations. Hugh, whose mother was involved in the Black Sash in the 1970s and 1980s, remembered: '(...) we did do the protests. I mean, when there were riots going on with goods. We were still at school. We go for the day, protests and get chased by the police.'⁷⁸¹ Participation by default can include small 'helper' roles, for example, folding and distributing leaflets, or volunteering for their parents' organisations.⁷⁸² Via participation by

⁷⁷⁵ Max Sisulu, interview; Biko, interview.

⁷⁷⁶ Meer, interview; Hain, *Pretoria Boy*, 19.

⁷⁷⁷ Sisulu, *I Will Go Singing*, 113.

⁷⁷⁸ Joseph (Cotton) Kotane, interview by Wolfie Kodesh, 29 March 1993, Oral History of Exiles Project, MCA6 – 299, Mayibuye Archives, UWC.

⁷⁷⁹ Hain, *Ad & Wal*, 96; Carneson-McGregor, interview.

⁷⁸⁰ Rodgers, *Children in Social Movements*, 44-5.

⁷⁸¹ Hugh Hawarden, interviewed by author, Johannesburg, 26 January 2023.

⁷⁸² Rodgers, *Children in Social Movements*, 45.

default, so Rodgers argues, '[c]hildren often cultivate their own ideas as they are indirectly exposed to their parents' ideas. This speaks less to indoctrination than to an expansion of their awareness.'⁷⁸³ Rodgers, however, also points out that participation by default, without the necessary political understanding, can lead to children's resentment, exclusion, and a felt lack of protection, as Kaplan and Shapiro also argue.⁷⁸⁴ While Rodgers includes youth clubs under her third category 'active participation' (see Chapter 7), highlighting children's agency within these groups, I have categorised children-centred initiatives as separate, due to the liberation movements' top-down approach (particularly within the ANC).⁷⁸⁵

Fourthly, I expand the concept of participation by default to include children's politicisation through exposure to their parents' political lives in what I term 'peripheral spaces' in the home and interactions with the political communities. Children picked up on their parents' politics as they witnessed parents' closed-off meetings at home, and experienced their parents' lifestyles, for example, by hosting people of different races at their home.⁷⁸⁶ Linda recalled:

But they didn't really sit us down, there were lots of meeting in our house with very mixed guests, if you want to call them that, and the door was closed and they were Indians, there were Blacks and there were Whites (...) They spoke a lot, there was a lot of literature in our cellar, which was underneath our house which was ransacked the day they were arrested but nothing was really explained to us as to why they were doing... not that I remember. But I knew it and I don't how I knew it.⁷⁸⁷

Children thus picked up on clues, by eavesdropping or as activists passed through their homes for meetings, as safe houses, or for social visits, as de Sas Kropiwnicki also notes.⁷⁸⁸

Other activists played a crucial role in children's politicisation, so Letebele recalled:

⁷⁸³ Rodgers, *Children in Social Movements*, 55.

⁷⁸⁴ Rodgers, *Children in Social Movements*, 54-5; Kaplan, Shapiro, *Red Diapers*, 7-8.

⁷⁸⁵ Rodgers, *Children in Social Movements*, 80.

⁷⁸⁶ Wilson, interview; Elizabeth, interviewed by author, Johannesburg, 4 March 2023 (pseudonymised); Hawarden, interview; Claude, interview.

⁷⁸⁷ Shapiro, interview.

⁷⁸⁸ De Sas Kropiwnicki, *Exile*, 82.

We were political beings without being political beings, whether we liked it or not, it was in our nature, it was instilled in us, you know. Because of where we came from and because of how our parents felt about it, so you know *we walked with activists and lived with activists* (...).⁷⁸⁹ [italics added for emphasis]

Fifthly, children were politicised through children-specific initiatives or sites of ‘struggle education’, organised by the liberation movements, including the *Masupatsela*, both in exile and South Africa pre-1960, and SOMAFCO in exile.

Through these five processes and across the assessed period, children deeply believed in the righteousness of their parents’ convictions. Ilse recalled that she,

accepted the rightness of what the parents stood for, not particularly being communist, but they were doing what was right. It seemed so obvious to us, that that’s what should be happening, I mean that’s what we should be fighting for.⁷⁹⁰

Their understanding of politics was shaped by their everyday experiences of their lived values, causing children to develop a strong sense of justice. In her study of daughters of women’s rights activists in France, Masclet similarly emphasises that for their children, feminism was ‘a way of life’ and an ‘everyday legacy’, rather than just a political opinion.⁷⁹¹

It was jarring for children when these lived values came under attack. Barbara Harmel recalled how she found out about her mother’s previous lover, Lazar Bach.⁷⁹² Bach, a leader of the 1930s CPSA, was called to the USSR to account for the party’s issues, where he was accused of Trotskyism and sent to a Gulag, dying in 1941.⁷⁹³ She wrote:

The shock of knowing there was a prior lover is overtaken by shock at what the Soviet Union did. That place is the bastion of all that is good, all that is moral, all that is to be aspired to. Certainly not where this kind of “mistake” is made. This next sense of deep betrayal is quickly followed by another: how could you have stayed

⁷⁸⁹ Masemola-Jones, interview.

⁷⁹⁰ Wilson, interview.

⁷⁹¹ Masclet, “Feminist activists and their children,” 117-8.

⁷⁹² J Brooks Spector, “Barbara Harmel – even the children of revolutionaries have childhoods,” *Daily Maverick*, 16 October 2018, <https://www.dailymaverick.co.za/article/2018-10-16-barbara-harmel-even-the-children-of-revolutionaries-have-childhoods/>.

⁷⁹³ Irina Filatova and Apollon Davidson, *The Hidden Thread: Russia and South Africa in the Soviet Era* (Johannesburg: Jonathan Ball Publishers, 2013), 106.

in the Communist Party after that? Omelettes, I am told, do not get made without breaking eggs.⁷⁹⁴

Sometimes, children's sense of justice came at their parents' expense. The Jordan children formed a 'trade union' for their family's domestic workers. When AC Jordan, voiced that he would not pay their gardener an increased fee for harder work, nine-year-old Pallo '(...) saw red and dared his father to do it. "Just do it! You will never again stand on any platform condemning exploiters when you are one of them. Just go do it! I'll expose you!"'⁷⁹⁵ Ultimately, his father paid the gardener the improved fee.

Due to these experiences, children established a different 'frame of reference' and sense of normality to their peers.⁷⁹⁶ This 'frame of reference' was first challenged at primary schools, which exposed them to vastly different viewpoints.⁷⁹⁷ Pagis refers to this process as 'dissocialisation', where children are 'exposed to genuinely *conflicting norms*' when they encounter other socialising agents, often in education.⁷⁹⁸ Children of activists found the differing expectations of home and school distressing: when Ruth was asked at school what her religion was, she, as the daughter of Communists, replied with 'South African'.⁷⁹⁹ Her peers only heard 'African' and ridiculed her. Winnie Mandela recalled a conversation with her daughter, Zindzi:

"But Mummy, the other children say people who are in prison are bad people." What do you say? This is a five-, six-year-old with an enquiring mind. Both of them would confront me with these questions so the values of society were reversed to the extent that as they grew older the fathers who were not in jail were 'collaborators' – it was "wrong" not to be in jail, you were a "collaborator".⁸⁰⁰

⁷⁹⁴ Brooks Spector, "Barbara Harmel."

⁷⁹⁵ Ntantala, *A Life's Mosaic*, 144.

⁷⁹⁶ Carneson-McGregor, interview.

⁷⁹⁷ Shapiro, interview; Wilson, interview; Lubner, interview; Strasburg, interview.

⁷⁹⁸ Pagis, *May '68*, 248. [italics in original]

⁷⁹⁹ Ruth Carneson, interview.

⁸⁰⁰ Mandela, *491 Days*, 286-7.

Rather ominously – considering the accusations that were made against her and the Mandela United Football Club in the late 1980s, including regarding Zindzi’s involvement – she added:

And how do you change those values later on in life? (...) They have led conflicted lives and they have turned out to be who they are. You do not know how many times parents like us fell on our knees and thanked God that they turned out to be who they are. It was touch and go – the child could have turned out to be a criminal.⁸⁰¹

Before I turn towards how these five processes were impacted by the changing political situation, I will briefly discuss the impact of secrecy on children, as it applies more generally, although to varying degrees, across the period and locations, according to the political context.

Parents withheld information to protect both children and themselves, as children were frequently interrogated (see Chapter 3) or divulged information accidentally. Shawn Slovo also highlighted a third reason: secrecy presented activists with an easy way out of answering hard questions – an accusation that Hilda Bernstein admitted she was partly correct in.⁸⁰²

To understand the effects of secrecy on children, it is useful to look at research on family secrets and transgenerational trauma transmission.⁸⁰³ Family secrets have been a relatively recent subject of inquiry by historians – Vallgård argues that secrecy practices offer ‘a lens through which to examine the emotionally charged micropolitics of the family and its intertwinements with macropolitical currents, institutional practices, economic

⁸⁰¹ Mandela, *491 Days*, 287; Antje Krog, *Country of my Skull* (London: Vintage, 1999), 379, 382.

⁸⁰² Hilda Bernstein, interviewed by Glenn Frankel, August 1, 1996, Glenn Frankel Papers, University of Delaware, Newark, DE, used with interviewer’s permission.

⁸⁰³ See for example Carol Smart, “Families, Secrets and Memories,” *Sociology* 45, no. 4 (2011): 539-53 and Deborah Cohen, *Family Secrets – The Things We Tried To Hide*, 2nd edition (London: Penguin Books, 2014 [2013]).

patterns, and wider social norms'.⁸⁰⁴ Existing research highlights the 'socio-temporal life of family secrets' (as Barnwell terms it) – in short, what is considered worthy of a secret is constantly changing according to socio-cultural acceptances.⁸⁰⁵ Much of the research is however based on secrets that emerged in consequence of social norms, such as incest, children out of wedlock, disabilities, or mental health challenges, rather than secrecy amidst political repression. Trauma research suggests that transgenerational trauma is transmitted through 'indirect knowing' and that children suffer from 'memories without experience'.⁸⁰⁶

What develops is a 'postmemory':

Like the memory of the parental generation, [postmemory] is fragmentary and shot through with holes and gaps, but in different ways. These children need to patch a history together they have never lived by using whatever props they can find – photographs and stories or letters but also, I would add, silences, grief, rage, despair, or sudden unexplainable shifts in moods handed down to them by those who bring them up.⁸⁰⁷

These memories become so 'repetitive, static, and coercive' because they are transmitted emotions, not images.⁸⁰⁸

Transgenerational trauma research originates in the study of the children of Holocaust survivors, born after the genocide. In contrast, most children of activists were present at the time of their parents' repression. Nonetheless, some similarities to the patterns of transgenerational trauma still emerge, including the role of silences, of sensing (rather than knowing), and of imagination. Transgenerational trauma studies emphasise children's ability to pick up on anxieties, as they

⁸⁰⁴ Karen Vallgård, "Introduction: The Politics of Family Secrecy," *Journal of Family History* 47, no. 3 (2022): 239.

⁸⁰⁵ Ashley Barnwell, "Family Secrets and the Slow Violence of Social Stigma," *Sociology* 53, no. 6 (2019): 1112.

⁸⁰⁶ Hoosain, "The Transmission of Intergenerational Trauma," 46; Connolly, "Healing the wounds," 612.

⁸⁰⁷ Gabriele Schwab, *Haunting Legacies – Violent Histories and Transgenerational Trauma* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010), 14. The concept of postmemory is originally from Marianne Hirsch, *Family Frames: Photography, Narrative, and Postmemory* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997), 22.

⁸⁰⁸ Connolly, "Healing the wounds," 612.

become avid readers of silences and memory traces hidden in a face that is frozen in grief, a forced smile that does not quite feel right, an apparently unmotivated flare-up of rage, or chronic depression ... without being fully aware of it, [second generation children] become skilled readers of the optical unconscious revealed in their parents' body language.⁸⁰⁹

Children picked up on the small trickle of information offered to them in their surroundings and the peripheral spaces of activism. Through their parents' conversations, newspapers, talk amongst siblings and other children of activists, they often knew more than their parents expected (or wished for), reading into the remaining gaps.⁸¹⁰ Toni wrote: 'As with all children of political parents, we developed an extra awareness, antennae which picked up on whisperings, meetings and extra tension in our parents.'⁸¹¹ John Carneson sensed they should not discuss communism at home, rather than explicitly knowing it.⁸¹² Carol Smart et al. also emphasise 'active not-knowing' as part of a family's repertoire to cope with secrecy.⁸¹³

As children picked up on this information, rather than being explicitly told, some felt alienated – when Milou's father, Mac Maharaj, infiltrated South Africa in 1990 as part of Operation Vula, he was told that Mac was receiving a kidney transplant in Russia.⁸¹⁴ On a home visit, Milou noticed how healthy his father appeared and concluded that his father was underground.⁸¹⁵ His mother, Zarina, reflected: 'He'd found it wiser to remain quiet about his painful sense of exclusion from such important secrets in his own family, instead of confronting me and forcing me to admit the truth.'⁸¹⁶

⁸⁰⁹ Schwab, *Haunting Legacies*, 14.

⁸¹⁰ Ruth Carneson, interview; Strasburg, interview.

⁸¹¹ Strasburg, *Holding the Fort*, 15.

⁸¹² Carneson, *John and Ntombi*, 24-5.

⁸¹³ Smart, "Families, Secrets and Memories," 549; Martina Koegeler-Abdi, "Family Secrecy: Experiences of Danish German Children Born of War, 1940–2019," *Journal of Family History* 46, no. 1 (2021): 67; Monica Konrad, *Nameless Relations* (Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2005), cited in Smart, "Families, Secrets and Memories," 549-50.

⁸¹⁴ Maharaj, *Dancing to a Different Rhythm*, 16.

⁸¹⁵ Milou Maharaj, interview.

⁸¹⁶ Maharaj, *Dancing to a Different Rhythm*, 16.

Faced with the silence, children filled their knowledge gaps with imagination, often assuming the worst.⁸¹⁷ While her father was detained, Deborah Levy questioned whether her father had not already died: ‘Every room is full of Dad’s absence. (...) Is he dead and Mom isn’t telling them?’⁸¹⁸

Children felt responsible for the information that they picked up and were fearful of accidental disclosure. Ruth recounted: ‘Theo [activist] says I must not tell anyone who we have met or who I have seen. I know I must keep my mouth shut, if I say the wrong thing something terrible could happen to someone’.⁸¹⁹

To explore children’s experiences of these five processes and the necessity for secrecy, as it was influenced by the changing political situation, I will now adopt a chronological approach, looking first at South Africa, before turning to exile.

Political Understanding in the late 1940s to late 1950s

The late 1940s to late 1950s were marked by a relatively open climate of political activism, which offered children of activists exposure to their parents’ politics, through (more) open conversations, participation by default, interactions with other activists, and children-specific initiatives.

⁸¹⁷ Dani Rowland-Klein, “The Transmission of Trauma Across Generations: Identification with Parental Trauma in Children of Holocaust Survivors,” in *Handbook of Stress, Trauma and the Family*, ed. Don R. Catherall (New York: Brunner-Routledge, 2004), 120.

⁸¹⁸ Levy, “My Frozen Father.”

⁸¹⁹ Carneson, *Girl On the Edge*, Ch. 6.

Children regularly participated by default by accompanying their parents to protests and meetings, canvassing, and assisting in folding and distributing leaflets.⁸²⁰ Twelve-year-old Aziz Pahad became involved during the 1952 Defiance Campaign: ‘The task assigned to us young comrades were to distribute leaflets, write slogans on the walls and put up posters. We worked in groups of five or six.’⁸²¹ His parents’ flat was a ‘hub of political and social gathering’ for senior ANC, Indian Congress, and COD members due to its strategic location (and Amina Pahad’s cooking skills), exposing Aziz and his brother, Essop, to other activists.⁸²² During the preparations for the 1955 Freedom Charter, children assisted their parents by putting up posters, writing slogans on walls, and folding, enveloping, and distributing thousands of leaflets.⁸²³

As these activities were not yet inhibited to the same extent by security regulations, participation by default was possible and even encouraged by parents. Ramnie and Shanthie Naidoo’s father often involved his children in the meetings held at their home.⁸²⁴ As children, they played ‘meetings’ rather than ‘house’.⁸²⁵ Phyllis Ntantala-Jordan recalled:

We did a lot together – reading, discussing matters, distributing leaflets and going to political rallies, for how could they stay away from the rallies when they had been distributing leaflets and talking to those who took them? Strange that even though there was always a possibility the police would come and break up a meeting, I never thought of what I would do with four young kids with me, none of them older than seven years.⁸²⁶

⁸²⁰ Carneson-McGregor, *Homage to Hope*, 88; Max Sisulu, interview.

⁸²¹ Aziz Pahad, *Insurgent Diplomat – Civil Talks or Civil War?*, Kindle edition (Johannesburg: Penguin Random House, 2014).

⁸²² Turok, *Nothing But the Truth*, 87; Pahad, *Insurgent Diplomat*.

⁸²³ Carneson-McGregor, interview; Pahad, *Insurgent Diplomat*.

⁸²⁴ Shanthie Naidoo and Ramnie Dinat (née Naidoo), interview by Hilda Bernstein, n.d., Hilda Bernstein Collection, MCA 7 – 1636, Mayibuye Archives, UWC.

⁸²⁵ Naidoo and Dinat, interview.

⁸²⁶ Ntantala, *A Life's Mosaic*, 138.

As the political situation deteriorated, children performed small political acts for their parents – after her parents were banned in 1954 from any gatherings, Lynn carried communications between her mother and fellow activists.⁸²⁷

The Basupatsela Youth Organisation (BYO), later known as the *Masupatsela a Walter Sisulu* or ANC Young Pioneers, was established on 4 June 1955 in Soweto with a small cohort of 20 boys, later joined by a small number of girls.⁸²⁸ De Sas Kropiwnicki suggests that the *Masupatsela* were founded by Walter Sisulu in the tradition of African peer groups, later expanding to Cape Town, Port Elizabeth, and other towns in the Transvaal.⁸²⁹ The *Masupatsela* – not just confined to the children of existing ANC members – was open to any children, aged 7-17. It was founded with the ‘basic purpose “to give the Youth creative recreation so that in turn they should serve their people and country.”’⁸³⁰ ANC volunteers taught classes on South African history and politics on weekends in changing locations to instil discipline, respect for elders, and adherence to the party line.⁸³¹ Alongside pursuing personal hygiene, physical exertion, academic education, and conscientious behaviour, the *Masupatsela* were also guided to enact their role in the South African struggle:

(...) I shall strive my best to assist those who are struggling for freedom and equality in South Africa, I shall put the cause of my people before my own selfish interests, now and all my life.⁸³²

⁸²⁷ Carneson-McGregor, *Homage to Hope*, 77; Carneson-McGregor, *Red in the Rainbow*, 131.

⁸²⁸ Mohau Soldaat, “Julius Malema, from Masupatsela to the Formation of the Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF): Historical Narrative,” *African Historical Review* 55, no. 2 (2024): 2; The First Report on the Basupatsela Youth Organisation, June-December 1955, Ea3.5.2, AD1812 The Treason Trial, Historical Papers, Wits.

⁸²⁹ De Sas Kropiwnicki, *Exile*, 91.

⁸³⁰ The First Report on the Basupatsela Youth Organisation, AD1812 The Treason Trial.

⁸³¹ The First Report on the Basupatsela Youth Organisation, AD1812 The Treason Trial; Stanley Mabizela, interview by Julie Frederikse, March 1986, AL2460 Tracing the Unbreakable Thread – Non-Racialism in South Africa, A13.01.1, SAHA.

⁸³² Rules for Basupatsela, n.d., Ea3.5.1, AD1812 The Treason Trial, Historical Papers, Wits.

Max Sisulu described the Masupatsela as a ‘learning process, learning of the struggle’.⁸³³ The *Masupatsela* acted as a pipeline for the ANCYL (open to ages 12-40).⁸³⁴ While the first cohort of *Masupatsela* was entirely Black, the report emphasised that branches had been started by Indian and white youth and that the intention was ‘to unite the various groups into one powerful Basupatsela Youth Organisation.’⁸³⁵

At the Congress of the People in Kliptown, the *Masupatsela* had their shining moment:

The children in the pioneer troupe were decked out in green shirts, black shorts and bright yellow scarves. They were the *Baputasele* [sic] – meaning literally “they show the way” – an ANC pioneer group largely from Orlando but including a few children of white supporters of the ANC from Yeoville. From the way their little legs moved in time to the beat from the band ahead of them, it was apparent that they sensed the significance of the day and perhaps heard from their parents that they “were the representatives of the future”, the generation that would not carry a pass or bear the blight of Bantu education.⁸³⁶

At Kliptown – the peak of the Congress Alliance’s legal existence – many activists passionately believed that the end of apartheid was within arm’s reach. Their children, thus, represented this non-racial vision and the symbolic recipients of liberation.

Another youth group was the Transvaal Indian Youth Congress (TIYC), the youth league of the TIC. According to Aziz Pahad, activities included ‘distributing leaflets, putting up posters, selling Congress newspapers and mobilising the Indian community in the support of the struggle.’⁸³⁷ Two other children of activists, Indres and Shanthie Naidoo (both born in the 1930s), had been executive members of the TIYC.⁸³⁸ Their younger sister, Ramnie,

⁸³³ Max Sisulu, interview.

⁸³⁴ Glaser, *ANC Youth League*, 30; Soldaat, “Julius Malema,” 2.

⁸³⁵ The First Report on the Basupatsela Youth Organisation, AD1812 The Treason Trial.

⁸³⁶ Norman Levy, *The Final Prize: My Life in the anti-apartheid struggle* (South African History Online, 2011), Chapter 10, accessible at <https://www.sahistory.org.za/archive/final-prize-norman-levy>.

⁸³⁷ Pahad, *Insurgent Diplomat*.

⁸³⁸ Naidoo and Dinat, interview.

was only nine when she was first arrested. Her father had asked his older children to leaflet, and she had not wanted to be left out. Only at the station did the police realise they would not be able to charge her.

In the mid-1950s, the Young Democrats (YD) were formed as a 'junior affiliate' of the COD.⁸³⁹ This organisation was, unlike the *Masupatsela* or the TIYC, explicitly for the children of activists:

This one consists of the children of "comrades". We meet every Sunday morning, in a park at the top of Stewart's Drive in Yeoville, a group of about 12 children ranging in age between about 10 and 13 years old.⁸⁴⁰

These meetings included classes on politics and history, held by activists.⁸⁴¹ Ilse described the YD as relatively short-lived in comparison to the *Masupatsela*, only targeting a 'handful of kids' and a certain cohort: her siblings did not attend.⁸⁴² Ilse, Toni, and Barbara formed a close-knit group; Toni recalled: 'It was a different kind of friendship because in a sense there was no explaining to do.'⁸⁴³ The YD not only provided theoretical political education but also schooled children regarding their interaction with apartheid agents. Sheila Weinberg remembered a raid on a meeting between the YD and *Masupatsela*:

They asked me my name and they said, "Oh, are you Eli's daughter?" And I said, "I don't have to answer that question." So already at that age, which was apparently seven, I knew what I should and shouldn't have to do.⁸⁴⁴

The YD's attendees were primarily white, mixing with the *Masupatsela* only at special events, meetings, or occasional summer camps in the countryside.⁸⁴⁵

⁸³⁹ Brooks Spector, "Barbara Harmel."

⁸⁴⁰ Brooks Spector, "Barbara Harmel."

⁸⁴¹ Wilson, interview.

⁸⁴² Wilson, interview.

⁸⁴³ Strasburg, interview.

⁸⁴⁴ Weinberg, interview.

⁸⁴⁵ Strasburg, interview; Brooks Spector, "Barbara Harmel."

In February 1955, the Congress movement set up the Central Indian High School (CIHS), or ‘Congress School’ in Fordsburg, Johannesburg, to counter government pressures to move all Indians to Lenasia by closing Indian schools.⁸⁴⁶ Many students understood the school as a ‘school of resistance’ and thus did not expect “‘normal” education’.⁸⁴⁷ For the Indian students attending this school, it became the “‘finishing school” for our political development and an important terrain of struggle.’⁸⁴⁸ The school’s atmosphere of resistance was amplified by its teachers: activists Molly Fischer, Duma Nokwe, and Dan Tloome were all teachers, and Michael Harmel was the principal.⁸⁴⁹ Police raids were frequent.⁸⁵⁰ The school also became a meeting point for non-Indian activists and their children. In December 1955 the school concert included a play ‘2005 – A Glimpse into the Future’.⁸⁵¹ Its cast included children of activists Max Sisulu, Ilse Fischer, Mark Weinberg, and Barbara Harmel, amongst others.⁸⁵²

In 1955, the Congress Alliance organised ‘cultural clubs’ to boycott Bantu Education. The African Education Movement (AEM) was founded to create lesson plans and training ‘conferences’ for the ‘cultural clubs’.⁸⁵³ These delivered math, history, and politics classes, as well as music, handcraft, home crafts, reading, and hygiene without using any traditional teaching methods, blackboards, or schoolbooks to avoid prosecution.⁸⁵⁴

⁸⁴⁶ Magazine of Central Indian High School, December 1955, Johannesburg, provided by Ilse Wilson to author; Pahad, *Insurgent Diplomat*.

⁸⁴⁷ Pahad, *Insurgent Diplomat*.

⁸⁴⁸ Pahad, *Insurgent Diplomat*.

⁸⁴⁹ Magazine of Central Indian High School.

⁸⁵⁰ Amin Cajee with Terry Bell, *Fordsburg Fighter: Journey of an MK Volunteer* (Cape Town: Cover2Cover, 2016), 25.

⁸⁵¹ Magazine of Central Indian High School.

⁸⁵² Magazine of Central Indian High School.

⁸⁵³ African Education Movement, “Aims and rules,” n.d., AD1137 Federation of South African Women (FEDSAW), Ca2.1, Historical Papers, Wits; Helen Joseph, *Side by Side* (Johannesburg: Ad. Donker Publishers/Jonathan Ball Publishers, 1993 [1986]), 50.

⁸⁵⁴ “Draft proposals on Bantu Education,” n.d., AD1137 Federation of South African Women (FEDSAW), Ca1.1.3, Historical Papers, Wits; “Report and resolutions adopted at the special conference of organisations opposed to the Bantu Education Act, 9-10 Apr.1955,” AD1137 Federation of South African Women (FEDSAW), Ca1.1.2, Historical Papers, Wits.

‘Club leaders’ (often former teachers), as well as pupils, were frequently harassed and arrested by the police. The ‘cultural clubs’ varied in impact across regions. A policy document detailed:

At the moment there are eight Cultural Clubs in operation on the Witwatersrand and eleven Clubs in the Eastern Cape.. The total number of children in all the Clubs is about 10,000. Some of these Clubs have as many as 900 children who attend regularly.⁸⁵⁵

Other sources suggest that around 7000 children attended the cultural clubs.⁸⁵⁶ It is unclear how many children of activists attended these cultural clubs, although they had a politicising influence on those who did. The Sisulu home organised a club, which their children attended.⁸⁵⁷ Joyce Sikakane, whose grandfather was the ANC Natal chaplain, attended that same club, calling it her ‘initiation into the political question’; she joined the *Masupatsela* and attended political meetings in Durban, near her boarding school, Inanda Seminary.⁸⁵⁸ Yet, a 1956 internal report expressed complaints that ‘leading Congressites’ children were avoiding the boycott.⁸⁵⁹ The *Cape Times* denounced it as a ‘rash decision of the elite’, a perspective Ntantala-Jordan, NEUM activist and mother, shared.⁸⁶⁰ The clubs collapsed by late 1956 due to a lack of resources.⁸⁶¹

⁸⁵⁵ African Education Movement, “History of the A.E.M.,” n.d., AD1137 Federation of South African Women (FEDSAW), Ca2.2., Historical Papers, Wits.

⁸⁵⁶ Norman Levy, *Final Prize*, Chapter 11.

⁸⁵⁷ Sisulu, *Walter and Albertina Sisulu*, 187.

⁸⁵⁸ Joyce Sikhakhane-Rankin, “Joyce Sikhakhane-Rankin,” interview by South African Democracy Education Trust, *The Road to Democracy: South Africans telling their stories, Volume 1* (Pretoria: South African Democracy Education Trust, 2008), 441. Joyce Sikakane is (as in this source) sometimes spelled as Sikhakhane, followed by her husband’s name Rankin. I have used ‘Sikakane’ as this seems to be the more widely used version.

⁸⁵⁹ “Our Cultural Clubs,” n.a., n.d., issued in Sept or Oct 1956) in *From Protest to Challenge: Documents of African Politics in South Africa, 1882-1964, Volume 3: Challenge and Violence, 1953-1964*, eds. Thomas Karis and Gwendolen M. Carter (Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 1977), 34.

⁸⁶⁰ “Our Cultural Clubs,” *From Protest to Challenge*, 34; Ntantala, *A Life’s Mosaic*, 162-3.

⁸⁶¹ Levy, *The Final Prize*, Chapter 11; “Report on a tour of the major centres of the Union, submitted to the National Consultative Committee for Discussion’, p. e. FSAW BII”, cited in Walker, *Women and Resistance*, 170.

Children experienced the late 1940s to mid-1950s as an intensely social period of meetings, conferences, and parties, as Lynn recounted:

There were also fund-raising parties and bazaars, to which my parents usually took me along. The best were the New Year's Eve parties, often at the Buntings' house on the mountain in Clifton, overlooking the white beaches and crashing waves. It was one of the few opportunities where people from different races could mix socially.⁸⁶²

For Barbara, the ANC's and SACP's rapprochement led to her having

new black friends, not only the communists like Moses Kotane and JB Marks who have been part of my life since childhood. I go to the township of Orlando with my father on a visit to Evelyn and Nelson Mandela where they live with their small children.⁸⁶³

Children were exposed to these political communities through participation by default and in peripheral spaces, experiencing them as an 'extended family' with other activists taking the role of 'aunties' and 'uncles'. Children credited not just their own parents' influences but also their general environment in guiding their political paths. Aziz Pahad wrote:

This then was the environment that provided the gravitational pull for being politically involved. (...) Political discourse swirled around us almost on a daily basis in our flat, in the congress offices and on street corners. I was thus very privileged to have grown up in a 'Congress base'. In a real sense, while I had a nuclear family, the Congress Movement and the many personalities who animated it had also become family and integral part of my existence.⁸⁶⁴

Children likely also highlighted the influence of the 'movement background', rather than their parents' direct influences, to counter accusations of nepotism (see Chapter 7).⁸⁶⁵

Apartheid's repression had, however, already started to impact these political communities. Initially only banned from political meetings, in 1954 Lynn's parents were banned from attending any 'gathering' for the next 14 years:

⁸⁶² Carneson-McGregor, *Red in the Rainbow*, 104.

⁸⁶³ Brooks Spector, "Barbara Harmel."

⁸⁶⁴ Pahad, *Insurgent Diplomat*.

⁸⁶⁵ Aziz Pahad, interview by Julie Frederikse, June 1986, AL2460 Tracing the Unbreakable Thread – Non-Racialism in South Africa, A16.03.1, SAHA.

Of course, before they were named and banned there was a huge... we had a very, very good community of struggle fighters who were all together and I played with their children and so forth and then all of the sudden that was not allowed.⁸⁶⁶

Her parents' banning thus also impacted her own social circles and she stopped interacting with the children of other activists.⁸⁶⁷

Political Understanding in the late 1950s to the late 1960s

While escalating detentions, imprisonment, and raids during the late 1950s and 1960s politicised children through constant interactions with the SB, intensified secrecy curtailed their involvement in their parents' political activities and communities.

Secrecy became tantamount to activists' everyday lives. After Sharpeville, Gillian Slovo remembered: 'Secrecy which had been part of our lives for as long as we could remember, now ran riot.'⁸⁶⁸ Consequently, children were less likely to attend meetings or conferences, no longer participating 'by default' to the same extent. Some children did perform small political activities for their parents, including smuggling messages between banned activists, distributing pamphlets, delivering food parcels, or acting as decoys.⁸⁶⁹ Zoya frequently accompanied Mac Maharaj and his wife, Tim Naidoo, on their activities – as a family, they were less suspicious.⁸⁷⁰ As noted in Chapter 3, children also acted as 'early-warning systems' and assisted their parents in the destruction of illegal material.⁸⁷¹ When their parents were listed/banned and could not be quoted by newspapers or speak publicly, children acted as their parents' spokesperson.⁸⁷²

⁸⁶⁶ Carneson-McGregor, interview; Carneson-McGregor, *Red in the Rainbow*, 131.

⁸⁶⁷ Carneson-McGregor, *Red in the Rainbow*, 131.

⁸⁶⁸ Slovo, *Every Secret Thing*, 67.

⁸⁶⁹ Hain, *Pretoria Boy*, 18, 23; Ruth Carneson, interview; Carneson-McGregor, interview.

⁸⁷⁰ Zoya Joseph, interview.

⁸⁷¹ Wilson, Eastwood, "We called him Bram," 23; Hain, *Ad & Wal*, 210.

⁸⁷² Hain, *Pretoria Boy*, 56, 60.

As the eldest, Peter Hain became his parents' political 'surrogate':

From the ages of 14-16, I became increasingly active in a liaison role, taking and passing messages to individuals with whom my parents were prevented from communicating, such as journalists and other banned people, and so helping them to continue much of their political work behind the scenes. This I enjoyed because I was helping them, and because I believed in their cause, even if I was not up to speed on all the detail.⁸⁷³

As older children had experienced the previously more overt political situation, they were generally entrusted with more information – also because their parents required them to support the family. From a young age, Mlungisi 'Lungi' Sisulu, the Sisulu's second son, worked as a courier and driver for his mother and other activists, delivering banned material and letters.⁸⁷⁴ He reflected:

But while young white people of my age were growing up and having a good time, I was a young man already. Sometimes, when I look at my own grandchildren now, I wish I could go back and experience the joys of being a child (...) I had to give up my childhood and I couldn't talk about what I did, that was too dangerous. It meant I was virtually grown up by the time I was 10 or 12.⁸⁷⁵

For Toni, being treated as an adult made her feel 'involved': 'Being given these responsible tasks confirmed to me that I was an adult and being treated like one.'⁸⁷⁶ Toni and Lungi's statements echo the argument made in Chapters 3 and 4 that children challenged conceptions of childhood, as increased responsibilities were placed upon them.

To gather information, children relied on hidden clues, so Denis Hirson wrote:

I had already guessed in the previous weeks that he [his father] would most likely be absent for longer than I wanted to think about. The solemn, powdered features of my great-aunt's face and the deep furrow of her brow had told me so in Durban, as had my mother's sleepless face in Johannesburg.⁸⁷⁷

⁸⁷³ Hain, *Pretoria Boy*, 49.

⁸⁷⁴ Sisulu, *Walter and Albertina Sisulu*, 303. Another source suggests this work started even earlier when he was ten years old, see Peter Bills, "Lungi Sisulu: 'It Was Pointless Fighting and Hating,'" *The Independent*, 28 July 2009, <https://www.independent.co.uk/voices/columnists/peter-bills/lungi-sisulu-it-was-pointless-fighting-and-hating-1763610.html>.

⁸⁷⁵ Bills, "Lungi Sisulu."

⁸⁷⁶ Strasburg, *Holding the Fort*, 189.

⁸⁷⁷ Hirson, *Thirty-Minute Bar Mitzvah*, 98.

Frances Bernstein sensed adults' anxieties when her parents were arrested following the Rivonia arrests in 1963:

And basically what I can remember about the feelings of that time was the adults conveyed this sense of trauma, drama, anxiety, whatever it was, but because I didn't really know the implications of them being arrested, I don't remember feeling it traumatically myself.⁸⁷⁸

Pregassen Naicker emphasised the role that fantasy played amidst a lack of concrete information.⁸⁷⁹

To protect both children and the movement, other children were completely kept away from politics. Gloria Nkadimeng remembered:

At that time, my political understanding was none, I didn't know what was happening. I just used to be surprised when there were these policemen visiting my dad. I didn't understand anything. I didn't know what the ANC was. My father didn't really tell us anything, because he didn't want us to be telling other people in the streets about it.⁸⁸⁰

When political parties were banned in the early 1960s, children-centred initiatives, like the *Masupatsela* or the YD, ceased.⁸⁸¹ Only some informal gatherings remained for younger children, organised by concerned activists and spouses.⁸⁸² Other, often younger, primarily white children did not remember spending any time with other children of activists.⁸⁸³ Children risked revealing sensitive information to each other, so parents potentially discouraged friendships.⁸⁸⁴ As a result of the increased secrecy, children rarely talked to friends, even within the movement, nor to their siblings. In consequence, Merle kept her parents' political work as an intangible secret: 'I kept a dark secret. Actually, it

⁸⁷⁸ Frances Bernstein, interview.

⁸⁷⁹ Pregassen Naicker, interview by Wolfie Kodesh, 16 November 1992, Oral History of Exiles Project, MCA6 – 330, Mayibuye Archives, UWC.

⁸⁸⁰ Bernstein, *The Rift*, 130.

⁸⁸¹ The Role of the Youth in the Development of the National Pioneers' Organisation, ANC Youth Conference, 17-23 August 1982, SOMAFCO, Morogoro, Box 4, Folder 42-47, A2675 Karis-Gerhart Collection, Historical Papers, Wits.

⁸⁸² Strasburg, interview.

⁸⁸³ Shapiro, interview; Lubner, interview; Ruff, interview; Alexandra Stein, interviewed by author, London, 11 May 2023.

⁸⁸⁴ Lubner, interview.

didn't exist anywhere, except in my head and on visits to Barberton [her mother's prison].⁸⁸⁵

Secrets became a source of intense shame, keeping children from engaging with those who could have provided comfort.⁸⁸⁶

As repression increased, activist communities disintegrated, leaving children isolated, while also eroding one of the key sites of children's politicisation. By the mid- to late 1960s, Ruth felt 'a terrible, terrible sense of isolation and fear and ostracism'.⁸⁸⁷ Sheila expressed this lack of supportive community:

And we didn't have structures, support structures. I lost – I'm talking about this as a young girl – I lost role models, because at that time in the sixties; that's when everybody was moving away. The Emplateles, everybody, they're my levels, the Mgees, my close family friends, my parents, the people that were good, were going either in exile or in prison.⁸⁸⁸

Political Understanding in the 1970s to the late 1980s in South Africa

From the early 1970s to the late 1980s, the political context changed drastically. In the early 1970s, activist communities were deeply diminished by exile and repression, offering little possibility for children to be politicised. By the 1980s, a high level of grassroots activity developed, offering children increased participation by default. In comparison to the 1950s, there were however fewer social interactions across political organisations. Through youth and student organisations, children became active participants.

In the first half of the 1970s, the liberation movement's situation in South Africa looked bleak, and the ANC's internal presence was greatly diminished.⁸⁸⁹ Nonetheless, small numbers of remaining activists, albeit heavily restricted, continued to organise a

⁸⁸⁵ Ruff, interview.

⁸⁸⁶ Lubner, interview; Ruff, interview.

⁸⁸⁷ Ruth Carneson, interview.

⁸⁸⁸ TRC, "Sheila Masote."

⁸⁸⁹ Gloss, *New Radicals*.

political underground.⁸⁹⁰ Due to the high levels of secrecy required, the children of activists were largely excluded from these structures. Some more overt structures included the HRC, as Chapter 3 discussed, which was founded to ‘keep the spirit of the ANC alive amongst the people’.⁸⁹¹ Nonetheless, Kuben, whose father co-founded the HRC, commented: ‘(...) 70s were silent, the 80s were not [laughs].’⁸⁹² Before the increase in youth organisations in the late 1970s, there seemed to have been few specific initiatives for children to engage with their parents’ politics.

Remaining activists were easily monitored by the state. Kuben recalled: ‘So, I come from a family that was part of that ‘50s and ‘60s party tradition and in the politics of the ‘70s and ‘80s there were no parties, right.’⁸⁹³ Nonetheless, there was some (cross-racial) social interaction throughout this period. Kuben remembered: ‘You know, as a child there was a complete non-racial mix of people who would come to the house. Winnie Mandela and her kids would often come, and they’d spend two or three days there.’⁸⁹⁴ After her brother, Paul died, Ilse moved in with activist Helen Joseph.⁸⁹⁵ Zenani and Zindzi also lived with Joseph – ‘Granny’ – in 1976 when Winnie Mandela was detained.⁸⁹⁶

The Soweto Uprising on 16 June 1976 ended this period of quiescence. For children who felt frustrated with their parents’ (supposed) lack of action, BCM teachings offered a political haven. Elinor Sisulu described how the

overwhelming majority of the members of the existing school and university organisations had very limited knowledge of the ANC, and tended to regard it as a

⁸⁹⁰ Houston, Magubane, “Political Underground,” 372-3.

⁸⁹¹ Houston, Magubane, “Political Underground,” 376.

⁸⁹² Naidoo, interview.

⁸⁹³ Naidoo, interview.

⁸⁹⁴ Naidoo, interview.

⁸⁹⁵ Joseph, *Side by Side*, 176.

⁸⁹⁶ Joseph, *Side by Side*, 212-5.

“dead organisation” of their fathers and mothers, “just concerned with setting up structures” and not “involved in any action”.⁸⁹⁷

For Gloria Nkadimeng, whose father had shielded her completely from the ANC, the uprising posed a first point of politicisation.⁸⁹⁸ These children were perceived as ‘active participants’ (see Chapter 7). For younger children of activists, like Nkosinathi, the flurry of political activity from 1976 onwards meant that their homes once again became the site of political meetings, offering politicisation via peripheral spaces.⁸⁹⁹

Starting from the late 1970s, numerous civic organisations, as well as student and youth movements were formed. The swell in ‘aboveground’ activity increased possibility for children’s participation by default.⁹⁰⁰ Once again, children accompanied their parents to events and meetings, assisting with small political tasks. Kuben Naidoo and his brother, Myan, ‘tagged along’ to their father’s meetings from about 1978/9.⁹⁰¹ Myan wrote:

We were politically active from the beginning as our parents always took us along to political gatherings. We attended most landmark anti-apartheid gatherings since the late 1970s. From a young age we were tasked with handing out flyers at traffic intersections; attending political rallies; doing door-to-door, knock and drop campaigns, attending placard demonstrations against detention of anti-apartheid leaders and activists and organising school boycotts against racist and unequal education.⁹⁰²

This was also due to the absence of childcare, particularly for people of colour who could not rely on domestic workers, as Shahida Issel wrote: ‘I felt very guilty because I allowed the children to be part of that. They had no choice then. When we went to meetings they went with. Wherever I went they went with.’⁹⁰³ In 1983, many of these smaller organisations

⁸⁹⁷Sisulu, *Walter and Albertina Sisulu*, 235; Houston and Magubane, “Political Underground,” 397.

⁸⁹⁸Bernstein, *Rift*, 130.

⁸⁹⁹Biko, interview.

⁹⁰⁰Saunders, “Liberal democratic anti-apartheid activity,” 1605.

⁹⁰¹Kuben Naidoo, interview.

⁹⁰²Vadi, *Thambi Naidoo*, 231-2.

⁹⁰³Issel, *Knocking on*, 33.

joined the UDF as affiliates. Children travelled alongside their parents to Cape Town to witness the UDF launch.⁹⁰⁴

Kuben highlighted that despite the high level of political activity, the political communities were less developed socially, compared to the 1950s, due to the levels of repression, secrecy, and the grassroots-driven, bottom-up structure of the UDF, which meant that there were fewer overarching structures.⁹⁰⁵ In the early 1950s, the social nature of activism had played an important role in exposing children to their parents' activism in peripheral spaces, but this was rarer in the 1980s:

(...) then it was in the '50s and '60s, you know, and my family used to talk...I mean, just the house that I grew up in, the Rockey Street house, right, every day there was somebody who came home and there was a meal there and they sat down and they ate and they talked politics, you know, that didn't happen in the '80s there.⁹⁰⁶

Hugh also emphasised the limited social interactions between his mother's circles with any black activists, and their children during his childhood: 'There was no social interaction, not even in their generation.'⁹⁰⁷

Political Understanding in Exile from the 1960s to 1990

The previous chapter argued that the ANC engaged with the movement's children by establishing educational programs and institutions only when faced with the influx of thousands of children and youth fleeing South Africa post-Soweto Uprising. These institutions played a significant role in children's politicisation, as will be discussed below. Thus, *when* children experienced exile had a major impact on their politicisation and,

⁹⁰⁴ Kuben Naidoo, interview.

⁹⁰⁵ Kuben Naidoo, interview.

⁹⁰⁶ Kuben Naidoo, interview.

⁹⁰⁷ Hawarden, interview.

ultimately, integration into their parents' movement. In her study on the *Masupatsela* 'generation', de Sas Kropiwnicki argues:

As individuals, they are unique in terms of their personal biographies. And yet, as a generation of exile children, they share a historical location, a political consciousness and an ongoing desire to be or become agents of change in a liberated South Africa.⁹⁰⁸

This reflects the experiences of children interviewed for this thesis only to a certain extent; instead, exile geographies and the historical point at which they experienced exile drastically impacted children's politicisation and integration into the political community. De Sas Kropiwnicki's work offers fascinating insights into one generation of children of activists, yet, broadening the temporal scope unearths strong differences not only regarding the levels of repressions children of activist were exposed to (Chapters 3 and 4), but also to what extent they were politicised, were able to understand the situation that they faced and integrated into their parents' political movement. Their varied experiences challenge the notion of a coherent 'generation of exiled children' and call into question the validity of the '*Masupatsela*' generation as representative of all exiled South African children.⁹⁰⁹

In addition to time, this sub-section also introduces the factor of location. Here, I follow Hugh Macmillan and Joan McGregor's call for challenging the non-locality of the term 'exile'.⁹¹⁰ McGregor

challenges the idea of a singular "exile condition" that can be generalized across time and space, arguing instead for a critical geographical approach that treats exile as performative and locates experiences historically within transnational networks and life trajectories.⁹¹¹

⁹⁰⁸ De Sas Kropiwnicki, *Exile*, 3.

⁹⁰⁹ Israel also suggests that referring to the children of exiles as second-generation exiles is misleading as these children do not constitute a coherent generation, see Israel, "Living with 'A World Apart'."

⁹¹⁰ Macmillan, "Culture of Exile," 304.

⁹¹¹ JoAnn McGregor, "Locating exile: decolonization, anti-imperial spaces and Zimbabwean students in Britain, 1965-1980," *Journal of Historical Geography* 57 (2017): 63.

While some children spent only short periods in individual locations, moving across countries to follow their parents' postings, the majority of children interviewed as part of this study spent most of their childhood in exile in one or sometimes two locations, shaping their formative experiences. The previous chapter explored how children experienced the geopolitical context of these locations and their reception. This chapter focuses more closely on the South African exile communities that were established, and the opportunities for politicisation these created, through four case studies: London, Lusaka, Maputo, and Mazimbu. Some children also travelled to less frequented exile locations, where they generally experienced less of a South African political community and consequently felt more detached from the South African struggle.⁹¹²

London

When children arrived in London in the 1960s, there were no specific South African-organised children initiatives yet, so many children attended the Woodcraft Folk (WF).⁹¹³ The WF, a socialist alternative to the Boy/Girl Scouts, had started in 1925 in the British Labour movement; it aimed 'to educate and empower young people to be able to participate actively in society, improving their lives and others through active citizenship'.⁹¹⁴ For exiled children, the organisation offered a haven: '[I]t gave us a place to feel we weren't sort of strange, because not being South African and not being English, you know [laughs], you know, in the Woodcraft Folk you felt absolutely one'.⁹¹⁵ It also linked South African children with each other.⁹¹⁶ Many remained part of WF until their late teens. By inviting speakers like Albie Sachs or Robert Resha, organising discussions about apartheid,

⁹¹² Emma Duncan, interviewed by author, London, 27 April 2023; Alex Duncan, interview.

⁹¹³ Deenan Pillay; Brown, interview; Nannan, interview; Zoya Joseph, interview; Anand Pillay, interview.

⁹¹⁴ Woodcraft Folk, n.d. "Our Policies," <http://woodcraft.org.uk/policies>, accessed 15 October 2016, cited in de Sas Kropiwnicki, *Exile*, 95

⁹¹⁵ Brown, interview.

⁹¹⁶ Brown, interview.

collecting material aid for SOMAFCO in 1986, and sponsoring British children to visit the school, WF also connected directly with the South African struggle.⁹¹⁷

In contrast, the success of the *Masupatsela* in London was patchy. It is unclear when the *Masupatsela* exactly started in London. As the next case study will show, the *Masupatsela* were re-launched in the mid-1970s in Lusaka. Yet, Blanche La Guma recalled her children attending ‘political instruction’ classes, one Saturday a month, led by Pallo Jordan, after they came to London in 1966.⁹¹⁸ Andrew recalled attending the *Masupatsela* from the age of eight, around 1973.⁹¹⁹ Meanwhile, ANC documentations suggest that they were formally launched as late as 1981 as the South African National Pioneer Organisation (*Masupatsela*).⁹²⁰ Children were split into age-related cohorts, and a range of activists, including Eleanor Kasrils, Dulcie September, Barry Gilder, and Shireen Carim-Fradet, organised educational and cultural activities.⁹²¹

The ANC was frustrated with the *Masupatsela*’s organisation and a lack of children’s participation in London – in 1979, SOMAFCO’s principal, on a visit to London, reported:

Attendance at an ANC Children Christmas party was a disappointing experience. The children of our various racial groups did not appear to be encouraged to participate together fully in our national cultural activities. One also missed hearing our children singing our national anthem in opening and or closing such an occasion [sic].⁹²²

⁹¹⁷ De Sas Kropiwnicki, *Exile*, 95; What Can We Do About South Africa, Publicity from SOMAFCO Campaign, 1986, FH_035_03, Woodcraft Folk Heritage Archive.

⁹¹⁸ La Guma, *In the Dark*, 135.

⁹¹⁹ Andrew Kasrils, interview.

⁹²⁰ The Role of the Youth in the Development of the National Pioneers’ Organisation, ANC Youth Conference, 17-23 August 1982, SOMAFCO, Morogoro, A2675 Karis-Gerhart Collection.

⁹²¹ Andrew Kasrils, interview.

⁹²² Report of the Principal of Solomon Mahlangu Freedom College on his Visit to Europe 5.12.1979-29.12.1979, Box 2-3, Folder 29-41, A2675 Karis-Gerhart Collection, Historical Papers, Wits; Secretary’s Report to the ANC Women’s Section Annual General Meeting, approx. 1981, Box 24, Folder 24, 38 a, b, ANC London Mission, UFH.

Children showed resistance to the school-like aspects of the club.⁹²³ Many were already too old to participate in the *Masupatsela* – those above the age of 16 were moved into the Youth Section.⁹²⁴ In 1981, the Women’s Secretariat lamented that no children in the US, Canada, and the UK had been sent to international camps, due to the ‘hostile environment of Western mass media and educational systems’.⁹²⁵

Children’s politicisation occurred in their everyday activities, as Nadine explained:

No, it was more an everyday thing that you heard about and, you know, things would be explained in terms of what was on the news and things would be explained in terms of well, you know, there’s this demonstration and there’s a vigil. And so, and then, of course, there was, you know, all of the anti-apartheid activities, that as young people we took part in. So, it was just our sort of way of life.⁹²⁶

Nadia recounted the culture of discussion and debate (the first of the five processes) in her home.⁹²⁷ Deenan similarly recalled: ‘But always discussions at home, (...) there was sort of active discussions and obviously, I knew the apartheid regime was wrong and so on and you know bad things about it.’⁹²⁸ In 1959, his parents were involved in founding the Boycott Movement (later the AAM). Both the ANC and the AAM organised cultural events as well as regular protests and vigils, often at Trafalgar Square outside South Africa House, which children frequently attended.⁹²⁹ The constant conversations at home, as well as attendance at these events, made Deenan conscious of apartheid: ‘(...) my youth was you know all the demonstrations my parents would take me on you know just because they couldn't leave me by myself (...).’⁹³⁰ Sam recalled accompanying his mother to pickets at Trafalgar Square and

⁹²³ Pioneers, Pioneers Committee, n.d., Box 24, Folder 38 a, b, ANC London Mission, UFH.

⁹²⁴ Pioneers, Pioneers Committee, n.d., ANC London Mission.

⁹²⁵ Report on the Activities of the Women’s Secretariat since September 1981, Women’s Section Lusaka Region Annual General Members Meeting (AGM) Minutes, 1986, Box 91, Folder 9, Mittah Seperepere, ANC Lusaka Mission, UFH.

⁹²⁶ Nannan, interview.

⁹²⁷ Nadia Joseph, interview.

⁹²⁸ Deenan Pillay, interview.

⁹²⁹ Nannan, interview; Sam Gurney, interviewed by author, London, 15 June 2023.

⁹³⁰ Deenan Pillay, interview.

leafleting outside their local Sainsbury's.⁹³¹ Participating in the boycott of South African goods posed an everyday political act and interaction with the South African struggle. Participation by default was thus a common part of children's politicisation in London.

This was not only confined to South African struggle-related events, as their parents also became involved in other political movements. Sam was raised primarily by his mother, Christabel Gurney, as his parents were separated and his father, Aziz Pahad, frequently travelled on ANC business.⁹³² Christabel Gurney was born in the UK in the 1940s and became politicised through the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND) before becoming involved in the AAM in the late 1960s, where she met Pahad.⁹³³ She continued to be politically involved outside of the AAM, including in the British Communist Party and the Print Union, and while South Africa always played a part in Sam's life, this was not 'insular' to him.⁹³⁴

In their teens, children volunteered at the ANC, AAM, and IDAF offices in London.⁹³⁵ Andrew volunteered at the ANC's Department for Information and Publicity (DIP) as a school boy, filling envelopes, or stapling and folding publications, before joining DIP full-time, aged 17.⁹³⁶ Reva wrote letters to political prisoners in South Africa and was involved in microficheing and filing at IDAF.⁹³⁷ While Nadia had previously experienced her social life at school and home life as two different 'worlds', her volunteering with Anti-

⁹³¹ Gurney, interview.

⁹³² Gurney, interview.

⁹³³ Gurney, interview; Christabel Gurney, interview by Hana Sandhu, 16 October 2013, Forward to Freedom Anti-Apartheid Movement Archives, Bodleian Libraries, University of Oxford.

⁹³⁴ Sam Gurney interview.

⁹³⁵ Andrew Kasrils, interview; Zoya Joseph, interview; Yasmin, interviewed by author, Johannesburg, 6 April 2023 (pseudonymised); Reva, interview; Gurney, interview.

⁹³⁶ Andrew Kasrils, interview.

⁹³⁷ Reva, interview.

Apartheid Camden when she was 14-15 years old enabled her to meet like-minded people, and mesh her two worlds together.⁹³⁸

Secrecy continued to be necessary in activists' everyday life in London. Children picked up on the secret activities around them in passing – in peripheral spaces – so Andrew recalled:

There were things in the house, that as kids, we stumbled upon... a box of small pamphlet books. That said "A Guide to the Winelands in South Africa", but when you flick it open, like halfway through the book, it's the Freedom Charter, and, you know, instructional text for overthrowing the apartheid government. And it's a whole box, so you... What's going on here?⁹³⁹

They were highly conscious that these activities had to be kept secret, including from their peers. Reva recounted:

(...) you know you sort of come home from school and there'll be all these people wearing gloves in the living room [laughs], stuffing leaflets into envelopes and it's like OK, we don't talk about this and don't bring your friends here I'm like alright...[laughs].⁹⁴⁰

Yet, children also struggled to understand the levels of secrecy required – while they were living in Yorkshire, Peta proudly shared her parents' political experiences, until her father intervened.⁹⁴¹ In response, Peta 'clammed up' completely, refusing to tell people even where she was from.⁹⁴²

Nonetheless, through organisations like the AAM and some ANC activities, there was a public front for activism, despite the secretive layer underneath, which allowed children to openly engage with their parents' activities. Growing up, David was unaware of his father's involvement in the struggle.⁹⁴³ While his mother, Babette, attended meetings

⁹³⁸ Nadia Joseph, interview.

⁹³⁹ Andrew Kasrils, interview.

⁹⁴⁰ Reva, interview.

⁹⁴¹ Peta Wolpe, interview.

⁹⁴² Peta Wolpe, interview.

⁹⁴³ Brown, interview.

and protests, his father, Mannie, stayed completely out of it. David believed that Mannie had forsaken his activist intentions: ‘Literally, all throughout our growing up lives, it was my mom and us, you know, getting... still involved in the struggle, through the ANC and the Anti-Apartheid Movement and all of that, but dad is not. Meanwhile, he was!’⁹⁴⁴ Only in 1995/6 did he become aware of the full extent of his father’s activities.

The South African community in the UK was, as Israel argues, however, not monolithic; instead, exiles ‘created partial networks, a series of interacting and overlapping circles’.⁹⁴⁵ These were organised ‘by various combinations of family ties, ethnicity, religion, age, geographical location, place of origin, time of arrival and shared experiences’, as well as political affiliation.⁹⁴⁶ When Anand and Deenan’s father, Vella Pillay, who worked at the Bank of China, refused to follow the SACP’s positioning during the Sino-Soviet Split, the family was ostracised from the London SACP community.⁹⁴⁷ Instead, they relied primarily on their South African Indian links. Andrew felt integrated into an extended family of political activists:

But, and of course, because they were part of this community of sort of ANC exiles, besides just our general neighbors, or social friends, or whatever. (...) So, there were these South African Uncles and Aunties, who weren't family member ‘Uncles and Aunties’, I mean, Uncles and Auntie’s in the sort of South African sense.⁹⁴⁸

Other children felt excluded and/or sought distance from other South African exiles, so

Shawn Slovo said:

Because I think it was the.. too painful, it must have been. I don’t know. I thought I didn’t want to be identified with a group of victims, which is what I suppose I felt being in exile is. I found it depressing to be in large gatherings of South Africans.⁹⁴⁹

⁹⁴⁴ Brown, interview.

⁹⁴⁵ Israel, *South African Political Exile*, 136, 131.

⁹⁴⁶ Israel, *South African Political Exile*, 3.

⁹⁴⁷ Anand Pillay, interview; Deenan Pillay, interview.

⁹⁴⁸ Andrew Kasrils, interview.

⁹⁴⁹ Shawn Slovo, interview by Hilda Bernstein, 1990, Hilda Bernstein Collection, MCA 7 – 1701, Mayibuye Archives, UWC.

Alex similarly described consciously wanting to avoid the South African exile communities in London.⁹⁵⁰

Yet, the ANC conducted a political project to portray a coherent community, as Israel argues:

The project was a politically important one, because if, for instance, the ANC could show that it existed as one big happy family outside South Africa, encompassing a broad and diverse range of people and opinions, then it could undercut some of the censures that Pretoria was deploying against it.⁹⁵¹

This political project developed over the ANC's time in exile: in the 1960s, the ANC was – as in South Africa, and until the 1969 Morogoro Conference – only open to Africans. Non-Africans in the UK were thus struggling to find a political home in the UK, a gap which the AAM was able to fill, as Lissoni argues.⁹⁵² A key event in the ANC social calendar was the bazaar, a yearly event that drew in exiles and supporters. Children came a day early to decorate the bazaar with 'black, green, and gold creping'.⁹⁵³ This was primarily a community event where 'all the families once a year [are] getting to see each other, the Aunties are cooking curry, the kids are all playing together.'⁹⁵⁴ For some children, this was the only time that they actively engaged with this community.⁹⁵⁵ There was also an ANC football team which attracted youth.⁹⁵⁶ Through these socio-political activities, South Africa was 'a feature of our lives', as Peta recalled.⁹⁵⁷

⁹⁵⁰ Alex Duncan, interview.

⁹⁵¹ Israel, *South African Political Exile*, 111-2.

⁹⁵² Lissoni, "South African Liberation Movements," 84.

⁹⁵³ Yasmin, interview.

⁹⁵⁴ Andrew Kasrils, interview.

⁹⁵⁵ Brown, interview.

⁹⁵⁶ Gurney, interview.

⁹⁵⁷ Peta Wolpe, interview.

Several activists expressed their exclusion from the ANC/SACP core community and argued that these offered little support to those outside their core.⁹⁵⁸ AnnMarie Wolpe recalled,

[b]ut in those early periods, I felt and have always felt, and it was highlighted, I suppose, by becoming a feminist, that the political movement gives fuck-all attention to either wives or children or perhaps now it might have changed, its somewhat better, but certainly in the early period, in the sixties, there was absolutely no support for me as me, or me as a wife, or we [me] as a mother of the children (...).⁹⁵⁹

Her daughter Tessa echoed this – when she was growing up in the 1960s and early 1970s – she felt like ‘just a number’, with no specific ANC policies towards children like her.⁹⁶⁰

The PAC had a much smaller community in London – Laretta Ngcobo suggested that there were about 100 PAC members in London.⁹⁶¹ Despite opening an office in 1961 in London, the PAC was unable to establish itself, also due to the UK government’s hostility towards what they considered a ‘black racist organization committed to the violent overthrow of all Whites in South Africa’.⁹⁶² Kethiwe, whose family had been PAC until her father left the party following its expulsion from Zambia in 1968, did not often partake in South African activities in London, as these were mostly ANC-dominated.⁹⁶³ Her older sisters became more involved when the 1976 influx swelled South African numbers in London, but Kethiwe was too young to engage much with them.

As in South Africa, children interacted with each other via their parents’ circles, but this did not always translate into independent friendships. A decisive factor in limiting

⁹⁵⁸ Maharaj, *Dancing to a Different Rhythm*, 82; Kitson, *Sixpence*, 216.

⁹⁵⁹ Anne Marie Wolpe, interview by Hilda Bernstein, n.d., Hilda Bernstein Collection, MCA 7 – 1722, Mayibuye Archives, UWC.

⁹⁶⁰ Tessa Wolpe, interview.

⁹⁶¹ Israel, *South African Political Exile*, 181.

⁹⁶² Israel, *South African Political Exile*, 179, 181.

⁹⁶³ Ngcobo, interview.

interactions was the sheer size of London.⁹⁶⁴ Children were less likely to use public transport until they were older, and thus were confined to their immediate surroundings.⁹⁶⁵ As many families settled in North London, children established friendships with those immediately around them. Zoya developed a strong friendship with David and his twin brother, Peter, because they attended the same school.⁹⁶⁶ These friendships could counter children's feelings of isolation – Alexandra befriended Robyn Slovo, as she was the only one to understand 'what it was like to float aimlessly in London with some great gaping hole inside torn in the shape of South Africa'.⁹⁶⁷ Zoya, however, also recalled that she was too afraid of breaking secrecy regulations, limiting their ability to rely on each other: 'But we never spoke to each other about any of this shit.'⁹⁶⁸

For some children, their parents' struggle continued to be all-consuming, as Nicholas recalled: 'It's not as simple as that because the struggle was all-pervasive. Wherever you went, it was there. You couldn't run away from it.'⁹⁶⁹ Other children, however, highlighted how apartheid formed only part of their life – in London, the city's size, the presence of multiple South African communities, and the influence of other socio-political movements offered children more space.⁹⁷⁰

The previous chapter discussed the racism that children of colour experienced in the UK. Like exposure to apartheid's violence in South Africa, these experiences often had a further politicising effect on children.

⁹⁶⁴ Nadia Joseph, interview.

⁹⁶⁵ Brown, interview.

⁹⁶⁶ Zoya Joseph, interview; Brown, interview.

⁹⁶⁷ Alexandra Stein, "An Edible Adolescence," *Gastronomica* 2, no. 2 (2002): 24.

⁹⁶⁸ Zoya Joseph, interview.

⁹⁶⁹ Nicholas Wolpe, interview.

⁹⁷⁰ Carneson-McGregor, interview.

Overall, London offered children a highly active political setting in which they were exposed to both their parents' anti-apartheid and other political events through participation by default and in peripheral spaces. Through the presence of the AAM and IDAF, there were overt organisations for them to engage with, while a more secretive layer of activity ran underneath. The South African community within London was, however, not monolithic; instead split into several, at times overlapping cores, defined by politics, race, ethnicity, and location in London, amongst other factors. Children thus had vastly different levels of exposure to other activists and feelings of inclusion in the liberation movements.

Lusaka

In Lusaka, where the ANC HQ and Women's Secretariat were located from the mid-1970s, the *Masupatsela* played a much more important role for children, compared to in London.⁹⁷¹ Archival material suggests that the *Masupatsela* were re-launched in 1976 in Lusaka, although Macmillan, who associated socially with the ANC in Lusaka, stated that it started a year prior, organised by Rita Mfenyana, the Soviet wife of ANC activist Sindiso Mfenyana.⁹⁷² Inspired by the Soviet Young Pioneers, her son struggling with his identity, and the general lack of activity for children in Lusaka, Mfenyana re-initiated the *Masupatsela*, which provided regular meetings for children on Saturdays, as well as New Year Parties, International Children's Day celebrations, camping trips, other excursions, and international trips to youth camps in the USSR, Angola, Cuba, and Norway.⁹⁷³ Unlike in London, participation in organised sports was less common, due to security risks posed by

⁹⁷¹ Macmillan, *Lusaka Years*, 97-8, 134, 169.

⁹⁷² Macmillan, *Lusaka Years*, 180; A Draft Constitution of the Children's Club Established in August 1976, Lusaka, Box 93, Folder 17, Mittah Seperepere, ANC Lusaka Mission, UFH.

⁹⁷³ Macmillan, *Lusaka Years*, 180; De Sas Kropiwnicki, *Exile*, 93.

Zambia's proximity to South Africa.⁹⁷⁴ Children received classes on South African history, culture, and politics, performed cultural traditions, including the gumboot dance, received some arms training, and learned ANC customs, including the recital of the Freedom Charter and the singing of *Nkosi Sikelel*.⁹⁷⁵ Children also discussed political events, such as the execution of Solomon Mahlangu in 1979.⁹⁷⁶

The new *Masupatsela*, open to children aged 8-18, was initially organised by the ANCWS, often by mothers, although in 1982 the Youth Section requested to be more involved in its organisation.⁹⁷⁷ The ANC was concerned about children's lack of connection to South Africa:

Inview [sic] of the fact that many of our children left South Africa as infants and some are born outside South Africa, they have no idea of their country, history, culture and different languages spoken inside South Africa; above all have no touch with children inside the country.⁹⁷⁸

As de Sas Kropiwnicki argues:

The aim of the club was, therefore, to organise and mobilise children in exile to bring them "closer" to the ANC and the struggle, to educate them about the struggle in South Africa in relation to the world (...) The ANC believed that the club would socialise children into being "right thinking children with a clear conscience about their role in the liberation struggle and to know what is expected of them; as they are the future leaders of our country."⁹⁷⁹

Themba argued that she had already been politicised through conversations with their parents at home; meanwhile, other children, including Maureen, had little political knowledge before joining the 'Club', where children also passed information between each

⁹⁷⁴ Macmillan, *Lusaka Years*, 181.

⁹⁷⁵ Macmillan, *Lusaka Years*, 180; De Sas Kropiwnicki, *Exile*, 92-4.

⁹⁷⁶ Elizabeth, interview.

⁹⁷⁷ Macmillan, *Lusaka Years*, 180; De Sas Kropiwnicki, *Exile*, 92; Report of the Women's Secretariat to the Office of the Secretary General, January 1985, Year of the Cadre, ANC Lusaka Mission.

⁹⁷⁸ A Draft Constitution of the Children's Club Established in August 1976, Lusaka, ANC Lusaka Mission.

⁹⁷⁹ A Draft Constitution of the Children's Club Established in August 1976, Lusaka, ANC Lusaka Mission, cited in De Sas Kropiwnicki, *Exile*, 92.

other.⁹⁸⁰ Unlike in London, children's primary groups of friends in Lusaka were primarily within the ANC community, despite them attending international and local schools.⁹⁸¹

In the late 1970s, the *Masupatsela* were relatively unorganised, reliant on the initiatives of a few committed WS members, but by the 1980s, the *Masupatsela* had become more formalised.⁹⁸² Nonetheless, organisational issues in the Children Sub-Committee of the ANCWS persisted, so the Second Women's Conference in 1989 reported: 'It is the general feeling of comrades that the committee [Children's Sub-Committee] is not functioning, to the detriment of the children.'⁹⁸³ Transportation of children spread across the city posed further logistical issues.⁹⁸⁴

The size of the community and its integration into Zambian society (see previous chapter) created a distinct context, as Bernstein argues:

Zambia, too, was an unsafe haven, but the exile experience in places like Lusaka was totally different from that further north in Africa or in Europe and America. For all the difficulties of life in Lusaka the South Africans were a larger community still within the ambience of Southern Africa. While some married Zambians, there was never any attempt to adjust to the life and culture of another country. In these borderlands, the Front Line states, the exiles were not so much strangers in a strange country, but part of a cohesive community in which their own customs and traditions were firmly maintained, and held together by their organised opposition to apartheid.⁹⁸⁵

Children made up about a third of this ANC community.⁹⁸⁶ From 1968 onwards, there was a regular pattern of celebration and commemorations, which 'provided the ANC with an

⁹⁸⁰ Themba, interview; McNabb, interview.

⁹⁸¹ Themba, interview; McNabb, interview.

⁹⁸² Elizabeth, interview.

⁹⁸³ African National Congress Second Women's Conference National Preparatory Committee Composite Report, 1987, Paper no.11, Box 92, Folder 10-14, Mittah Sepererepere, ANC Lusaka Mission, UFH.

⁹⁸⁴ Report of the ANC (S.A.) Zambia Regional Women's Committee for the Period November 1980 to March 1981, Box 8, Folder 13, Chief Representative Office, ANC Lusaka Mission, UFH.

⁹⁸⁵ Hilda Bernstein, "Discovering Exiles," *Southern African Review of Books* 26, no. 5:4 (July/August 1993): 10.

⁹⁸⁶ Macmillan, *Lusaka Years*, 177.

opportunity to project its image and to enunciate its policies to a wider local audience'.⁹⁸⁷

The *Masupatsela* participated in this projection, including by performing for Kaunda.⁹⁸⁸

Children were constantly exposed to other activists at public events, meetings, and social gatherings in their homes:

(...) Oliver Tambo stayed with us whenever he came from London, Thabo Mbeki stayed with us. You know all of them came, the late Mark Shope often stayed at our house. I always say my political education came from sitting at the knees of these guys, so I'd sit there and say "Uncle O, so why must we do this", and you know he'd give you the information.⁹⁸⁹

Children commented on the ubiquity of the ANC in their experiences: 'Everything around us was about the ANC.'⁹⁹⁰ In Lusaka, children within the ANC experienced the socio-political community as a family (see Chapter 6), where other activists performed the role of 'uncles and aunties', while other children became siblings: "So that's how I have sisters and brothers, I don't have any blood sisters, but I have lots of them [laughs]."⁹⁹¹

Through this active, primarily monolithic community in Lusaka, their experiences as exiles were normalised. This was aided by the presence of other liberation movements, as well as the overall support of the Zambian government. ANC children interacted with SWAPO and ZAPU children, who lived in camps, through occasional meetups.⁹⁹² As activists lived in family units throughout the city, amongst other Zambians, many children experienced a 'normal' home life.⁹⁹³

⁹⁸⁷ Macmillan, *Lusaka Years*, 61.

⁹⁸⁸ Themba, interview.

⁹⁸⁹ Langa-Royds, interview.

⁹⁹⁰ Elizabeth, interview.

⁹⁹¹ Langa-Royds, interview.

⁹⁹² Themba, interview; McNabb, interview.

⁹⁹³ Themba, interview.

To some extent, PAC children also felt welcomed in this South African community in Lusaka. Busisiwe was born in 1963 in London, before moving to Zambia as an infant.⁹⁹⁴ Her father had initially been associated with the PAC but later changed to the ANC. He kept his political affiliations secret from his children, which, so Busisiwe believed, led to her not being involved in the *Masupatsela*. Nonetheless, she was constantly surrounded by South Africans: ‘(...) it was just part you, it was everything you lived and breathed’.⁹⁹⁵ As a child, she was not conscious of the differences between ANC and PAC in the South African community: ‘I just loved it, I just felt completely at home, I felt free, I felt supported (...)’.⁹⁹⁶ Liepollo Pheko, whose parents were PAC, also felt welcomed in Zambia, ‘comfortable in our “otherness” (...) because I did not know I was an “other” or because it was a “familiar other”’.⁹⁹⁷

As in London, children were conscious of an undercurrent of secret political activity – Maureen knew of her father’s AK-47 in the wardrobe but understood not to open it.⁹⁹⁸ Nonetheless, Lusaka’s acceptance of the ANC meant that the ANC community operated relatively openly.⁹⁹⁹ Through this overt activity and the *Masupatsela*, children engaged openly with their parents’ political beliefs and the community. A few activists operated amidst more secrecy by being (semi-)underground. Consequently, their children were isolated from the South African community. Stephanie, whose mother was semi-underground, took a different way to school each day, and only two school friends were permitted to know her address.¹⁰⁰⁰ The family was not openly attached to the ANC, and

⁹⁹⁴ Chaane, interview.

⁹⁹⁵ Chaane, interview.

⁹⁹⁶ Chaane, interview.

⁹⁹⁷ Liepollo Lebohlang Pheko, *Prodigal Daughters: Stories of South African Women in Exile*, ed. Laurreta Ngcobo (Durban: University of KwaZulu Natal Press, 2012), 157.

⁹⁹⁸ McNabb, interview.

⁹⁹⁹ Macmillan, “Culture of Exile,” 305.

¹⁰⁰⁰ Stephanie, interview.

Stephanie did not attend the same schools as other ANC children. She attended the *Masupatsela* a couple of times, but later stopped, presumably for security reasons.

The community was primarily black, but in the 1980s, more whites and Indians settled in the affluent areas.¹⁰⁰¹ This was partially a safety precaution as whites and Indians stood out in the largely Black high-density complexes in Lusaka, but it led to accusations of privilege.¹⁰⁰² Children rarely recalled these issues: Ntombi explained that race did not matter, '[w]hich is the South Africa that we wanted'.¹⁰⁰³ Children, however, also pointed out the psychological presence of the 'Boer', so Maureen recalled: 'We were so free, besides the white man that was put here in us [points at her head].'¹⁰⁰⁴ As a child, Sechaba developed a deep-seated disdain for white people in South Africa.¹⁰⁰⁵ He had learned about racism as a concept, but – unlike children in London – had not actively experienced it: only upon returning to South Africa, did he realise that Rita Mfenyana, the Soviet *Masupatsela* organiser, was white.

Overall, from the mid-1970s, children in Lusaka formed an active part of an overt and relatively monolithic political community, which allowed for children's politicisation through participation by default and in the peripheral spaces at home, in line with the ANC's ideology. The *Masupatsela* offered crucial political education and interaction with other South African children. A small number of children, whose parents were (semi-) underground, remained more isolated from this community.

¹⁰⁰¹ Macmillan, "Culture of Exile," 320.

¹⁰⁰² Macmillan, "Culture of Exile," 320.

¹⁰⁰³ Langa-Royds, interview.

¹⁰⁰⁴ McNabb, interview.

¹⁰⁰⁵ Mogale, Kgositsile, interview.

Maputo

The *Masupatsela* also formed a vital part of children's experiences of Maputo, where the ANC established a community following Mozambique's independence in 1975 – for Phola, whose mother, Ticksie Mabizela, alongside other women, organised these gatherings, it was their 'equivalent of political education'.¹⁰⁰⁶ The *Masupatsela* offered a sense of cohesion amongst the children of activists and a role to play in ANC cultural events, including funerals and community events, at which children performed.¹⁰⁰⁷ These events occurred relatively openly, due to FRELIMO's support of the ANC. Children also pointed towards the *Masupatsela* in fostering their sense of importance as the next generation, so Bram Naidoo told Nadja Manghezi: 'I think the important thing about the ANC in Maputo is that to a certain degree they were honest about this idea that the youth is our future. I really felt like that. I really felt like the future.'¹⁰⁰⁸ Stephanie described how this surrounding formed them into 'little revolutionaries'.¹⁰⁰⁹

Through these classes, but also the social interactions through their parents, children were constantly exposed to the ANC community in Maputo, which, as in Lusaka, children remembered as an extended family.¹⁰¹⁰ Due to this tight-knit community, children felt supported by the ANC, so Franny Rabkin recalled:

The ANC in Mozambique took care of us. The food was sometimes really bad. There was no milk, no this, no that, and you couldn't flush the toilet, but at the end of the day, you knew that you were fine, you would be looked after. You were a priority as a child. The ANC kids in Mozambique were taken care of by all the ANC adults.¹⁰¹¹

¹⁰⁰⁶ Mabizela-Mabaso, interview.

¹⁰⁰⁷ Mabizela-Mabaso, interview.

¹⁰⁰⁸ Manghezi, *Maputo Connection*, 106.

¹⁰⁰⁹ Stephanie, interview.

¹⁰¹⁰ Mabizela-Mabaso, interview; Stephanie, interview.

¹⁰¹¹ Manghezi, *Maputo Connection*, 100.

As in Lusaka, the ANC provided clothes – through *mphando* (or *mpande*, the distribution of donated clothes) – and food to its members and their families.¹⁰¹² From 1978, the ANC organised for all children (32 in 1983) to attend the International School in Maputo, which caused the ANC considerable debts, before the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) stepped in in the early 1980s.¹⁰¹³ By centring all ANC children at one school, the ANC enabled further social cohesion amongst its children.

The Mozambican context offered a socialist vision for post-apartheid South Africa, so Ronnie Ntuli told Manghezi:

It was amazing, the texture of the country that Samora built at the time. It was very much that we were all together moving in one direction and with one objective. (...) I remember going to the Praza da Independência where he used to do his talks, and just being among thousands of Mozambicans, listening to Samora's speeches for hours and hours.¹⁰¹⁴

Efforts were made for the *Masupatsela* to connect with the children of FRELIMO, the 'continuadores'.¹⁰¹⁵ At cultural events, both groups performed struggle and traditional songs. Post-independence, Mozambique also attracted socialist leaning 'cooperantes', primarily European, skilled workers, who came to Mozambique 'to show their solidarity with the anticolonial struggle and help FRELIMO achieve its socialist goals'.¹⁰¹⁶ Growing up, Stephanie was not only friends with ANC children but also the children of Mozambicans and 'cooperantes'.¹⁰¹⁷

As in Lusaka, children's experiences were normalised through the context of their upbringing and the support of their community. So, Ronnie Ntuli told Manghezi:

¹⁰¹² Manghezi, *Maputo Connection*, 79; Macmillan, *Lusaka Years*, 127.

¹⁰¹³ Maputo ANC Education Committee Report to the August 1983 Meeting of the National Educational Council, Box 9, 18-19, ANC London Mission, UFH; Manghezi, *Maputo Connection*, 102-3.

¹⁰¹⁴ Manghezi, *Maputo Connection*, 100-1.

¹⁰¹⁵ Mabizela-Mabaso, interview; Stephanie, interview.

¹⁰¹⁶ Manghezi, *Maputo Connection*, 124.

¹⁰¹⁷ Stephanie, interview.

As a 9-year-old I got taught how to dismantle an AK and put it back in key. I got taught that every day when we woke up I must go to every single door and check it; that was my task. It was never explained in the greater context. It was a routine that you followed, like cleaning your teeth and washing the dishes. Now when I look back at the routines that you did as a child, and I listen to how other children grew up, it is completely, totally abnormal.¹⁰¹⁸

The ANC community in Maputo was also mixed-race, with some white and Indian activists working amidst African activists. The number of non-Africans was augmented by the large number of ‘cooperantes’ present. Children rarely experienced racism in Maputo – ‘Our knowledge of racism was theoretical’, so Stephanie recalled.¹⁰¹⁹ For her, Mozambique offered South Africa a ‘recipe’ for dealing with racism.¹⁰²⁰ The Nkomati Accords of 1984, perceived as the ‘Great Betrayal’, destroyed this community.¹⁰²¹

Overall, from the mid-1970s until the Nkomati Accords, children thus experienced a thriving ANC community in Maputo, which provided for its members both materially and socially. Children were politicised through the *Masupatsela*, their participation (by default) in community events, and their interactions with other activists, as well as through the socialist vision they experienced daily in post-independence Mozambique.

Mazimbu

As stated, SOMAFCO in Mazimbu, Morogoro, was initially established to accommodate Soweto recruits, but many children of activists also attended SOMAFCO either with their parents, who worked at the school, or on their own, sent by their parents. Morrow et al. also noted several Soweto recruits who were the children of activists, and had come into exile either to join their parents or on their own.¹⁰²² Zola’s father, Tim Maseko, was Principal of

¹⁰¹⁸ Manghezi, *Maputo Connection*, 103-4.

¹⁰¹⁹ Mabizela-Mabaso, interview; Stephanie, interview.

¹⁰²⁰ Stephanie, interview.

¹⁰²¹ Manghezi, *Maputo Connection*, 1.

¹⁰²² Morrow et al., *Education in Exile*, 38-9.

SOMAFCO from 1981 onwards and later Director of the School.¹⁰²³ At SOMAFCO, Zola lived in the dormitories with other students, although he emphasised ‘the added comfort of having our parents there.’¹⁰²⁴ Themba’s parents joined SOMAFCO in its initial stages.¹⁰²⁵ With no primary school built yet, she attended a local school, although she barely interacted with local children. While she lived with her parents, her older brother attended SOMAFCO and moved into the shared dormitories. The school provided housing for staff and their children, although this matter was frequently contested.¹⁰²⁶ Themba emphasised the difficulties of living in Tanzania in the late 1970s: as a child, she picked up on the tense mood amongst activists following the execution of Solomon Mahlangu in 1979 and the traumatised children who came to SOMAFCO as students: ‘Tanzania felt darker than Zambia’.¹⁰²⁷

SOMAFCO was set up with two objectives, firstly to ‘prepare cadres to serve the national liberation struggle of the people of South Africa in the phase of struggle for seizure of political power and the post liberation phase’ and secondly, to ‘produce such cadres as will be able to serve the society in all spheres i.e. political, economic, socio-cultural, educational and scientific.’¹⁰²⁸ De Sas Kropiwnicki highlights how,

[a]t SOMAFCO, childhood was constructed as a life stage associated with normative expectations pertaining to children’s roles and responsibilities in the liberation struggle and upon return. (...) These children were expected to be Political agents who could support the underground struggle and later assume leadership and civic roles in a liberated South Africa.¹⁰²⁹

¹⁰²³ Maseko, interview.

¹⁰²⁴ Maseko, interview.

¹⁰²⁵ Themba, interview. The exact dates and roles of Themba’s parents at SOMAFCO are withheld to respect Themba’s wish to be pseudonymised.

¹⁰²⁶ Directorate Meeting held at Mazimbu on 25 October 1981, Box 132-3, Subject Files, ANC Lusaka Mission, UFH.

¹⁰²⁷ Themba, interview.

¹⁰²⁸ Education Policy of the African National Congress (SA), adopted by the Council Meeting of the ANC Education Department, 1-3 October 1978 in Morogoro, Box 119, Folder 133, Subject Files, ANC Lusaka Mission, UFH.

¹⁰²⁹ De Sas Kropiwnicki, *Exile*, 98.

Morrow et al., however, note the ‘constant tension between SOMAFCO as a revolutionary academy raising the social and political awareness of its students and SOMAFCO as a conventional school preparing young South Africans for a return home equipped with a variety of skills’.¹⁰³⁰

ANC officials were deeply concerned with students’ lack of politicisation, many of whom had left South Africa with only basic political understandings.¹⁰³¹ The ANC Youth Conference in 1983 ‘stressed the necessity of intensified political education in the whole life process in SOMAFCO’ and viewed political education as the solution to frequent disciplinary issues at the school.¹⁰³² Previously exiled children of activists often found themselves much more politicised than their Soweto counterparts. Students studied the compulsory class ‘History of the Struggle’, which ‘openly intended to indoctrinate students with ANC ideology’.¹⁰³³ Maaba further shows how the political commissar system ‘helped to organize political discussions and other consciousness-raising exercises, and tried to encourage a sense of purpose and dedication among both student and teachers.’¹⁰³⁴ The Student Union’s political committee, aided by the Zonal and Regional Political Committees, organised gatherings to commemorate key events.¹⁰³⁵ Younger students joined the *Masupatsela* and participated in these events by performing dances, plays, and songs.¹⁰³⁶ Students between 18 and 35 years old, furthermore, participated in the Zonal Youth Committees, of which Mazimbu composed a zone.¹⁰³⁷

¹⁰³⁰ Morrow et al., *Education in Exile*, 79.

¹⁰³¹ Morrow et al., *Education in Exile*, 76.

¹⁰³² A Briefing Paper on Student Activity to the National Education Council Meeting, August 1983, Box 9, Folder 18-19, ANC London Mission, UFH.

¹⁰³³ Brown Maaba, “Alternative Schooling for South Africans: Notes on the Solomon Mahlangu Freedom College in Tanzania, 1978-1992,” *International Journal of African Historical Studies* 37, no. 2 (2004): 295.

¹⁰³⁴ Maaba, “Alternative Schooling,” 298-9.

¹⁰³⁵ Maaba, “Alternative Schooling,” 303-4.

¹⁰³⁶ Maaba, “Alternative Schooling,” 304.

¹⁰³⁷ Maaba, “Alternative Schooling,” 305.

Zola had grown up in Swaziland, where, due to the intense secrecy needed in light of Swaziland's geopolitical position, he had lacked an understanding of his parents' politics.¹⁰³⁸ He had grown up amidst other exiled South Africans and had regularly encountered other activists, whom he viewed as uncles and aunts, yet was unaware of their political roles. He became politicised at Waterford, the multiracial school in Swaziland (see Chapter 4), which hosted a group of children of activists and South Africans who met weekly at the student society 'Khuluma' ('speak' in isiZulu) to discuss South African politics. His political conscientisation was 'cemented' at SOMAFCO.¹⁰³⁹ He stated: 'For me, going to SOMAFCO was like going into exile.'¹⁰⁴⁰ Zola's recollections highlight the importance SOMAFCO played in forming his identity as an exiled ANC child, whereas before he had been in Swaziland, also exiled and as part of a South African community, but unaware of the implications of his situation.

In Mazimbu (and in Dakawa), those who had been born in exile or had only scant recollections of South Africa could interact with those who had only recently left South Africa, further cementing their identification with South Africa and the ANC. Nadine went to Dakawa after finishing college in the UK, explicitly to meet other South Africans.¹⁰⁴¹ According to Morrow et al., there was some tension between the two groups: South African-born exiles called the exile-born children 'makwerekwere', a derogatory term used for black South Africans, while exile-born children called the new arrivals 'wakimbizi', Swahili for 'refugees'.¹⁰⁴²

¹⁰³⁸ Maseko, interview.

¹⁰³⁹ Maseko, interview.

¹⁰⁴⁰ Maseko, interview.

¹⁰⁴¹ Nannan, interview.

¹⁰⁴² Morrow et al., *Education in Exile*, 106.

While some social exchanges with locals resulted in South African-Tanzanian children, as Lissoni and Suriano discuss, the ANC community, tucked away in the Mazimbu complex, generally rarely interacted socially with Tanzanians.¹⁰⁴³ As international donations to Mazimbu increased, there were economic tensions between the complex and its poorer surroundings, as well as social tensions. Morrow et al. argue that some South Africans were patronising towards locals, perceiving them as poorer and less cultured.¹⁰⁴⁴

Overall, at SOMAFSCO (and in Dakawa), children of activists became part of the ANC's project to produce the cadres for liberation and the future citizens of South Africa. Their politicisation was accelerated through the institutionalised political education, the *Masupatsela*, and other political structures on campus, although, in political terms, they were often ahead of those who had recently arrived from South Africa.

Belonging and Identity in Exile

Finally, I want to turn briefly to the question of belonging and identity – these feature prominently in academic and public discussion of South African exile, and, thus, I want to underline here only the role of location and time in shaping their identities, and point out some strategies children employed to cope with their sense of displacement.¹⁰⁴⁵ This matter will be taken up further in Chapter 8 to see how recent socio-political developments in South Africa have altered children's sense of belonging. De Sas Kropiwnicki also emphasises the fluidity of this process:

Children's identities and sense of belonging were not fixed or singular; they were (re)constructed in relational and temporal terms as children negotiated their

¹⁰⁴³ Lissoni, Suriano, "Married to the ANC," 130, 147.

¹⁰⁴⁴ Morrow et al., "SOMAFSCO," 168-9.

¹⁰⁴⁵ De Sas Kropiwnicki, *Exile*; Bernstein, *Rift*.

positioning within relationships that were embedded in fluctuating institutional, discursive and material contexts.¹⁰⁴⁶

Israel argues that activist-parents in the UK, ‘fail[ed] to transmit political ideologies’ necessary for children’s identification with South Africa due to,

the complex and rather difficult relationship that the second generation had with their parents. Instead of instilling a commitment to South Africa or creating a new home for their children in Britain, I have argued that the first generation have bequeathed their children a sense of bitterness, resentment, guilt, ambivalence, insecurity and inadequacy.¹⁰⁴⁷

The children he interviewed as part of his research had little connection to each other, outside of their parents’ interactions, and ‘few emotional ties to South Africa’, struggling to identify as exiles.¹⁰⁴⁸ I argue that community, and thus location, played a key role in shaping children’s sense of identity and belonging to South Africa and the struggle. While children who grew up in Maputo, Lusaka, or Mazimbu in vibrant political South African communities held strong identifications with South Africa and/or the ANC, children in London, where there were several, more fragmented communities, were less likely to identify with the struggle and/or South Africa.

Chapter 4 highlighted how only a few parents decided to embrace their departure from South Africa not as exile to protect their children from its ‘limbo existence’.¹⁰⁴⁹ The majority of parents were keen to instil a sense of identity as South Africans within their children, as did the liberation movements, including through the *Masupatsela*. Phola recalled that her parents ‘taught us to be South African’:

(...) we had this pride of being South African, that we are South African and we are fighting for something tangible. This is something I think that had popped out from our parents and people around us.¹⁰⁵⁰

¹⁰⁴⁶ De Sas Kropiwnicki, *Exile*, 184.

¹⁰⁴⁷ Israel, *South African Political Exile*, 16.

¹⁰⁴⁸ Israel, *South African Political Exile*, 154.

¹⁰⁴⁹ Hain, *Pretoria Boy*, 76.

¹⁰⁵⁰ Phola Mabizela, interview by Thomas Mathole, 11 January 1991, SAHA Exiles Project, AL2461-11, SAHA.

Letebele's parents 'made sure we knew where we came from.'¹⁰⁵¹

Yet, many children also grappled with complex emotions towards South Africa, so Karen Naidoo told Israel that she could '...never forgive South Africa in a sense for having made my parents leave. There will always be anger there about parts of history.'¹⁰⁵² Phola emphasised: 'I hated South Africa, but I wanted very much to live in South Africa.'¹⁰⁵³

Children who grew up in the UK felt divided between the two countries, so David recounted: '(...) it was always in the forefront, you know. And it meant that (...) you never felt English, you never really felt South African!'¹⁰⁵⁴ As a child, Nadia felt highly conscious of her difference: '...not being white, it felt like I was not various things, I was not white, I was not Afro-Caribbean, I was not Indian (...).'¹⁰⁵⁵ Nicholas highlighted the difficulty of moving on, while 'South Africa hasn't left the house.'¹⁰⁵⁶ Contrastingly, Andrew Hall recalled '(...) conveniently I can feel British when I want to and I can feel South African when I want to. Its [sic] a good feeling that way really.'¹⁰⁵⁷

Language formed a 'vector of belonging and social exclusion'.¹⁰⁵⁸ Dali Tambo lost his native language by his third year in the UK as he experienced 'a kind of mental transition in my mind'; other children echoed this loss of language.¹⁰⁵⁹ To tackle this issue, the Second National Conference of the ANCWS in 1987 recommended,

¹⁰⁵¹ Masemola-Jones, interview.

¹⁰⁵² Israel, *South African Political Exile*, 154.

¹⁰⁵³ Phola Mabizela, interview (SAHA).

¹⁰⁵⁴ Brown, interview.

¹⁰⁵⁵ Nadia Joseph, interview.

¹⁰⁵⁶ Nicholas Wolpe, interview.

¹⁰⁵⁷ Andy Hall, interview by Hilda Bernstein, n.d., Hilda Bernstein Collection, MCA 7 – 1514, Mayibuye Archives, UWC.

¹⁰⁵⁸ De Sas Kropiwnicki, *Exile*, 172.

¹⁰⁵⁹ Tambo, interview; Ngcobo, interview.

[t]hat the movement addresses the language problem among the children in exile by e.g. considering the teaching of our language in the kindergarten and primary schools to prevent the decay of these languages to give the children another skill and sense of identity with home.¹⁰⁶⁰

Extended families also acted both as a vector of belonging with South Africa and of exclusion in exile: Nadine never fully integrated into the UK, because her extended family was at ‘home’ in South Africa.¹⁰⁶¹

To cope with their sense of displacement, children developed a range of strategies. Israel argues that, in response, exiles developed a ‘meta-exile identity’ with four specific components: 1. the denial of a refugee identity, 2. identification with the objectives and ideology of the liberation struggle, 3. ‘identification with expression of a moral discourse of non-discrimination and cosmopolitanism’, and 4. identification with the ‘project of return to the “homeland”’.¹⁰⁶² South Africa became a ‘meta-exile home’ – ‘a homeland that exists mainly in memory’ – underlined by the fabrication of memories pre-departure and ties to home.¹⁰⁶³ She argues that many second-generation exiles replaced their desire to belong to a specific place with belonging to the ‘movement’.¹⁰⁶⁴ Franny Rabkin, in conversation with Nadja Manghezi, also underlined this identification with the ANC:

There was one thing at the International School. It was some kind of performance where all the different countries had a little piece. You go on stage in your national dress and then you said: My name is what-ever, We are Italian, and then you did the Italian dancing. The you would go off, and then the other countries would come on. (laughs) I’ll never forget. These guys came on the stage in something supposed to be skins, but it was plastic, cut up, like into a skirt. And they go in: My name is so-and-so, I come from ANC.¹⁰⁶⁵

¹⁰⁶⁰ Report of the Second National Conference of the Women’s Section of the ANC held in Luanda, 1-6 September 1987 (Draft Abridged Version), I2.1.1 Conferences, AL2457 Original SAHA Collection, South African History Africa, Wits.

¹⁰⁶¹ Nannan, interview.

¹⁰⁶² Israel, *South African Political Exile*, 136, paraphrased in De Sas Kropiwnicki, *Exile*, 80.

¹⁰⁶³ De Sas Kropiwnicki, *Exile*, 174.

¹⁰⁶⁴ De Sas Kropiwnicki, *Exile*, 181.

¹⁰⁶⁵ Nadja Manghezi, “‘They Were Part of Us and We Were Part of Them’ – The ANC in Mozambique from 1976-1990,” unpublished document, n.d., 5.

Israel argues that some children also purposefully adopted a sense of ambivalence towards their national identity, as a ‘realistic response by the children of exiles to the decisions of their parents to adopt an identity that could not be transmitted to their children (...)’.¹⁰⁶⁶

Other children embraced their new national identity wholeheartedly, also to separate themselves from other exiles. Frances Bernstein recalled:

Between arriving in England and going to university, I didn’t see myself as a South African or an ex-South African. I didn’t identify with the exile community politics and all that. (...) Well obviously I felt a strong connection with South Africa, not in a political way, and I didn’t see myself as part of this exile community, you know, I was English, here I was in England, I had to be English and just do my own thing.¹⁰⁶⁷

Some sought belonging in other spaces, including sports. Nicholas became obsessed with Manchester United, which provided ‘a place of comfort and security’.¹⁰⁶⁸

Drawing on existing literature about Afghan refugee youth, de Sas Kropiwnicki argues that second-generation exiles also overcame identity struggles by ‘appealing to a cosmopolitan identity’.¹⁰⁶⁹ James Clifford argues that cosmopolitanism is a ‘skill of survival’ for the diaspora.¹⁰⁷⁰ Particularly children, who grew up in London, emphasised their identification with the city and its cosmopolitan nature over a national identity, thereby avoiding having to choose between South Africa and the UK.¹⁰⁷¹ So, Andrew stated he ‘was born as a Londoner’.¹⁰⁷²

¹⁰⁶⁶ Israel, *South African Political Exile*, 139.

¹⁰⁶⁷ Frances Bernstein, interview.

¹⁰⁶⁸ Nicholas Wolpe, interview.

¹⁰⁶⁹ Homa Hoodfar, “Refusing the Margins: Afghan Refugee Youth in Iran,” in *Deterritorialized Youth: Sahrawi and Afghan Refugees at the Margins of the Middle East*, ed. Dawn Chatty (New York: Berghahn Books, 2012), 145-81, discussed in de Sas Kropiwnicki, *Exile*, 182.

¹⁰⁷⁰ James Clifford, “Partial Truths,” in *Writing Culture: The poetics and politics of ethnography*, ed. James Clifford and George E. Marcus (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 312, cited in de Sas Kropiwnicki, *Exile*, 254.

¹⁰⁷¹ Andrew Kasrils, interview; Emma Duncan, interview.

¹⁰⁷² Andrew Kasrils, interview.

Conclusion

This chapter explored how children's politicisation was impacted by the changing political situation, both in South Africa and in exile. I argued that five processes of politicisation occurred in interplay with each other throughout this period, including 1. direct interactions with their parents, 2. by witnessing the brutality of apartheid, 3. through 'participation by default' as Rodgers suggests, 4. in 'peripheral spaces', and 5. through children-specific initiatives, youth clubs and sites of alternative education.

Tracing these five processes over time emphasised the importance of the shifting political context in shaping children's politicisation. There were dramatic changes in the extent to which children were exposed to their parents' politics and politicised from the more overt situation of the late 1940s and early 1950s, to the worsening repression of the late 1950s and 1960s. By the mid- to late 1960s, activism was crushed, leaving children isolated from their parents' activism and political communities, while facing greater levels of repression. In the early 1970s, activist communities slowly rebuilt, albeit in great secrecy; thus, children experienced limited opportunities for politicisation. Following the Soweto Uprising and during the 1980s, children – including the children of activists – became active participants in the struggle through youth and student organisations. Due to the high level of grassroots movements, there was increased opportunity for participation by default and community interaction, yet there were fewer overarching, socio-political interactions.

In exile, not only time but also location shaped these five processes. Scholars frequently focus on the ANC's establishment of 'state-in-exile', but children who went into exile before the establishment of these institutions did not benefit from the opportunities this

‘state-in-exile’ provided. To underscore that location was key in shaping South African communities and, consequently, children’s politicisation, I compared London, Lusaka, Maputo and SOMAFCO. While Lusaka, Maputo, and SOMAFCO (the latter only much later) created strong South African communities that offered children exposure to and integration into their parents’ movement, children experienced a much more fragmented community in London. These exile geographies also impacted children’s sense of belonging and identity. Children adopted a number of coping mechanisms to grapple with feelings of displacement, including by identifying with cosmopolitanism, adopting a sense of ambivalence, and through searching for belonging outside the nation state.

By tracing these five processes, I also emphasised the role of the home in children’s politicisation. In Chapter 3, I positioned the home as an arena of anti-apartheid repression for children – this chapter also centres the home as a highly politicised space, further dispelling the public-private dichotomy that activists have so often narrated. The five processes also showed that politicisation did not only occur through their parents, but also other politicisation agents, especially other activists in their political communities. Lastly, the five processes emphasised the varying levels of intentionality that underlined children’s politicisation – while groups like the *Masupatsela* had a clear intent to politicise children along the ANC line and, thus, institutionalised the process, children’s politicisation in peripheral spaces and through participation by default were much less intentional.

Lastly, I argued that research on transgenerational trauma and family secrets is useful in understanding how children learned about their parents’ political activities. Amidst increasing secrecy, children picked up on hidden clues and emotions, sensing rather than

actively knowing about their parents' activism. The remaining gaps, children filled with imagination and fears, often assuming the worst.

Chapter 6: Sacrifice and the Political Family

The ANC's attitude to all children was "Every child is my child". (...) It seems ironic, then that a culture universally known for its love of children should have produced, in its political movement, children who felt neglected and abandoned (...).¹⁰⁷³

Introduction

This chapter examines sacrifice and the political family as key narratives underpinning activists' approach to their biological children.

I begin by exploring some of the reasons that influenced activists' decisions to have children. Many highlighted the gradual intensification of state repression, stressing that there was no single, decisive moment when they chose to expose their children to risk. Others pointed to their limited understanding of the long-term consequences for their children. Nonetheless, I argue that at least some activists were aware of these dangers as early as 1948, and certainly by the early 1960s. I also show that activists of colour may have viewed having children as an act of resistance, given that the apartheid state promoted family planning to curb African population growth while encouraging whites to have children to maintain political control.

I, then, turn to the central focus of this chapter: the idea of sacrifice and the political family as key narratives. I argue that the narratives form an 'emotional formation', which children 'learned' as part of their politicisation (see previous chapter) through their parents and the movement.¹⁰⁷⁴ Through this emotional formation, children not only learned about their place in the struggle but also how to feel about it. This emotional formation privileged the collective over the personal and symbolically replaced the immediate, biological family

¹⁰⁷³ Callinicos, *Oliver Tambo*, 425.

¹⁰⁷⁴ Vallgård et al., "Emotions and the Global Politics of Childhood," 20.

with a broader political family. Activists' biological children were perceived as a necessary sacrifice – an idea that served as a signifier of activists' commitment, as a justifier to their feelings of guilt, and as a response to their children's expression of needs.

I trace how children's experience of this 'emotional formation', especially the political family, developed over time and place, from pre-illegality to exile. While many children strongly emphasised their sense of belonging to this symbolic political family, their accounts also suggest that the biological family co-existed, cooperated, and clashed with this political family.

Finally, drawing on psychological research about the role of ideology and community in shaping children's coping abilities, I show how their psychological adjustment depended significantly on the extent to which they felt integrated into the struggle and accepted this emotional formation.

The Choice to Have Children

A central theme that emerges from memoirs and oral histories with children and activists is the question of whether it was justifiable for activists to have children given the repression their families endured.¹⁰⁷⁵ Nicholas asked: 'I think, the critical question in some respect should be 'Was it fair to have children?''¹⁰⁷⁶

Hilda Bernstein viewed her decision to have children as a product of time: 'It all came very gradually. We'd already had children before things became dangerous it wasn't

¹⁰⁷⁵ See for example Wolpe, *Long Way Home*, 276.

¹⁰⁷⁶ Nicholas Wolpe, interview.

a choice that was made at the beginning...in the early years it was great fun.’¹⁰⁷⁷ Bernstein reflected that she had a ‘totally inadequate’ lack of knowledge about the psychological effects on children.¹⁰⁷⁸ In a similar vein, Mandela’s secret autobiography from prison stated:

The process of deciding was not simple and straightforward (...) I often realised the full implications of what I had done, not before, but after, taking the first step (...)¹⁰⁷⁹

Did this perhaps also apply to his children’s fates? Lynn emphasised the time period in impacting her parents’ decision:

I think had they known what they know now about how it affected the children and they had knowingly done that they would have been wrong, but it didn’t occur to them. So were they right? You know nobody is right to neglect children, but we are now more conscious of that.¹⁰⁸⁰

Yet, activist Rica Hodgson’s recollections suggest that as early as 1948 her husband, Jack, was concerned about the effects of his activism on his children:

(...) he regretted it for the rest of his life, he decided that it was not safe for him to have custody, and he phoned his [first] wife and asked her if she would. She was remarried by then. And she agreed very quickly. It was tragic for his children. It was done. So you see there was no optimism in 1948, that’s for sure.¹⁰⁸¹

There is also archival evidence that suggests that at least by 1960, female activists were engaging more deeply with the psychological effects of their absence on their children. So, Bernstein’s diary from her 1960 detention, describes her group of detainees drawing up a ‘bowlby statement’, referring to John Bowlby, a British psychiatrist, renowned for his work on attachment theory, which highlights the importance of children’s attachment to their primary caregiver in early childhood development.¹⁰⁸²

¹⁰⁷⁷ Hilda Bernstein, interview [Frankel].

¹⁰⁷⁸ Transcript of interview with Hilda Bernstein, conducted by Toni Bernstein, n.d., approx. 2005, I2.1, A3299 Bernstein Papers, Historical Papers, Wits.

¹⁰⁷⁹ Nelson Mandela, *Unpublished Memoir*, written in 1976, held by Nelson Mandela Centre of Memory, cited in Steinberg, *Winnie & Nelson*, 76.

¹⁰⁸⁰ Carneson-McGregor, interview.

¹⁰⁸¹ Rica Hodgson, interviewed by Glenn Frankel, 7 July 1997, Glenn Frankel Papers, University of Delaware, Newark, DE, used with interviewer’s permission.

¹⁰⁸² Typed version of a more detailed diary, 8 April-27 June 1960, A4.2.3.2, A3299 Bernstein Papers, Historical Papers, Wits; Letter by Hilda to Vera, Mamma, and Olga, May 1960, A4.2.2, A3299 Bernstein Papers, Historical Papers, Wits.

Potentially, particularly activists of colour also perceived having children as an act of resistance. As early as 1955, a government commission suggested implementing a family planning program to counter what it perceived to be a population problem as the numbers of whites (who showed the lowest birth rates) dwindled.¹⁰⁸³ Consequently, the government encouraged European immigration and promoted child-bearing amongst white families.¹⁰⁸⁴ In 1965, on the fifth anniversary of the Republic, M.C. Botha, Minister of Bantu Administration and Development, called on white women to have more babies to celebrate the establishment of the Republic.¹⁰⁸⁵ Norling writes: ‘Government expenditure on family planning rose from a tiny amount in the 1950s to comprise roughly one-quarter of all government spending on health in the late 1980s’.¹⁰⁸⁶ Although the government attempted to avoid openly politicising the National Family Planning Programme to reduce suspicion amongst the black population, it was widely acknowledged to be political in nature.¹⁰⁸⁷ In 1982, the *African Communist* (a London-based SACP publication) published an article titled ‘Family Planning in South Africa – A Kind of Genocide’, emphasising the movements’ concern about the scheme.¹⁰⁸⁸ Liberation (and ‘homelands’) leaders expressed further concerns about family planning, championing ‘a political call for “freedom babies”’.¹⁰⁸⁹ Joyce Sikakane wrote:

The African community responded as any “threatened nation” would: it continued to produce more babies. Apartheid is a life denying and indeed murderous system, and our response was a determination to live and to resist.¹⁰⁹⁰

¹⁰⁸³ Johannes Norling, “Family planning and fertility in South Africa under apartheid,” *European Review of Economic History* 23, no.3 (2018): 366.

¹⁰⁸⁴ Norling, “Family planning,” 366.

¹⁰⁸⁵ Barbara Brown, “Facing the ‘Black Peril’: The Politics of Population Control in South Africa,” *Journal of Southern African Studies* 13, no. 2 (1987): 267.

¹⁰⁸⁶ Norling, “Family planning,” 365.

¹⁰⁸⁷ Norling, “Family planning,” 366, 369; Carol Kaufman, “Reproductive Control in Apartheid South Africa,” *Population Studies* 54 (2000): 105; Brown, “Facing the ‘Black Peril,’” 264. The program was open to all, but as whites could access private physicians it was primarily targeted at black urban women.

¹⁰⁸⁸ Kaufman, “Reproductive Control,” 109.

¹⁰⁸⁹ Kaufman, “Reproductive Control,” 109.

¹⁰⁹⁰ Joyce Sikakane, *A Window on Soweto* (London: International Defence and Aid Fund, 1977), 46.

Sikakane framed her own pregnancy in 1966 in the context of ‘the Botha babies pleas’, suggesting that political women, like her, were conscious of their role in the struggle as bearers of the next generation.¹⁰⁹¹

Narratives of Sacrifice and the Political Family

Parental approaches to their children were situated within a narrative centred on sacrifice and the political family, which valued the collective over the personal and symbolically replaced the immediate, biological family with the political family. Throughout this next section, I will primarily draw on ideas from within the ANC and the SACP, although sacrifice and the political family also played symbolic roles in other political parties.

ANC activists and academic Raymond Suttner discusses how the revolutionary situation of the 1960s-1980s in South Africa required the ‘denial of the personal’ and total ‘subjection to the collective’.¹⁰⁹² Unterhalter argues that autobiographical writings stress ‘autonomy, adventure, comradeship and a self-conscious location in history’ at the expense of the private sphere; the sacrifice of the personal, the family, and children act merely as proof of this heroic masculinity.¹⁰⁹³ Ben Turok wrote:

(...) I need to confess that when one becomes an ANC activist, one soon learns to subordinate one’s personal life and feelings to the collective. It is essential that career, ambition, personal preferences, family life, even one’s sensibilities, become to some degree subject to the objective struggle.¹⁰⁹⁴

¹⁰⁹¹ Sikakane, *A Window on Soweto*, 46. So far discussed as the granddaughter of an ANC activist, Sikakane became pregnant in 1966, placing her child within this thesis’ scope.

¹⁰⁹² Raymond Suttner, “Masculinities and Femininities within the ANC-Led Liberation Movement,” (paper presented at ‘African Renewal, African Renaissance’: New Perspectives on Africa’s Past and Africa’s Present, The African Studies Association of Australia and the Pacific (AFSAAP) Annual Conference, 26-28 November 2004, University of Western Australia), 26; Raymond Suttner, *The ANC Underground in South Africa, 1950-1976*, 2nd edition (Boulder: First Forum Press, 2009 [2008]), 133.

¹⁰⁹³ Unterhalter, “The Work of the Nation,” 157.

¹⁰⁹⁴ Turok, *Nothing But the Truth*, 11.

As mentioned in Chapter 5, this collective was frequently discussed and enacted by individuals and the liberation movement as a family. McClintock argues that '[n]ations are frequently figured through the iconography of familial and domestic space'.¹⁰⁹⁵ Activists regularly invoked this gendered language – at Walter Sisulu's wedding, Anton Lembede remarked in his speech to Albertina: 'You must know you are now married to a married man. He's married to a nation'.¹⁰⁹⁶ Unterhalter writes: 'Heroism and adventure is work lived exclusively in the public realm, which must be supported unquestioningly by the private sphere (mothers, wives, girlfriends, children)'.¹⁰⁹⁷ Jonny Steinberg highlights the focus on activists' domestic lives by pointing out how Mandela's biographer had chided him for marrying Winnie, as she would never have given him the same seemingly steady home lives his male comrades experienced through their wives.¹⁰⁹⁸ Neither had his first marriage to Evelyn Mase, ending acrimoniously in divorce in 1958:

My devotion to the ANC and the struggle was unremitting. This disturbed Evelyn. She had always assumed that politics was a youthful diversion, that I would someday return to the Transkei and practice there as a lawyer.¹⁰⁹⁹

In stark contrast, ANC President Chief Albert Luthuli wrote about his wife, Nokukhanya:

She has not once intruded upon me, as she might many times have done, the conflict between family and work. She has not said at any time (...) 'But what will become of the family and me?' Instead, she has created a home, sometimes my background, occasionally my foreground, which has all through been stable and constant and inwardly secure.¹¹⁰⁰

Suttner suggests that other organisations, such as the Spanish Communist Party, also perceived themselves as a family; the USSR, here, often acted as an overarching parental

¹⁰⁹⁵ Anne McClintock, "Family Feuds: Gender, Nationalism and the Family," *Feminist Review* 44 (1993): 63.

¹⁰⁹⁶ Sisulu, *I Will Go Singing*, 51. This discourse was not restricted to only men, but female activists would occasionally infer similar ideas, see for example Liz Abrahams's memoir *Married to the Struggle*, 'Nanna' Liz Abrahams tells her life story, ed. Yusuf Patel and Philip Hirschsohn (Cape Town: UWC, in association with Diana Ferrus Publishers, 2005).

¹⁰⁹⁷ Unterhalter, "The Work of the Nation," 166-7.

¹⁰⁹⁸ Steinberg, *Winnie & Nelson*, xiv.

¹⁰⁹⁹ Mandela, *Long Walk to Freedom*, 240.

¹¹⁰⁰ Albert Luthuli, *Let My People Go*, 2nd edition (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1962 [1960]), 44.

figure.¹¹⁰¹ The use of familial language provided for security amidst surveillance but also dictated the sort of allegiance and loyalty that was expected within party structures.

Suttner also writes:

The notion of the collective has an impact on individual judgment, personal choices and intimacy, with its concepts of the organisation as family or parent and a tendency to displace interpersonal love by ‘love for the people’, displayed through one’s revolutionary activity.¹¹⁰²

Phola’s recollections echo the displacement of interpersonal love with ‘love for the people’:

(...) we had three conversations with him [her father, Stanley Mabizela] at different times where we asked him, “Who do you love more, the ANC or us?”, and each time he said the ANC [laughs]. So, I think we kept hoping for a different answer [laughs] and it never came. And he was very upfront about it, you know, the ANC came first.¹¹⁰³

Activists’ children’s needs were juxtaposed against the needs of all South African children, so Denis Goldberg told his son:

(...) I knew that what I was doing could hurt his mother and sister and him too, but millions of children in our country were forced by the race laws, and especially migrant labor laws, to grow up without their fathers. I said I did not know how to make my children more important than all the other children.¹¹⁰⁴

Within this revolutionary context, Suttner argued, ‘no sacrifice is too great and there is no situation where personal needs can supplant those of the organisation.’¹¹⁰⁵ Baleka Mbete, who left two children behind when she went into exile, wrote:

We sacrificed a great deal as a society as our children were wrenched from the warmth of parental arms. Without realising it, our children contributed to the struggle by foregoing what was due to them so that their parents could participate in the struggle to ensure that they would enjoy a better future.¹¹⁰⁶

¹¹⁰¹ Suttner, “Masculinities and Femininities,” 29.

¹¹⁰² Suttner, *The ANC Underground in South Africa*, 133.

¹¹⁰³ Mabizela-Mabaso, interview.

¹¹⁰⁴ Goldberg, *The Mission*, 228.

¹¹⁰⁵ Suttner, *The ANC Underground in South Africa*, 139.

¹¹⁰⁶ Baleka Mbete, *Prodigal Daughters: Stories of South African Women in Exile*, ed. Laurretta Ngcobo (Durban: University of KwaZulu Natal Press, 2012), 77.

In activists' narratives, their biological children thus became the ultimate personal sacrifice. Contradictorily to this idea of sacrifice, children simultaneously also represented the future of the nation, the beneficiaries of liberation.

I argue that this notion of sacrifice held several functions for activists. Firstly, it acted as an indicator of total commitment to other activists. In her prison diary from 1960, Bernstein expressed her concerns,

that they might release mothers of young children whose husbands are detained. I would hate to go under such circumstances and leave all the others. (...) I would rather stayed [sic] here with the others until all go, than go before them, to my children.¹¹⁰⁷

Secondly, it acted as a justifying narrative for parents. Many activists agonised privately and even publicly about their children's wellbeing.¹¹⁰⁸ Blanche La Guma had wanted to go into exile for her children's sake, but her husband reminded her of the children of other activists who could not leave.¹¹⁰⁹ Bernstein later recalled a conversation with La Guma:

And maybe I know exactly how she felt. The bonds with the organisation and what you owed to the people and what they're suffering more than you doesn't in a sense lessen your own pain and the way you feel about what's happening to your children and to your family.¹¹¹⁰

By framing their actions in the narrative of sacrifice and commitment, activists were able to justify these feelings of guilt. Joe Slovo argued:

Were we, in the circumstances, morally entitled to have a family? And, having become a family, did we have the right to include our children in the sacrifice for a cause which had meaning only in our understanding? Such questions are not unique to our family, to our time and to our struggle. There are no simple answers to them. One thing is clear, however; the world would be a poorer place if it was peopled by children whose parents risked nothing in the cause of social justice, for fear of personal loss. If I regret anything, it is certainly not how my daughters turned out but rather that we might have found a way of easing the hidden traumas they were suffering had we been more sensitive.¹¹¹¹

¹¹⁰⁷ Typed version of a more detailed diary, 1960, A3299 Bernstein Papers.

¹¹⁰⁸ See for example La Guma, *In the Dark*, 118-9 and Wolpe, *Long Way Home*, 272.

¹¹⁰⁹ La Guma, *In the Dark*, 116.

¹¹¹⁰ Transcript of interview with Hilda Bernstein, approx. 2005, A3299 Bernstein Papers.

¹¹¹¹ Joe Slovo, *SLOVO: The Unfinished Autobiography of ANC Leader Joe Slovo* (Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1995), 111.

For activists who had difficult relationships with their families – often because of their political commitments – the political family also acted as a replacement family, so Mark Gevisser argues that Govan Mbeki,

found impenetrable refuge in the struggle, with its Marxist understanding of affective family relationships as sentimental, bourgeois, and ultimately distracting from the revolutionary matter at hand; of “the family” as a political rather than a biological unit.¹¹¹²

Gevisser also suggests that Thabo Mbeki, exposed to his father’s approach throughout his childhood, sought this environment himself.¹¹¹³ Thirdly, the narrative of sacrifice was used by parents to counter children’s expressions of needs: ‘When children raised questions about care and protection within kinship relations, they were confronted with this dominant discourse of ‘sacrifice’ and were forced to second-guess their own feelings of abandonment, neglect and abuse.’¹¹¹⁴

Sacrifice and the Political Family as an ‘Emotional Formation’

It is particularly apt to discuss children’s experiences of the struggle in terms of an ‘emotional formation’, as scholars emphasise the role that emotion and emotional bonds play in children’s politicisation.¹¹¹⁵ For instance, Dorothy Moss argues that it is crucial for scholars ‘to recognize that children’s political engagement is grounded in relationships and involves feelings of fear, care and concern.’¹¹¹⁶ Similarly, Jennings et al. point out that political traits and values laden with emotion are more effectively transmitted to the next generation.¹¹¹⁷

¹¹¹² Gevisser, *Legacy of Liberation*, 42.

¹¹¹³ Gevisser, *Legacy of Liberation*, 77.

¹¹¹⁴ De Sas Kropiwnicki, *Exile*, 117-8.

¹¹¹⁵ Moss, “Children’s Political Engagement in Everyday Life,” 24.

¹¹¹⁶ Moss, “Children’s Political Engagement in Everyday Life,” 24.

¹¹¹⁷ Jennings et al., “Politics across Generations,” 782.

I argue that these narratives underpinned an ‘emotional formation’ – defined as a ‘set of emotional structures ordered in a particular *pattern*’, forming a continuous process through ‘reiterated everyday emotional practices of individuals and collectives’ (see *Literature Review*) – that liberation movements and activists adhered to.¹¹¹⁸ The previous chapter assessed how children learned about their parents’ politics. As part of this process, I argue, that children also learned how to feel about the struggle and their position within the struggle. Failure to adhere to this emotional formation (or the failure to transmit this formation) underlies some children’s difficulty in coping with the adversity they faced, ultimately leading to children not becoming involved in the South African struggle, as the next chapter will show.

Children were conscious of the movements’ expectations in them, so Phola narrated:

From an early age, we understood so well that our father was fighting for the liberation of South Africa and that there was this big ugly enemy called apartheid that, you know, was more important than anything else in his life and we were supportive, we just had to be supportive, we had to do everything we could not to distract him from that.¹¹¹⁹

Children were expected to accept their parents’ sacrifice, so de Sas Kropiwnicki suggests, through practical exchanges including by giving up their bed or a meal to a passing exile, but also emotionally, by allowing their parents to continue their activism unbothered by their children’s constraints.¹¹²⁰

While this struggle narrative could enable children to make sense of their parents’ frequent absences, Suttner argues that it also led to ‘a negation of intimacy’, creating a

¹¹¹⁸ Vallgård et al., “Emotions and the Global Politics of Childhood,” 20.

¹¹¹⁹ Mabizela-Mabaso, interview.

¹¹²⁰ De Sas Kropiwnicki, *Exile*, 89.

‘context for both the fulfilment and repression of emotions’.¹¹²¹ In South Africa, children were frequently told not to cry or show emotions in front of the enemy.¹¹²² Zoya recalled:

I remember Dad coming home, being carried out of the police car outside of our house on Avenue Road and he was bleeding and mom holds my hand and says ‘Whatever you do, don’t cry, don’t show them you’re crying, they mustn’t see that we’re weak, we’re not crying. And Dad’s walking up and I’m saying “Dad, Dad” and he’s “It’s alright, I’ve just had a tooth pulled at the dentist.” That’s the level of denial, to protect and to bury it.’¹¹²³

Consequently, she felt unable to discuss her feelings with friends and family. Nicholas recalled:

I don't feel on solid ground, I've never felt on solid ground. And I've never felt like an individual, basically because again its so complicated, this kind of shell that's been put around us, I'm never allowed to express, again never being able to express anger, emotion, frustration and so on. (...) We keep it to ourselves because there is not a place to talk about it. Because if we did, we would crumble (...).¹¹²⁴

He bottled up his feelings, which later emerged in the form of anger.¹¹²⁵

Juxtaposed to the struggle, many children felt that their needs did not matter, so

Blanche La Guma wrote:

Later we learnt that one of the major causes of Milou’s deep emotional trauma was his belief that Mac’s work in South Africa was so worthy and important that he had no right to feel upset or angry about not having a father around. He thought it was selfish of him not to want to share Mac with others. This made him repress and deny his pain.¹¹²⁶

Children perceived their own needs and emotions as hindrances to their parents’ work.¹¹²⁷

As a child, Nicholas was a good tennis player but started losing his matches purposefully – he came to understand that he had felt guilty for excelling at this sport, while South Africans were struggling:

¹¹²¹ De Sas Kropiwnicki, *Exile*, 123; Suttner, *The ANC Underground in South Africa*, 133, 138.

¹¹²² Hain, *Ad & Wal*, 194; Carneson-McGregor, interview; La Guma, *In the Dark*, 117.

¹¹²³ Zoya Joseph, interview.

¹¹²⁴ Nicholas Wolpe, interview by Hilda Bernstein, n.d., Hilda Bernstein Collection, MCA 7 – 1724, Mayibuye Archives, UWC.

¹¹²⁵ Nicholas Wolpe, interview.

¹¹²⁶ Maharaj, *Dancing to a Different Rhythm*, 34.

¹¹²⁷ Jeanne, interviewed by author, 28 March 2023 (pseudonymised).

What right did I have to enjoy life, what right did I have to have fun? What right did I have to move on with my life when my father was involved in this fight for justice, freedom, and equality?¹¹²⁸

He expressed ‘resentment that Harold and Ann-Marie, particularly Harold, had more concern for 25-30 million black people than he did for me.’¹¹²⁹ Zola argued: ‘Their first love was the struggle and we were abandoned because of it, and we carry those wounds and, and, that’s how I see it now as an adult.’¹¹³⁰ Due to these narratives around sacrifice, many children of activists held ‘contradictory emotions of rage and guilt, pride and jealousy which racked’ them.¹¹³¹ Hilda Bernstein recounted the prevalence of feelings of ‘resentment and a lack of understanding’ amongst the many children she interviewed for her anthology.¹¹³²

Amongst the children of communists, there crystallises a theme that can perhaps bluntly be summarised as ‘the harsh mother’. While children often fondly remembered their father despite their activism, they perceived their mothers as more distant.¹¹³³ Barbara Harmel wrote:

My mother doesn’t see that my cousin’s mother is gentle and loving toward her son, while she is not toward her daughter. (...) At 11 years old, I am too young to understand human wounding, the how and the why of it.¹¹³⁴

Gillian Slovo depicted her mother as a highly intelligent woman, but not as a particularly good mother.¹¹³⁵ I argue that this mother-daughter relationship was not only influenced by revolutionary ideologies but also by their mothers’ backgrounds, who often were Jewish refugees, primarily from Eastern Europe, and patriarchal ideas of motherhood. Sonya explained her mother’s difficult childhood, having fled Lithuania as a child: ‘I understand

¹¹²⁸ Nicholas Wolpe, interview.

¹¹²⁹ Nicholas Wolpe, interview (Bernstein).

¹¹³⁰ Maseko, interview.

¹¹³¹ Israel, “Living with ‘A World Apart’.”

¹¹³² Interview with Hilda and Rusty Bernstein by Terri Barnes for the ANC Oral History Project, Cape Town, 28 February 2001, E1.1, A3299 Bernstein Papers, Historical Papers, Wits.

¹¹³³ Shapiro, interview; Jeanne, interview; Lubner, interview.

¹¹³⁴ Brooks Spector, “Barbara Harmel”.

¹¹³⁵ Slovo, *Every Secret Thing*.

all of this now, but I didn't then.'¹¹³⁶ It required years of personal work and professional help for her to come to this realisation. While their fathers often experienced similarly traumatic childhoods, fatherhood does not receive the same societal scrutiny, as Deborah Levy highlights: 'When our father does the things he needs to do in our world, we understand it is his due. If our mother does the things she needs to do in the world, we feel she has abandoned us.'¹¹³⁷ As childcare duties fell primarily on mothers, children were also more frequently exposed to them. Internal family dynamics, including existing trauma, thus, exacerbated the impacts of these narratives around sacrifice and the family.

Internal family dynamics could, however, also mitigate these narratives. Several children highlighted their parents' effort in recreating a 'normal' family life.¹¹³⁸ They highlighted the importance of their parents' communication and the extent to which children were integrated into family decisions.¹¹³⁹ Frankel describes how Molly Fischer 'had cut back her own political activities considerably to care for their son Paul. Rather than exclude the personal consequences of her deeds, she had been acutely aware of them and worked hard to shelter her children from them.'¹¹⁴⁰ Hazel Goldreich stated:

I was perfectly prepared to go along with the whole thing because it was important to all of us, but I did feel that if anything happened there should be at least one parent to take care of the children. So I was not involved.¹¹⁴¹

Paul Joseph tried to balance the demands of his family and the movements in his activism: 'My position and that of my brothers and my friends that I know, our responsibility was to our family as well as to the movement. We had to understand where to keep the balance.'¹¹⁴²

¹¹³⁶ Lubner, interview.

¹¹³⁷ Deborah Levy, *The Cost of Living* (London: Penguin Books, 2018), 119-20.

¹¹³⁸ Stephanie, interview; Deenan Pillay, interview; Wilson, interview; Mabizela-Mabaso, interview; Ngcobo, interview; Hain, *Pretoria Boy*, 3.

¹¹³⁹ Mabizela-Mabaso, interview; Wilson, interview.

¹¹⁴⁰ Frankel, *Rivonia's Children*, 265.

¹¹⁴¹ Hazel Goldreich, interview.

¹¹⁴² Paul Joseph, interview by Pádraig O'Malley, 9 November 2002, O'Malley – The Heart of Hope, Nelson Mandela Foundation.

The Political Family over Time

Children's sense of identification with this political family however changed over time and place, highlighting the movements' difficulties in transmitting this 'emotional formation'.

The ANC had perceived itself as a national family even before its departure into exile – during the Congress of People in 1955, a volunteer reported: 'Whenever we went to people's house, and they were in trouble, or had problems, we would become mothers of that family, and men volunteers should be fathers.'¹¹⁴³ This familial conception, thus, predated the ANC's own illegality, perhaps because of the strong influences of the SACP – already banned and resurrected in the underground – amongst its members.¹¹⁴⁴ Shireen Hassim argues that the early

Congress was a political family and it replicated the hierarchical form of a patriarchal institution, with the exclusively male National Executive Committee acting as the paternal head of the movement, the Women's League playing the lesser, maternal role and the Youth League treated as a space of radical militancy needing the guidance of the parents.¹¹⁴⁵

As highlighted in the section on the 1940s to mid-1950s in the previous chapter, children during this period often experienced their parents' political community as an extended family. For some children, this familial conceptualisation continued into the 1960s and beyond, but other, often white, children did not share this experience, having been less exposed to their parents' politics and the activist communities due to increasing repression and secrecy. While his father, Baruch Hirson, was imprisoned, Denis recalled ex-prisoners, who visited his family upon release to deliver Hirson's messages: 'They considered my

¹¹⁴³ Raymond Suttner, Jeremy Cronin, *Thirty Years of the Freedom Charter* (Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1986), 12.

¹¹⁴⁴ Suttner, "Masculinities and Femininities," 26, 29.

¹¹⁴⁵ Shireen Hassim, *The ANC Women's League*, 29.

mother and me to be of their kind, long before I had any clear political ideas of my own. Politics for me, at the time, meant nothing but personal loss (...).¹¹⁴⁶ While his father's comrades regarded him as part of this political family, Denis did not reciprocate this emotion.

In exile, the notion of the ANC – from the late 1960s, the umbrella political party for the Congress Alliance in exile – as the family took on a crucial role, both for activists and their children. The ANC supported and sustained its members with employment, a (small) stipend, food, clothes, education, and scholarships.¹¹⁴⁷ It was the provision of these physical services that led Davis to refer to the ANC in the late 1970s and 1980s as a 'borderless welfare state'.¹¹⁴⁸ Upon leaving her children in Tanzania for an ANC assignment, one female cadre explained to her children 'although I may be your mother, your real mother and father are the ANC. The ANC will look after you, feed you and clothe you.'¹¹⁴⁹ Children experienced this certainty of physical support, as Maureen recounted: '(...) we never went to bed hungry, so it didn't matter where the food came from, there was always a plate of food to eat every day.'¹¹⁵⁰

In addition to this physical component, Bundy also highlights the 'psychological dimension' of ANC support to its members: 'The psychological achievement of the exiled movement was essentially to create a sense of belonging: to give people far from family, home, and community an alternative framework of the familiar.'¹¹⁵¹ As activists were often

¹¹⁴⁶ Hirson, *Thirty-Minute Bar Mitzvah*, 114-5.

¹¹⁴⁷ Bundy, "ANC in Exile".

¹¹⁴⁸ Davis, *Apartheid's Rebels*, 72.

¹¹⁴⁹ Zonke Majodina, "Home at Last: The Re-entry Adaptation of Returned South African Exiles," PhD Thesis (University of Cape Town, 1998), 192.

¹¹⁵⁰ McNabb, interview.

¹¹⁵¹ Bundy, "ANC in Exile".

separated from their biological family and felt the displacement and loneliness of exile, the perception of the ANC as one's family was 'more than a political commitment; it was an emotional necessity'.¹¹⁵²

Exiled children frequently echoed this notion of the ANC family, so Zola stated: 'I was born into this exiled ANC family.'¹¹⁵³ Children were highly conscious of being part of a larger community, so Themba recalled how there was a

connected sense of...there was something, it's hard to describe, it's family, it's not family, but it's just...maybe it's that shared purpose, that shared cause and that shared vulnerability, that really brought people together in a way that felt like an extended family.¹¹⁵⁴

I have however already argued that the sense of community differed vastly across exile locations and over time (see Chapter 5); thus, while there was an overall understanding of the ANC as a parental figure in children's lives, children developed differing connections to this central figure based on the community dynamics of their exile location and the point in time at which they experienced these dynamics.

De Sas Kropiwnicki argues that the ANC intentionally applied kinship level names 'as a means of enhancing the emotional and reciprocal equality of these relationships'¹¹⁵⁵ McClintock suggests that the idea of 'the family offers a "natural" figure for sanctioning social *hierarchy* within a putative organic *unity* of interest'.¹¹⁵⁶ The idea of the family thus also enabled the ANC to control its member base and maintain commitment. Following the arrival of the Soweto recruits in and after 1976, older ANC members were required as parents, uncles, and elder brothers to the newcomers, who needed political and general

¹¹⁵² Bernstein, "Discovering Exiles," 10.

¹¹⁵³ Maseko, interview; De Sas Kropiwnicki, *Exile*, 139.

¹¹⁵⁴ Themba, interview.

¹¹⁵⁵ De Sas Kropiwnicki, *Exile*, 140.

¹¹⁵⁶ McClintock, "Family Feuds," 63-4.

guidance.¹¹⁵⁷ The ANC's regulation of its members' marriages and pregnancies furthermore reflected its role of paternal oversight.¹¹⁵⁸ Concerned about the psychological consequences of parental absences on children, the ANC attempted to create familial conditions at SOMAFCO: children were integrated into families living on campus 'in a type of fostering relationship' and in 1983 the WSEA assigned a 'surrogate mother/sister' to each dormitory room.¹¹⁵⁹

Yet, the parental role activists held towards younger ANC members affected activists' relationships with their biological children. When Gloria Nkadimeng wanted to join MK before studying, her father, a senior ANC figure, was asked for his opinion:

He said he doesn't think it's proper for them to ask him; because he is a parent to every child who comes to exile whoever they are. So he doesn't think that he must decide for me; there are children who don't have parents in exile to be asked what should be the fate of their child.¹¹⁶⁰

Children also recalled their parents denying them treats, as these could not be offered to all other children.¹¹⁶¹ Freddy Reddy, an ANC psychiatrist, encountered a young man who had joined MK in exile, primarily to meet his father, whom he had barely known:

The first time he saw his father was on the parade ground during inspection. He was very excited, but his father gave not the slightest sign of recognition, nor did he contact him later after the inspection. The boy was emotionally devastated. He felt that his father did not love him. It was not very long before he developed confusional psychosis. On asking his father why he ignored his son, he [the father] replied that *everyone in the camp was his* [child]: "I could not give him special treatment."¹¹⁶² [italics added by Suttner]

¹¹⁵⁷ Shubin, *A View From Moscow*, 130.

¹¹⁵⁸ Lissoni, "Dear Comrade Chief Rep," 10; Lissoni, Suriano, "Married to the ANC," 130; Sandwell, "Love I cannot begin to explain," 67.

¹¹⁵⁹ Morrow et al., *Education in Exile*, 100-1; Draft Programme of Action, Women's Section, n.d., Box 8, Folder 13, Chief Representative Office, ANC Lusaka Mission, UFH; Report by the East Africa Women's Section to the Women's Council Meeting, Lusaka, 22-24 February 1983, to the ANC Women's Section Council Meeting, 1983, Box 91, Mittah Seperepere, ANC Lusaka Mission, UFH.

¹¹⁶⁰ Bernstein, *Rift*, 133.

¹¹⁶¹ Bernstein, *Rift*, 132-3.

¹¹⁶² Freddy Reddy and Sigmund Karterud, "Must the Revolution Eat its Children? Working with the African National Congress (ANC) in Exile and Following Its Return," in *Group Process and Political Dynamics*, eds. Mark Ettlín et al. (Madison, CT: International Universities Press, 1995), 226, cited in Suttner, *The ANC Underground in South Africa*, 145.

Thus, Suttner argues:

It appears to have resulted in specific conceptions of parental responsibility and relationships as part of this vision of a broader love of the people that tended to supplant or downgrade the interpersonal, including responsibilities towards children.¹¹⁶³

Letebele recalled the complicated dynamics of sharing her parents with others. While she attended a British boarding school, her parents were stationed in Ethiopia:

In Ethiopia I remember I would get home in my summer holiday and my parents lived in quite a large apartment building (...) And I'd get there and I'd find one South African child already in bed [laughs]. I was like, "What's happening here?" [laughs]. (...) And then they were calling my mum "Mama" and I was like "Huh? She's my Mama!" [laughs]¹¹⁶⁴

She eventually grew to accept the necessity of her parents enacting this paternal role. Other children also recalled understanding the necessity of this arrangement, despite finding it 'very overwhelming'.¹¹⁶⁵

Alongside evocations of this broader political family, children's recollections of exile, however, also emphasised the importance of the biological family, either explicitly or by evoking domestic scenes. The biological family, thus, co-existed, cooperated, and sometimes clashed with this political family. Williams notices a similar pattern in SWAPO:

Although often presented as a united, national family, SWAPO in exile consisted of many families, whose interests in contacting and associating with biological children and other family members often competed with the interests of their liberation movement.¹¹⁶⁶

To showcase the constant negotiation occurring between these entities, I look at two case studies: parents' decision to send their children to SOMAFSCO and a scene of return in 1990.

¹¹⁶³ Suttner, *The ANC Underground in South Africa*, 145.

¹¹⁶⁴ Masemola-Jones, interview.

¹¹⁶⁵ McNabb, interview.

¹¹⁶⁶ Williams, "SWAPO's Struggle Children," 595.

In the mid-1980s, expectations of SOMAFCO as a school for all children of the ANC clashed with parents' expectations. In the early 1980s, the ANC was faced with questions about its regulations towards children of exiles at SOMAFCO and in the forward areas.¹¹⁶⁷ In late 1981, the NEC ruled that families should be kept together.¹¹⁶⁸ In 1983, however, the National Education Secretary requested that all children in the forward areas be sent to Mazimbu due to increasing security threats.¹¹⁶⁹ Macmillan states that the ANC also attempted to persuade parents to send their children to SOMAFCO by no longer paying secondary school fees elsewhere.¹¹⁷⁰ In 1987, the ANC Women's Conference in Luanda expressed its disagreement with a Treasurer-General Office ruling that all secondary school children should be taken to SOMAFCO, as it contradicted the earlier 1981 NEC ruling.¹¹⁷¹ Some parents had also insisted on taking their children out of SOMAFCO due to circulating rumours about the boarding conditions.¹¹⁷² Stephanie's mother had been one of the parents who refused to send her children to SOMAFCO, as their intimate family setting was crucial to their well-being.¹¹⁷³ Her decision was highly contested by the ANC and she was accused of believing herself better than rank-and-file ANC cadres, highlighting this tension between the political and nuclear family.

A scene occurring in the final days of apartheid furthermore highlights the differing extents to which children accepted this idea of the political family. On 15 January 1990, a

¹¹⁶⁷ Letter by H.G. Makgothi, Commissar, Morogoro, to Alfred Nzo, Secretary General, Lusaka, August 29, 1981, Box 132-33, Subject Files, ANC Lusaka Mission, UFH.

¹¹⁶⁸ Report of the Proceedings of the Second National Conference of the Women's Section of the African National Congress of South Africa, 1-6 September 1987, Box 92, Folder 10-14, Mittah Seperepere, ANC Lusaka Mission, UFH.

¹¹⁶⁹ Maputo ANC Education Committee Report to the August 1983 Meeting of the National Educational Council, Box 9, Folder 18-19, ANC London Mission, UFH; Report of the National Education Council, 1983, B2.3.2, AG2510 African National Congress, Historical Papers, Wits.

¹¹⁷⁰ Macmillan, *Lusaka Years*, 179.

¹¹⁷¹ Report of the Proceedings of the Second National Conference of the Women's Section of the African National Congress of South Africa, ANC Lusaka Mission.

¹¹⁷² Report of the Proceedings of the Second National Conference of the Women's Section of the African National Congress of South Africa, ANC Lusaka Mission.

¹¹⁷³ Stephanie, interview.

delegation of freed Robben Islanders visited the ANC headquarters in Lusaka. It was the first time that Walter Sisulu and Govan Mbeki saw their eldest sons in almost three decades, as Max and Thabo had been exiled since the early 1960s. When Govan Mbeki was asked how he felt about seeing his eldest son, he said: “Not much finer than seeing others. (...) You must remember that Thabo Mbeki is no longer my son. He is my comrade!”¹¹⁷⁴ Upon arrival, Thabo waited in line before shaking his father’s hand, only hugging him later in private.¹¹⁷⁵ Meanwhile, Max broke discipline and rushed forward to hug Walter and Albertina Sisulu.¹¹⁷⁶ Max was furious with the ANC as no provisions had been made for families to properly greet each other and spend time together.¹¹⁷⁷ Max and his wife, Elinor, wanted to organise a dinner for his parents, but security demands requested that the entire delegation and their families be invited.¹¹⁷⁸ The dinner became a party of 200 people; Elinor wrote: ‘I was not surprised when, towards the end of the evening, Lindi [Sisulu] broke down in tears, saying she had had more time with her father when she had visited him in jail: “At least then I could have an uninterrupted half an hour with him”.’¹¹⁷⁹

The Importance of Community and Ideology

In 1943, psychologist and concentration camp survivor Bruno Bettelheim argued that deeply religious Jews and communists were the least psychologically vulnerable in Dachau and Buchenwald, because ‘their strong religious beliefs and ideological commitment provided them with a clear explanation for why hardships happened to them.’¹¹⁸⁰ Since then,

¹¹⁷⁴ Gevisser, *Legacy of Liberation*, 43.

¹¹⁷⁵ Gevisser, *Legacy of Liberation*, 208.

¹¹⁷⁶ Sisulu, *Walter and Albertina Sisulu*, 600.

¹¹⁷⁷ Sisulu, *Walter and Albertina Sisulu*, 600.

¹¹⁷⁸ Sisulu, *Walter and Albertina Sisulu*, 602.

¹¹⁷⁹ Sisulu, *Walter and Albertina Sisulu*, 602.

¹¹⁸⁰ Bruno Bettelheim, “Individual and mass behavior in extreme situations,” *Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology* 38, no. 4 (1943): 417-52, paraphrased in Raija-Leena Punamäki, “Can Ideological Commitment Protect Children’s Psychosocial Well-Being in Situations of Political Violence?,” *Child Development* 67, no. 1 (1996): 55.

psychologists have broadened this idea. Qouta et al. argue that for Palestinian children who ‘viewed themselves as freedom fighters (...) this ideological commitment functioned as a protective factor and source of resilience’.¹¹⁸¹ In Northern Ireland, Rolston also emphasises the importance of community and ideological belief for children’s coping in his research on children of ex-combatants.¹¹⁸² In the South African context, Dawes writes:

While one of the important ‘buffer’ variables that have been noted in research on adversity has been the presence of a supportive older family member or peer, in this area children who seem to cope better are also possessed of a degree of ideological commitment to the political struggle in which they are caught up.¹¹⁸³

As mentioned in Chapter 5, de Sas Kropiwnicki also argues that ‘identification with a movement and an ideology is an agentic strategy that enabled second-generation exiles to cope with feelings of dislocation.’¹¹⁸⁴

I argue that this was not only relevant to exiled children who were dislocated from South Africa, but also more generally to children of activists, exiled or not. The extent to which children accepted these struggle narratives and adhered to this ‘emotional formation’ (and participated in the struggle, see next chapter) enabled them to understand their position in the struggle and cope with the adversity faced. So, Gevisser argues, that Thabo Mbeki ‘slot[ted] into the freedom fighter mythology’ as a coping strategy.¹¹⁸⁵

Conclusion

This chapter has traced how the liberation movements’ narratives of sacrifice and the political family shaped activists’ views on children, structured family dynamics, and informed children’s engagement with their parents’ beliefs.

¹¹⁸¹ Samir Qouta et al., “The Impact of the Peace Treaty on Psychological Well-Being: A Follow-Up Study of Palestinian Children,” *Child Abuse & Neglect* 19, no. 10 (1995): 1205.

¹¹⁸² Rolston, *Children of the Revolution*, 24-5.

¹¹⁸³ Dawes, “Effects of Political Violence,” 26.

¹¹⁸⁴ De Sas Kropiwnicki, *Exile*, 181.

¹¹⁸⁵ Gevisser, *Legacy of Liberation*, 43.

I showed how activists' decisions to have children unfolded within a context of gradually intensifying repression, an often-limited understanding of the consequences for their children, and within the context of the state's population control.

Furthermore, activists' children were deeply embedded in narratives of sacrifice and the political family, which enabled parents to demonstrate their commitment to the struggle, navigate feelings of guilt, and respond to their children's needs. The movement's narrative prioritised the collective over the personal and the political family over the biological one. Such ideas underpinned the 'emotional formation' that children came to learn. Through their parents and interactions with the movement, children not only learned about political ideas (as explored in Chapter 5) but also absorbed this emotional formation, which shaped how they felt about their place within their parents' struggle.

By tracing these dynamics from the period before illegality into exile, I highlighted how children's adherence to this emotional formation, much like their politicisation, was shaped by time and place. Existing research also points towards the role of ideology and community in enabling children (and adults) to cope with the adversity faced. Thus, the extent to which children were politicised and adhered to this 'emotional formation' played a crucial role in enabling children to adapt psychologically to their circumstances. Ultimately, these uneven patterns meant that not all children – to borrow Israel's term – 'graduated' into the movement.¹¹⁸⁶ Those less integrated into the struggle were more likely to face difficulties coping and develop some of the psychological challenges discussed in Chapters 3 and 4.

¹¹⁸⁶ Israel, "Living with 'A World Apart'."

Chapter 7: Becoming Activists – Children’s Political Pathways

You see, I was older, as you say. By the time, the wheels really came off, you know, I was well into being a member of the Communist Party myself and then I just did what you have to do.¹¹⁸⁷

I think the children become very confused about what it has turned them away from. I don't think they want to be turned away from their parents or their politics but I think there's something in them that does drive them against one or the other or both. I think.. I don't say all of them don't resolve it, but I think there are those don't resolve it. And it then does really become somehow an obstacle to their contribution in terms of politics and their relationship with their parents.¹¹⁸⁸

Introduction

In the previous chapter, I argued that children were expected to adhere to an emotional formation that underlined the collective – the political family – and de-prioritised the personal, but that the activist generation was not always successful in transmitting this formation to their children. Consequently, some children struggled to cope with the adversities faced. Chapter 5 also showed that the ANC explicitly set out to educate and politicise children so that they would contribute to the movement, before and after liberation. Yet, while all children developed a strong sense of justice, the extent to which these children became active in the South African struggle varies drastically.

I begin by drawing on research from Canada and France and use Rymond-Richmond's concept of 'participation identity' to show that children of activists are 'attitudinally disposed and structurally available for activism'.¹¹⁸⁹ However, I follow Pagis and others, who argue that this 'disposition for activism' does not always translate into children actually becoming activists.¹¹⁹⁰ Instead, the political context can facilitate or hinder children of activists' participation.

¹¹⁸⁷ Wilson, interview.

¹¹⁸⁸ Garth & Brigid Strachan, interview. Brigid speaks the cited sentence.

¹¹⁸⁹ Rymond-Richmond, "Children of War Resisters," 1263.

¹¹⁹⁰ Pagis, *May '68*, 244. As discussed in the Literature Review, there is a wealth of literature by social movement scholars that look at other structural factors that influence individual's participation in activism.

I, then, turn towards a chronological approach to show how the political context over time influenced the extent to which children of activists, as adults or still as children, were able to ‘graduate’ – to borrow Israel’s term – into their parents’ movements.¹¹⁹¹ Children, who felt excluded from their parents’ struggle due to the political context or their personal relationships with their parents, sought to enact their disposition for activism or ‘participation identity’ in other socio-political movements in exile or sought safety and security outside of politics, including through marriage.

Furthermore, I suggest that children’s political pathways are intimately entangled in their personal relationships to their parents and their experiences of childhood, suggesting that for these children, the political was, indeed, highly personal.

Lastly, I examine throughout this chapter the extent to which children of activists identified as, or were perceived to be, activists themselves. I argue that their political trajectories in adulthood shape whether they are viewed primarily in relation to their parents or as independent activists with a struggle background.

Disposition for Activism

Rymond-Richmond assesses the children of Vietnam War resisters that emigrated to Canada to avoid the draft to understand the transgenerational transmission of activism from parents to children.¹¹⁹² Using Stryker’s theory of identity salience (1968) which supposes that ‘the self’ comprises a hierarchy of identities’, she argues that these children possess a

¹¹⁹¹ Israel, “Living with ‘A World Apart’.”

¹¹⁹² Sheldon Stryker, “Identity Salience and Role Performance; The Relevance of Symbolic Interaction Theory for Family Research,” *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 30 (1968): 558-564, cited in Rymond-Richmond, “Children of War Resisters,” 1261-1280.

‘participation identity’ which, firstly, ‘resonates with their identities and life histories’, secondly, is ‘inspired by parents’ activism’, thirdly, leads them to adopt ‘an injustice frame’ and fourthly, provides them with ‘optimism that social movements are effective vehicles of social change.’¹¹⁹³ She concludes, that ‘[w]ar resister children are thus attitudinally disposed and structurally available for activism.’¹¹⁹⁴ Similarly, Kaplan and Shapiro argue that ‘red-diaper children’ in the USA share five characteristics:

1. centrality of left-wing politics to everyday life, 2. an oppositional identity, 3. a heightened historical awareness, 4. a feeling of connection to an international community of people working for social change and 5. a belief that one's person's actions can make a difference and that by working together people can radically change society.¹¹⁹⁵

Yet, while all children of anti-apartheid activists developed a strong sense of justice, not all joined the struggle: some participated in other socio-political movements or did not become politically active in adulthood.

Julie Pagis’ research on the children of the ‘68 generation in France offers insights into why some children of activists chose differing political pathways.¹¹⁹⁶ Pagis emphasises the ‘importance of distinguishing dispositions for activism from the fact of being an activist’.¹¹⁹⁷ Nearly a third of her study’s children said they wanted to be activists but hadn’t found a political organisation that suited them.¹¹⁹⁸ Pagis, here, highlights the importance of children’s ability to enter their parents’ or another political organisation to enact their disposition for activism. In her research on the children of female activists involved in the French Women’s Liberation Movement, Masclet argues for the necessity to understand ‘how dispositions to feminist activism are activated’.¹¹⁹⁹ Masclet also suggests that several

¹¹⁹³ Rymond-Richmond, “Children of War Resisters,” 1270.

¹¹⁹⁴ Rymond-Richmond, “Children of War Resisters,” 1263.

¹¹⁹⁵ Kaplan, Shapiro, *Red Diapers*, 9.

¹¹⁹⁶ Pagis, *May ‘68*.

¹¹⁹⁷ Pagis, *May ‘68*, 244.

¹¹⁹⁸ Pagis, *May ‘68*, 244.

¹¹⁹⁹ Masclet, “Feminist activists and their children,” 118.

of her respondents ‘highlighted that they feel uncomfortable with political groups and political commitment’.¹²⁰⁰

Most children I interviewed, in South Africa and exile, rejected the idea that their parents wanted them to be politically involved or that their parents pushed their politics onto them.¹²⁰¹ Few of them expressed a sense of pressure to become (more) involved. Lukhanyo Calata stated: ‘You see, my mother had over the years done almost everything she could to keep me as far removed from active politics as possible.’¹²⁰² Kuben recalled ‘the unwritten contract’ between him and his parents: only as long as he performed well in school, was he allowed to be politically active.¹²⁰³ Lynn’s father rejected her request to join MK shortly after its creation to prioritise her education.¹²⁰⁴ This contrasts with the official ANC policy, at least after the late 1970s when its policy was clearly defined through their educational project, see Chapters 4 and 5. My findings also differ from de Sas Kropiwnicki, whose interviewees often felt pressured to become politically active – this will be discussed further below.¹²⁰⁵

Political Participation in the late 1950s-1960s from South Africa and into Exile

These older children, generally born in the early to mid-1940s, were politicised from a young age due to the more overt political situation during their childhood, and ‘graduated’ into the liberation movement in the late 1950s to 1960s.¹²⁰⁶ For them, their evolution into activism

¹²⁰⁰ Masclet, “Feminist activists and their children,” 113.

¹²⁰¹ See for example Deenan Pillay, interview; Chaane, interview; Peta Wolpe, interview; Anand Pillay, interview.

¹²⁰² Calata and Calata, *My Father*, 29. Calata makes this statement in the context of him accusing SABC of stymieing media freedom in 2016.

¹²⁰³ Kuben Naidoo, interview.

¹²⁰⁴ Carneson-McGregor, *Red in the Rainbow*, 168.

¹²⁰⁵ De Sas Kropiwnicki, *Exile*, 101-2.

¹²⁰⁶ Israel, “Living with ‘A World Apart’.”

seemed ‘natural’.¹²⁰⁷ Toni could not recall a specific moment at which she made the decision to become politically committed.¹²⁰⁸

They were able to graduate into the movement, as the more open political structures enabled their participation. White children, now in their late teens and early twenties, joined the COD in the early 1960s, before its 1962 banning. Some children were also invited to the multiracial, underground SACP, attending cell meetings, painting slogans, and partaking in other political activities.¹²⁰⁹ For Lynn, a brief arrest was a point of pride.¹²¹⁰ Due to the secretive cell structure, their parents did not always know that their children had joined the SACP. Govan Mbeki did not know that Thabo had become a member until 1969 when he heard, whilst imprisoned on Robben Island, that Thabo had enrolled at the Lenin Institute in Moscow.¹²¹¹ While Toni’s parents recruited her friend, Barbara Harmel, they did not recruit Toni, likely out of concern for their daughter’s wellbeing and perhaps also because they relied on Toni for the childcare of her younger siblings.¹²¹² Before the 1950 banning, all CPSA members had been required to take part in study groups; post-banning, these were more informal and irregular.¹²¹³ Lynn attended ‘political Sunday School’ in the 1960s at Albie Sachs’ house: ‘So he taught us about revolution, he taught us about guerrilla warfare, he taught us about all the philosophies and the reasons for this and this and that. Very good education.’¹²¹⁴ Following her arrival at UCT, Albie Sachs also recruited Ilse, who joined a cell with Blanche La Guma, Liz Abrahams, and Denis Goldberg.¹²¹⁵ By 1963, these

¹²⁰⁷ Carneson-McGregor, interview.

¹²⁰⁸ Strasburg, interview (Frankel).

¹²⁰⁹ Wilson, interview; Carneson-McGregor, interview; Weinberg, interview; Brooks Spector, “Barbara Harmel.”

¹²¹⁰ Carneson-McGregor, interview.

¹²¹¹ Gevisser, *Legacy of Liberation*, 77.

¹²¹² Strasburg, interview (Frankel).

¹²¹³ Gevisser, *Legacy of Liberation*, 76.

¹²¹⁴ Carneson-McGregor, interview.

¹²¹⁵ Wilson, interview; La Guma, *In the Dark*, 89.

activities became even more secretive and dangerous.¹²¹⁶ Ilse commented: ‘By the time, the wheels really came off, you know, I was well into being a member of the Communist Party myself and then I just did what you have to do.’¹²¹⁷ In 1964, Sheila Weinberg – alongside her mother – was detained for two months in solitary confinement, before being charged for painting slogans, serving six months in Barberton prison.¹²¹⁸ As a young adult, Toni was acutely conscious of the state’s surveillance, waiting to ‘pick’ up the next generation.¹²¹⁹ Like many of her age, she was listed, which prohibited her from speaking to her father, when he was awaiting trial in 1964.¹²²⁰ He applied for permission to communicate with Toni, but received an answer only after she turned to Helen Suzman, the Progressive Party MP, for help. Ilse, as well as Essop and Aziz Pahad, received full banning orders.¹²²¹

Following the Extension of University Education Act of 1959 (the ‘Fort Hare’ Act), people of colour were excluded from studying at historically white universities and instead sent to segregated universities.¹²²² Aziz had been one of the last people of colour to enrol at Wits through a scholarship.¹²²³ Albeit excluded from the recreational and sports facilities, Wits enabled him to attend ‘multiracial parties in the white suburbs’ and experience the general political atmosphere – Sobukwe had been his Zulu lecturer. Nandi and Pallo Jordan both became politically active at the University of Cape Town (UCT).¹²²⁴ Nandi enrolled at UCT just before the Act; Pallo was tutored by colleagues of his father, a UCT professor, for his A-levels to enable him to study abroad.¹²²⁵ In 1961-2, during the stay-at-home protests,

¹²¹⁶ Carneson-McGregor, interview.

¹²¹⁷ Wilson, interview.

¹²¹⁸ Weinberg, interview.

¹²¹⁹ Strasburg, interview.

¹²²⁰ Bernstein, *The World That Was Ours*, 178-80.

¹²²¹ Wilson, interview; Pahad, *Insurgent Diplomat*.

¹²²² Mzamane et al., “BCM,” 103.

¹²²³ Pahad, *Insurgent Diplomat*.

¹²²⁴ Ntantala, *A Life’s Mosaic*, 171.

¹²²⁵ Ntantala, *A Life’s Mosaic*, 185-6.

Nandi and Pallo (...) were caught up in these activities with other students. If there was anything that my children liked, it was leafletting and distributing political propaganda. This is not surprising: they had started quite early with their mother.¹²²⁶

At UCT, the Africa Club, which originated as a Marxist study class under activist and lecturer, Jack Simons, posed a key recruitment pool for the movement and was consequently monitored by the SB.¹²²⁷ In the 1950s, the Modern Youth Society (MYS) was a further meeting point for young leftist activists, including the older children of activists.¹²²⁸

According to Pallo Jordan, the MYS was

an outgrowth of a body of a similar name on the campus of the University of Cape Town, the Modern World Society. Left-wing students had formed this body to replace the Students Socialist Party (SSP) after the banning of the Communist Party of South Africa (CPSA) under the terms of the Suppression of Communism Act of 1950.¹²²⁹

In Johannesburg, the Rand Youth Club (RYC) became one of the remaining spaces for older children of activists and other youth to connect. After 1960, the ANC was run illegally by Walter Sisulu and Duma Nokwe from the TIC's headquarters at Macosa House in Ferreirasdorp, a suburb of Johannesburg.¹²³⁰ On the top floor, the RYC, disguised as a ballroom school, provided a space for youth to come together and discuss politics.¹²³¹ The RYC was primarily attended by African youth, who lacked other recreational spaces, but was open to all.¹²³² For the older youth of political families, including Indres Naidoo, Thabo Mbeki, and the Pahad brothers, the RYC became an important space for political discussion and multiracial socialisation.¹²³³

¹²²⁶ Ntantala, *A Life's Mosaic*, 182.

¹²²⁷ Turok, *Nothing But the Truth*, 30.

¹²²⁸ Turok, *Nothing But the Truth*, 29.

¹²²⁹ Foreword, written by Pallo Jordan, to Goldberg, *The Mission*, vii.

¹²³⁰ Gevisser, *Legacy of Liberation*, 70; Indres Naidoo, interview by Julie Frederikse, March 1987, AL2460 Tracing the Unbreakable Thread – Non-Racialism in South Africa, A14.01, SAHA.

¹²³¹ Gevisser, *Legacy of Liberation*, 70-1.

¹²³² Gevisser, *Legacy of Liberation*, 70; Indres Naidoo, interview.

¹²³³ Mark Gevisser, *Thabo Mbeki – The Dream Deferred* (Johannesburg: Jonathan Ball Publishers, 2007), 70, 136.

Before 1960, African youth had become involved in the ANCYL (often following the *Masupatsela*), which had branches across the country; others joined the Society of Young Africa (SOYA), NEUM's youth faction. Thabo Mbeki went to Lovedale in 1955 – the 'Eton of Africa' – where he joined the executive committee of the ANCYL Lovedale branch, following a brief stint with SOYA.¹²³⁴ Political discussions were strictly forbidden at Lovedale, but they secretly met at night and with activists at the nearby Fort Hare on weekends.¹²³⁵ In 1959, Thabo was expelled from Lovedale following his involvement in student strikes.¹²³⁶ Fort Hare had been the university of choice for the black elite, politicising numerous young activists, but following the 'Fort Hare Act' of 1959 and the university's placement under the Bantu Education system, the university's prestige eroded.

Following the ANC's ban in 1960, the ANCYL fell into 'abeyance'.¹²³⁷ It was officially not re-launched until 1991, but other youth and student organisations formed in the country during the early 1960s and were restructured in exile to ultimately become the ANC Youth and Student Section (YSS), which was by many perceived as, and even called, the ANCYL.¹²³⁸ On 17 December 1961, the Association of African Students (ASA) was launched in Durban – as another brainchild of Walter Sisulu's, it was under strong ANC influence.¹²³⁹ ASA's membership was entirely African, organising both secondary and tertiary level students in cells.¹²⁴⁰ Thabo Mbeki was elected its National Secretary and travelled the country in early 1962 to recruit students for scholarships in the USSR.¹²⁴¹ In

¹²³⁴ Gevisser, *Legacy of Liberation*, 50; Gevisser, *Dream Deferred*, 97.

¹²³⁵ Gevisser, *Legacy of Liberation*, 54.

¹²³⁶ Gevisser, *Legacy of Liberation*, 54.

¹²³⁷ Posel, "The ANC youth league," 62.

¹²³⁸ Max Sisulu, interview; Interview with Aziz Pahad, by Sue Onslow, Johannesburg, 18 April 2013, Commonwealth Oral History Project, University of London.

¹²³⁹ Gevisser, 2007: 145-6; Gevisser, *Legacy of Liberation*, 75; Max Sisulu, interview.

¹²⁴⁰ Gevisser, *Dream Deferred*, 145; Joyce Sikakane, *A Window on Soweto* (London: International Defence and Aid Fund, 1977), 42.

¹²⁴¹ Gevisser, *Legacy of Liberation*, 75, 80.

1960, Thabo had received a scholarship from the South African Committee on Higher Education (SACHED) to prepare him for A-levels.¹²⁴² According to Gevisser, SACHED was not officially associated with the ANC, but its candidates were ‘handpicked by the ANC’; in Thabo’s case, Sisulu had recommended him.¹²⁴³ He left South Africa in 1962: after a failed attempt and two months in a Rhodesian prison, his group – consisting of PAC and ANC students under SAUF – arrived in Dar Es Salaam in November.¹²⁴⁴ Most travelled on to the USSR, while Mbeki started his course at Sussex University.¹²⁴⁵ He had resisted going into exile, but the ANC pulled rank and he was forced to go, or face expulsion.¹²⁴⁶ The Pahad brothers also attended Sussex after they had received banning orders in January 1964 and left for exile in November of that year.¹²⁴⁷

As much of ASA’s leadership was almost immediately forced into exile, it was generally considered ‘stillborn’, although in exile, it morphed into the YSS, set up by Thabo Mbeki, alongside Essop Pahad and others.¹²⁴⁸ In a 1965 memorandum on the YSS, Mbeki wrote: ‘The Youth and Student Department of the International Section “External Mission” of the ANC is in charge of the overall programme of all our youth and student areal sections.’¹²⁴⁹ Supposedly under this, ASA was responsible for South African students in the Eastern Bloc, while the South African Student Association (SASA) handled students – also of other political organisations – in the West.¹²⁵⁰ There were frequent tensions between ASA and the YSS, as the former expected to be independent of the ANC in its leadership,

¹²⁴² Gevisser, *Legacy of Liberation*, 67.

¹²⁴³ Gevisser, *Legacy of Liberation*, 67.

¹²⁴⁴ Gevisser, *Legacy of Liberation*, 78-83.

¹²⁴⁵ Gevisser, *Legacy of Liberation*, 84.

¹²⁴⁶ Gevisser, *Legacy of Liberation*, 79.

¹²⁴⁷ Pahad, *Insurgent Diplomat*.

¹²⁴⁸ Ndlovu, “The ANC in exile,” 474; Gevisser, *Dream Deferred*, 145-6.

¹²⁴⁹ ANC Youth and Student Section (London Office) Short Memorandum on Structure, Aims and Tactics, written by Thabo Mbeki, 18 November 1965, Box 25, Folder 39-41, ANC London Mission, UFH.

¹²⁵⁰ ANC Youth and Student Section (London Office) Short Memorandum on Structure, Aims and Tactics, 18 November 1965, ANC London Mission.

albeit not ideology.¹²⁵¹ Generally, the ANC was more dominant amongst students in the USSR than in the West, as in the latter, students could transfer or leave university without informing the ANC.¹²⁵² In 1966 (three years before the ANC), Mbeki steered the YSS towards opening to all races, a move harshly criticised by some ANC leaders.¹²⁵³ By September 1969, the YSS was streamlined more clearly under ANC auspices.¹²⁵⁴ The YSS set out to care for its members in exile and politicise them, as well as to fundraise and advocate for the ANC.¹²⁵⁵ Members were expected to inform the YSS of any changes to their studies and were required to seek permission to marry.¹²⁵⁶ Many of its members were children of activists, and the YSS shaped their experiences of exile.¹²⁵⁷

From his leadership position in the YSS in Britain, Thabo, mentored by Tambo, went to the USSR for training before working for the ANC in Lusaka and various other African countries, ultimately rising to Head of International Affairs, closely involved in negotiating the end of apartheid.¹²⁵⁸ Essop and Aziz Pahad also entered ANC politics through the YSS.¹²⁵⁹ Both joined the SACP in the late 1960s and were sent to Moscow for training.¹²⁶⁰ In June 1985, Aziz was elected to the NEC at the Kabwe Conference, as one of the first non-Africans to join the NEC.¹²⁶¹ He credited his political involvement in enabling him to cope with exile: ‘Fortunately for me and my peers, our involvement in the struggle and the

¹²⁵¹ ANC Youth and Student Section (London Office) Short Memorandum on Structure, Aims and Tactics, 18 November 1965, ANC London Mission; Ndlovu, “The ANC in exile,” 474.

¹²⁵² Ndlovu, “The ANC in exile,” 476.

¹²⁵³ Pahad, interview (Onslow); Gevisser, *Legacy of Liberation*, 99.

¹²⁵⁴ Appeal Letter to All ANC Youth & Students from the Secretariat of the ANC Youth & Student Section, Provisional Headquarters, Morogoro, Tanzania, September 1969, Box 25, Folder 39-41, ANC London Mission, UFH.

¹²⁵⁵ Appeal Letter to All ANC Youth & Students from the Secretariat of the ANC Youth & Student Section, Provisional Headquarters, Morogoro, Tanzania, September 1969, ANC London Mission.

¹²⁵⁶ Appeal Letter to All ANC Youth & Students from the Secretariat of the ANC Youth & Student Section, Provisional Headquarters, Morogoro, Tanzania, September 1969, ANC London Mission.

¹²⁵⁷ Naicker, interview.

¹²⁵⁸ Gevisser, *Legacy of Liberation*, 97.

¹²⁵⁹ Pahad, interview (Frederikse). Lack of article preceding ‘musket bearer’ in original.

¹²⁶⁰ Aziz Pahad, *Insurgent Diplomat*.

¹²⁶¹ Pahad, interview (Frederikse).

discipline imposed on us by the movement saved us from becoming part of the lost exile generation.’¹²⁶²

Other children of activists joined MK in the 1960s, including Gerald Lockman, de facto the Sisulu’s son, who received military training in Czechoslovakia in the early 1960s before being based in Kongwa, Tanzania.¹²⁶³ In Czechoslovakia and Kongwa, he trained with Joseph ‘Cotton’ Kotane (son of SACP leader, Moses Kotane), who had been recruited, not by his father, but by Andrew Masondo in late 1961.¹²⁶⁴

A closer examination of children born before the 1950s reveals that many of them moved beyond the relational identity of being perceived as the ‘child of’ activists, highlighting the social construction of childhood. Through the processes described above, children became activists (and, in some cases, later politicians) in their own right. While their parents’ political engagements are often noted, these individuals established independent political legacies. Examples from previous years include Albie Sachs, son of a prominent trade unionist, Denis Goldberg, whose mother was known as ‘Comrade Annie Goldberg’, Joe Gaobakwe Matthews, son of Fort Hare academic and activist Z.K. Matthews, Brian Bunting, son of founding members of the CPSA, and Indres and Shanthie Naidoo.¹²⁶⁵ Likewise, many children born in the 1940s ‘graduated’ into activism and are remembered as political figures in their own right – most notably Thabo Mbeki, Aziz and Essop Pahad, Pallo Jordan, and Sheila Weinberg.¹²⁶⁶

¹²⁶² Aziz Pahad, *Insurgent Diplomat*.

¹²⁶³ Sisulu, *Walter and Albertina Sisulu*, 79; Cajee with Bell, *Fordsburg Fighter*, 82. Gerald Lockman is the son of Walter Sisulu’s sister, Barbie, but was raised by the Sisulu’s.

¹²⁶⁴ Joseph Kotane, interview (Bernstein).

¹²⁶⁵ Carneson-McGregor, *Red in the Rainbow*, 123.

¹²⁶⁶ Israel, “Living with ‘A World Apart’.”

Children's attempts to establish their own position in the struggle did not always go uncontested, as the experiences of Max Sisulu emphasise. After finishing his studies in the USSR, Max worked with the YSS in Tanzania and was a founding member of the Youth Secretariat in Lusaka.¹²⁶⁷ From 1977-1981, he was based in Budapest serving as the ANC representative for the World Federation of Democratic Youth. In 1982, he returned to Lusaka. Elinor Sisulu narrated Max's interactions with ANC leadership in this period:

On 28 August 1983 he had written to Alfred Nzo, the Secretary-General, to complain about an NEC decision that "despite being no longer a youth, I should remain in the youth section i.e. to become by decree a perpetual youth".¹²⁶⁸

At age 38, Max was deeply frustrated by continuously being perceived as a 'youth', a positioning that was likely affected by his relation to his parents, and perpetuated through the posts to which he was assigned.

While accusations of nepotism were already occurring during the 1940s-1950s in South Africa (e.g., during the Bantu Education Boycotts, see Chapter 5), these became more vocal in exile. The Hani Memorandum, written in early 1969, and with pivotal consequences for the ANC, stated:

Another disturbing symptom is the glaring practice of nepotism where the leadership uses its position to promote their kith and kin and put them in positions where they will not be in any physical confrontation with the enemy. The sending of virtually all the sons of the leaders to universities in Europe is a sign that these people are being groomed for leadership positions after the M.K. cadres have overthrown the fascists.¹²⁶⁹

Luli Callinicos, Tambo's biographer, described how the fact that Adelaide Tambo and their children lived in Muswell Hill, and their children went to private school was used to tarnish Oliver Tambo's integrity.¹²⁷⁰ London was 'seen as the easy option even by some of those

¹²⁶⁷ Sisulu, *Walter and Albertina Sisulu*, 466.

¹²⁶⁸ Sisulu, *Walter and Albertina Sisulu*, 466.

¹²⁶⁹ Hugh Macmillan, "The 'Hani Memorandum' – introduced and annotated," *Transformation: Critical Perspectives on Southern Africa* 69, no.1 (2009): 120.

¹²⁷⁰ Callinicos, *Oliver Tambo*, 419.

who took it' in comparison to exile in Africa, and particularly to MK camps.¹²⁷¹ University scholarships also became a point of contestation – when Thabo Mbeki (singled out as the head of a 'bogus' youth organisation in the Hani Memorandum) had been the only one of his border crossing group to attend a Western university, this was seen as favouritism.¹²⁷²

His biographer, Gevisser, writes:

Thabo Mbeki's pedigree meant that he arrived in Johannesburg with immediate access to the movement and without really having to prove his loyalty, but while it was a given that the children of leaders were part of the ANC "family," they often found themselves there by circumstance or necessity rather than volition. It is thus incorrect and perhaps unjust to accuse Thabo Mbeki of having been born with a "red spoon" in his mouth. He may have been Mbeki's son, but had he not proven himself, he would have remained ANC "family" the way Tambo's or Mandela's children were: loyal, coddled, and made into icons, but not given powerful positions.¹²⁷³

After his release from detention, Max Sisulu, wary of re-arrest, travelled via Botswana to Dar es Salaam, and later to the USSR to receive military training.¹²⁷⁴ This was against his parents' wishes, who had hoped for him to study in the UK, and following their intervention, Max enrolled at the Plekhanov Institute for Economics in Moscow.¹²⁷⁵ Blanche La Guma also commented on the misbehaviour of children of ANC members in Cuba, while she and her husband headed the ANC Mission in Havana:

My only objection was that when we arrived some of the students whose parents were in the upper echelons of the ANC took advantage of the situation. (...) As children of leaders in the Movement they felt they were entitled to a better living situation than the hundred or so other students.¹²⁷⁶

Accusations of nepotism also occurred in MK camps. After two female comrades had joined Kongwa, one of them, Gladys, started dating Joseph Kotane.¹²⁷⁷ Dating amongst comrades was perceived with trepidation, but as it involved the son of high-ranking Moses Kotane, there was no intervention. Following leadership struggles at the camp and a lack of

¹²⁷¹ Israel, *South African Political Exile*, 5.

¹²⁷² Macmillan, "Hani Memorandum," 120; Gevisser, *Legacy of Liberation*, 84.

¹²⁷³ Gevisser, *Legacy of Liberation*, 77.

¹²⁷⁴ Sisulu, *Walter and Albertina Sisulu*, 231-3.

¹²⁷⁵ Sisulu, *Walter and Albertina Sisulu*, 244, 309-10.

¹²⁷⁶ La Guma, *In the Dark*, 173.

¹²⁷⁷ Cajee with Bell, *Fordsburg Fighter*, 112.

communication about the Wankie Campaign, Gerald Lockman defected and disappeared into Dar es Salaam.¹²⁷⁸ He was eventually arrested by the Tanzanian police and handed over to the ANC. Amin Cajee, a fellow MK defector, suggested that Gerald then faked mental health issues, for which he received specialist help, supposedly only because of his Sisulu connection.¹²⁷⁹ Eventually, Gerald escaped and settled in the Copperbelt, where he distanced himself from the movement (and to some extent his family).¹²⁸⁰

Generally, it seems that many children of ANC elites received some preferential treatment, although, as Gevisser points out, this did not provide immediate access to the higher echelons of ANC leadership.¹²⁸¹ Although many children of activists were recipients of scholarships, Ndlovu argues that student lists in the 1960s reject the perception that this was overwhelmingly the case.¹²⁸² As many of the individuals mentioned in this chapter went on to become politicians or are holding public roles, they would have likely wanted to identify with a background in struggle politics but underplay the label ‘child of’ to not be accused of favouritism. By highlighting a background in struggle politics, rather than a direct relation to their parents, children furthermore established a distance to their parents, with whom some had difficult relationships.

Political Participation in Exile in the 1970s and 1980s

The following section assesses the group of children who were born in the 1950s and exiled at a young age, primarily in the early to mid-1960s, or were born in exile, usually in the 1960s to early 1970s. The extent to which they ‘graduated’ into the movement is much less

¹²⁷⁸ Sisulu, *Walter and Albertina Sisulu*, 326; Cajee with Bell, *Fordsburg Fighter*, 148-9.

¹²⁷⁹ Cajee with Bell, *Fordsburg Fighter*, 148-9.

¹²⁸⁰ Sisulu, *Walter and Albertina Sisulu*, 325-6.

¹²⁸¹ Gevisser, *Legacy of Liberation*, 77.

¹²⁸² Ndlovu, “The ANC in exile,” 471-3.

cohesive and depended on the extent to which their politicisation as children and the political context of their exile location enabled this political participation. While their experiences made them available for activism, many of them did not feel that they were given the structural opportunity to join the ANC; complex relationships to their parents – often as a product of the narratives discussed in the previous chapter – furthermore caused children to reject participation.

In London, not all children joined the ANC, and the progression from child to activist was not given. Gill Marcus, who sits on the cusp of this age group, having been born in 1949, arrived in the UK, alongside her family, in 1969. They linked up with the ANC by late 1969/early 1970:

I can recall there was always something going on the weekend. There was a study class, there was discussion and there was a party. But people who were the - Brian Buntings and the Yusuf Dadoos and the Rusty Bernsteins and people took enormous time with us and we had a thorough grounding in South Africa, in South African history, in the politics of where you go, what's happening, what your role, in [sic] think which very few other people had.¹²⁸³

John Carneson, who was recruited to the YSS around the same time by Archie Sibeko, experienced the ANC as less penetrable:

My parents had given me a general hatred of racism and injustice and the rest but because they were underground they could never really go into details and our house was in fact bugged or electronically surveyed, so they had probably had good reason not to tell me details, so I was extremely ignorant and I suppose a lot of knowledge was assumed. There were no really basic classes in the history of the struggle at that time and that was a great lack, this assumption that I knew what the ANC was like but there was also a great secrecy, an almost treating knowledge about the ANC as a privilege, so I never got a clear idea of the structure of the organisation and if I tried to find out anything I was met with vague sort of knowing smiles (...)¹²⁸⁴

Born in 1951 in South Africa, he had not been politicised and integrated into the liberation movement to the same extent as even his older sister, Lynn, leaving him initially excluded

¹²⁸³ Gill Marcus, interview by Wolfie Kodesh, 24 March 1993, Oral History of Exiles Project, MCA6-310, Mayibuye Archives, UWC.

¹²⁸⁴ John Carneson, interview by Wolfie Kodesh, 6 June 1993, Oral History of Exiles Project, MCA6-254, Mayibuye Archives, UWC. The interview refers to 'Archie Zebeko' but appears to be Archie Sibeko.

from ANC structures in the UK. After joining the YSS, he started attending meetings, organised sit-ins, marches, and fundraisers, and travelled to the GDR for the World Festival of Youth and Students in 1973 with the ANC delegation. His social circles got increasingly more South African and he ‘had relatively fewer British friends.’¹²⁸⁵ Later, he became a teacher, first in socialist Mozambique, heeding the call for qualified personnel, and then in the 1980s at SOMAFSCO, where he taught for six years, including a sabbatical doing curriculum development for the ANC in London.¹²⁸⁶ In 1986, he developed ‘scholarship fever’ and applied to do a Master’s in London, while his wife, Ntombi, pursued culinary training.¹²⁸⁷ Reva joined the ANC Youth Committee at a young age but commented that she was somewhat of an exception amongst much older activists.¹²⁸⁸ Tessa joined the ANC around the age of 14-15, but neither of her siblings did.¹²⁸⁹

It is often noted that the Slovo daughters and Tambo children did not become involved in anti-apartheid activism. In her 1997 memoir, Gillian Slovo narrated her alienation from her parents’ struggle: when asked to pick up her ‘spear’ [MK translates to ‘spear of the nation’] at her mother’s funeral, she felt it was too heavy.¹²⁹⁰ At a Miner’s Union event after the end of apartheid, her awkward identification with the struggle is expressed in her difficulty in partaking in struggle customs:

I’d witnessed enough meetings to know how I should respond. I stepped forward, raised my fist and gave a weak “Amandla!” (Power). It was a first for me. As the Ngawethu (To the People) was delivered back, Joe’s pre-election voice, questioning my place in South Africa, echoed from the past. Was Joe right? Was I a fraud?¹²⁹¹

¹²⁸⁵ John Carneson, interview.

¹²⁸⁶ Carneson, *John and Ntombi*, 29-30.

¹²⁸⁷ Carneson, *John and Ntombi*, 71.

¹²⁸⁸ Reva, interview.

¹²⁸⁹ Tessa Wolpe, interview.

¹²⁹⁰ Slovo, *Every Secret Thing*, 139.

¹²⁹¹ Slovo, *Every Secret Thing*, 229.

Her older sister, Shawn, did not want to join the ANC, positioned her strained relationship to the movement as a consequence of her parents' choices:

I was also extremely angry with my parents with their political choices they had made and the way that had affected us as a family and the way it had affected me as an individual, so I couldn't.. I am a member of the ANC but I can't operate within the ANC because of this anger that I feel.¹²⁹²

In the late 1980s, Frances Bernstein wrote a letter to her mother which reckoned with her lack of participation in the struggle.¹²⁹³ Describing a brief visit to Zambia where she met Mac Maharaj, Frances wrote:

(...) I felt terrible. He knew me as a child, as my father's child, right in the thick of it. He saw me as my father's daughter attached to the struggle, born of it, but in fact I had by then become a stranger to it. I had left behind that life, while he had been in prison. I wasn't attached any more, at all, I was pulled out of that life, placed in an alien soil, to grow into a stranger to that struggle.¹²⁹⁴

Frances saw her exile in the early 1960s as the primary reason for her detachment from the struggle. She told her mother: 'You have found proper outlets for it, connected to the struggle, useful to the struggle. It's harder for us to find these.'¹²⁹⁵ During university, she became involved in a local AAM group, which she perceived as her activity 'in my own right, for myself, as what I wanted to do, not because I was the daughter of these people and this is what they did.'¹²⁹⁶ In late 1989, Frances – now in her thirties – informed her parents that she had finally joined the ANC.¹²⁹⁷

Refraining from politics posed a way to differentiate themselves from their parents. Their narratives about their (chosen) exclusion from the political scene further underlines that while their parents prioritised the political collective over the personal, immediate

¹²⁹² Shawn Slovo, interview.

¹²⁹³ Letter from Frances to Hilda, 8 June, approx. late 1980s, D3.2, A3299 Bernstein Papers, Historical Papers, Wits.

¹²⁹⁴ Letter from Frances to Hilda, 8 June, approx. late 1980s, A3299 Bernstein Papers.

¹²⁹⁵ Letter from Frances to Hilda, 8 June, approx. late 1980s, A3299 Bernstein Papers.

¹²⁹⁶ Frances Bernstein, interview.

¹²⁹⁷ Letter from Frances to Hilda and Rusty, 18 November 1989, D3.2, A3299 Bernstein Papers, Historical Papers, Wits.

family, for their children, the political was personal. Moeletsi Mbeki's early experiences in London emphasise this close entanglement between children's political activism and their relationship to their parents. Moeletsi, so Gevisser argues, had a very different relationship to his father: rather than to compare himself to him, as Thabo did, he had wanted to 'leave the playing field altogether'.¹²⁹⁸ Moeletsi came to London in 1965, but while his older brother became engrossed in the ANC and the SACP, Moeletsi turned towards the Young Socialists of the British Labour Party and the 'New Left'.¹²⁹⁹ The political pathways of Jama, the youngest Mbeki son, diverged even further from their father's (and Thabo's) politics. He had been sent to Lesotho, aged ten, to live with his aunt, a stalwart of the BCP.¹³⁰⁰ Consequently, Jama joined the BCP and its armed wing, the LLA.¹³⁰¹ In their conflict with the Basutoland National Party (BNP), which had refused to accept their electoral defeat, the LLA received funding from Pretoria and even attacked the ANC, the BNP's ally. Jama disappeared in 1982 and was presumed dead in the mid-1990s.¹³⁰²

In Chapter 5, I suggested that children, particularly in London, were also exposed to other solidarity and liberation movements, which played a politicising role in their lives – these other movements furthermore offered children the possibility to become politically active, both alongside, as well as instead of in the South African struggle. Reva joined the ANC but was also involved in School Kids Against Nazis and Rock Against Racism.¹³⁰³

Nadine recalled:

(...) we seem to be wanting to demonstrate. (...) we felt it was important to participate in those sorts of things. But I mean, we felt it was important to participate in, you know, the anti-Nazi League, or, you know, the People's March for Jobs or just those

¹²⁹⁸ Gevisser, *Legacy of Liberation*, 112.

¹²⁹⁹ Mbeki, interview. Note: Moeletsi Mbeki, born in 1945, is actually older than the other children referred to in this section. Gevisser discusses some of the reasons for Moeletsi's detachment from his family's struggle in *Legacy of Liberation*.

¹³⁰⁰ Gevisser, *Legacy of Liberation*, 150.

¹³⁰¹ Gevisser, *Legacy of Liberation*, 45.

¹³⁰² Gevisser, *Legacy of Liberation*, 152-3.

¹³⁰³ Reva, interview.

sorts of big issues. So, it wasn't just the anti-apartheid movement. It was other things as well.¹³⁰⁴

When David was 15, he was elected as Chairperson of the National Union of School Students but remained involved in anti-apartheid causes.¹³⁰⁵ Yasmin was involved in the AAM but also the CND and the Palestine Solidarity Movement.¹³⁰⁶

The ANC did not always approve of their members' (and their children's) involvement in other causes. During the Vietnam War, Toni, who was an ANC member, formed a small group called 'Women Against the War', but the ANC reprimanded them for not having asked for permission.¹³⁰⁷ Norma Kitson and her children formed the City of London Anti-Apartheid Group in January 1982 – it was at first affiliated with the AAM but by 1985 became disaffiliated due to disagreements with the ANC and AAM leadership.¹³⁰⁸ Norma described her children's alienation from the ANC – Amandla had been threatened with expulsion by Solly Smith (ANC Chief Representative in London, later exposed as a spy) when she distributed pamphlets during a meeting and was kicked out of the ANC office while trying to volunteer, supposedly for being a member of the Revolutionary Communist Party (which she was not).¹³⁰⁹ Steven joined the ANC choir, but they failed to inform him of practice sessions and performances.¹³¹⁰

For children who had felt alienated from their parents and/or the struggle, these other political movements offered them a possibility to engage with their disposition for activism, while they could (or would) not engage with their parents' movement. Throughout her

¹³⁰⁴ Nannan, interview.

¹³⁰⁵ Brown, interview.

¹³⁰⁶ Yasmin, interview.

¹³⁰⁷ Strasburg, interview.

¹³⁰⁸ Kitson, *Sixpence*, 262.

¹³⁰⁹ Kitson, *Sixpence*, 286.

¹³¹⁰ Kitson, *Sixpence*, 287.

childhood, Alexandra had a difficult relationship with her parents: ‘My background was culturally rich, for which I’m deeply grateful for, and attachment poor.’¹³¹¹ Her father had been mostly absent, and her mother had been ‘marvellous and terrible, that complicated mixture’, following a difficult childhood.¹³¹² By the 1960s, her parents had mostly withdrawn from activism and expected Alexandra to attend university and pursue a career. The secretive environment during this period further contributed to her exclusion from her parents’ movement. She wrote: ‘1968 is approaching and I can feel the world seething around me. I want in. In a desperate way I want to be included, but I can find no way in.’¹³¹³ Alexandra intended to become a political revolutionary, which appeared like a ‘feasible option’ in the context of her parents’ milieu.¹³¹⁴ She turned towards the 1968 student protests and at 15 ran away with a friend of Dany Le Rouge (Daniel Cohn-Bendit, one of the student leaders in the 1968 Paris movement), before emigrating to the US, where she fell into a supposedly Marxist-Leninist cult in Minneapolis in 1982. Some of the cult’s rules, including secret messages and a cell structure, seemed ‘reasonable’ to her, having witnessed similar secrecy during her childhood.¹³¹⁵ She had wanted to be ‘a good comrade’; it was the cult’s ignoring of the South African boycott that finally convinced her to leave.¹³¹⁶ Her older sister, Lyndall, resisted following in her parents’ footsteps, carving out her own space within the protest movements of the late 1960s, though she later fundraised for the ANC in the

¹³¹¹ Alexandra Stein, interview.

¹³¹² Alexandra Stein, interview.

¹³¹³ Alexandra Stein, “Where The Heart Is,” (unpublished, provided to the author, 1998), 5.

¹³¹⁴ Alexandra Stein, interview. There is a wide range of existing historical and sociological literature on the 1960s, focusing particularly on the US, France, the UK and Germany. See for example Belinda Davis et al. (eds), *Changing the World, Changing Oneself: Political Protest and Collective Identities in West Germany and the US in the 1960s and 1970s* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2010); Gerd-Rainer Horn, *The Spirit of '68: Rebellion in Western Europe and North America 1956–1976* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2007); Terry Anderson, *The Movement and the Sixties: Protest in America From Greensboro to Wounded Knee* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995); Arthur Marwick, *The Sixties: Cultural Revolution in Britain, France, Italy, and the United States, c. 1958-c.1974* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998); Anna von der Goltz, “Generations of 68ers – Age-Related Constructions of identity and German’s ‘1968’,” *Journal of the Social History Society* 8, no. 4 (2011): 473-491.

¹³¹⁵ Alexandra Stein, interview.

¹³¹⁶ Alexandra Stein, interview.

1980s.¹³¹⁷ The political pathways of both sisters highlight acutely how parental activism led to children's disposition for activism, yet also underline Pagis' argument regarding the necessity of finding a political movement to invest their time in. Excluded from the South African struggle, both in consequence of the secrecy regulations and due to their difficult relationship with their parents, Alexandra and Lyndall sought alternative political movements.¹³¹⁸ Kethiwe also emphasised her need of finding her own place in activism.¹³¹⁹ She became head of the student union and attended rallies, focusing on the cultural dislocation of black people in Britain in the 1980s: 'For me, it was my struggle. It was the struggle that I needed to be part of.'¹³²⁰

Secrecy concerns were ubiquitous in the ANC in exile, particularly after the discovery of an extensive spy ring in 1981.¹³²¹ Due to their parental connection and as they had known many activists since childhood, children of activists were rarely suspected of spying (both in exile and South Africa).¹³²² This was, however, not the case for Phyllis Naidoo's eldest son, Nersen.¹³²³ Nersen lived with Naidoo until the age of ten, but did not return after a holiday to the US, where his father, separated from Naidoo, was living. In his mid-20s, Nersen reconnected with his mother in Durban via phone. When Naidoo lived in Lesotho, Nersen sent her a letter, expressing his wish to join MK, asking for her assistance. Yet, the ANC suspected Nersen of being a Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) plant, and Naidoo was requested to break off contact. Nersen later joined Charles Taylor's army in

¹³¹⁷ Lyndall Stein, interviewed by author, London, 12 May 2023.

¹³¹⁸ Pagis, *May '68*, 224.

¹³¹⁹ Ngcobo, interview.

¹³²⁰ Ngcobo, interview.

¹³²¹ Macmillan, "Culture of Exile," 320.

¹³²² Ruff, interview; Nad Pillay, interviewed by author, Johannesburg, 5 June 2023; Maseko, interview; Kuben Naidoo, interview.

¹³²³ Shanthi Aboobaker, "Struggle heroine Phyllis had secret third son," *Sunday Tribune*, 24 February 2013, https://www.pressreader.com/south-africa/sunday-tribune-south-africa/20130224/281736971862924?srsId=AfmBOop2aHcgOC2ySmNkiSALY43g-Ma0gSd_tvFnG5XgyG0W_feVkMiX.

Liberia and died there in the 1980s. In 2013, Sukhthi, Naidoo's daughter from her second marriage, wrote:

I can only imagine how devastated he must have been. It has always been clear to me that all he was reaching out for was his mother, and he thought that couching that approach in noble political terms would probably appeal more to her.¹³²⁴

Children's political participation reveal insights into how individuals are perceived in the South African public sphere and examined by academics. While this thesis has highlighted a range of children whose parents were politically involved, it is generally the children who have not become politically active themselves, that are perceived as the children of activists. This (self-)labelling becomes clear in books like Bernstein's *The Rift*, where children of activists are sequestered in the final section 'Bridging the Rift' under the 'Families' section.¹³²⁵ This section includes interviews with Tessa and Peta Wolpe, all three Slovo daughters, and Dali Tambo, among others. Yet, a reading of the entire book pinpoints to a number of people who were also raised by activist parents: both Gloria Nkadimeng and Linda Mvusi describe how their childhood in activism ultimately led them to become politically active, yet neither are featured in the 'Families' section.¹³²⁶ 'Children of activists' are thus perceived only in the relational, where they are discussed or drawn in as witnesses, *because* of their connection to their parents, not due to their own actions. Meanwhile, children who have become politically active have avoided this label – also to avoid accusations of nepotism, as I have argued previously. The careful analysis of these children's experiences and narratives thus reveals how childhood is constructed not only as a life stage, but also through their relation to others, and perhaps even through the (perceived) inactivity of these children.

¹³²⁴ Witness, "Another son lost to the struggle," *Witness*, 2 February 2013, <https://witness.co.za/archive/2013/02/22/another-son-lost-to-the-struggle-20150430/>.

¹³²⁵ Bernstein, *Rift*, 397-501.

¹³²⁶ Bernstein, *Rift*, 35, 129.

ANC documentation post-1976 clearly highlighted children's expected contribution, during the struggle and to the liberated South Africa. In an NEC paper delivered to the ANC Youth Summer School in 1980, Andrew Masondo declared:

The youth are the heirs of the revolution, the material necessary to the period of economic and political reconstruction [sic], the dynamo of the armed and political struggle and future leaders of the revolution and new society who will defend the gains of the revolution and give the toiling masses liberty and freedom in concrete terms.¹³²⁷

This led de Sas Kropiwnicki to argue that the exiled ANC conceptualised the childhood of ANC children as 'a period of investment'.¹³²⁸ She states:

Children, by virtue of their particular position in the life course, had a role to play in the future South Africa. This was more than just a role that they could pick or choose from, but it was a lifelong responsibility and moral imperative that they had to fulfil in order to reciprocate the freedom and protection won for them through the sacrifice – imprisonment, disablement and death – of others, as well as a form of repayment for the "investments" – education, material and social welfare – made by the ANC in their childhoods.¹³²⁹

Chapters 5 and 6 questioned the extent to which this was a universal experience for children, suggesting that the point at which, and where, children experienced exile was crucial in moulding children's integration into the ANC narrative and community, thus shaping their relationship to the movement. The children who experienced the politically charged environment in the frontline states, especially after 1976, were more likely to enact their disposition for activism within the ANC, also because they experienced these newly created institutions to become involved. Zola perceived his education at SOMAFCO as preparation for MK, where he went from being the child of activists to being a 'freedom fighter in my own right'.¹³³⁰ Based at Waterford for his IB, he was well-placed for the

¹³²⁷ The Role of the Youth and Students in the South African Struggle – Paper from the NEC, Comrade A. Masondo (National Commissar), ANC Youth Summer School, 28 July-4 August, Year of the Charter [1980], Box 1, Folder 17, Departments of Arts & Culture, ANC Lusaka Mission, UFH.

¹³²⁸ De Sas Kropiwnicki, *Exile*, 90.

¹³²⁹ De Sas Kropiwnicki, *Exile*, 77.

¹³³⁰ Maseko, interview.

underground struggle in Swaziland. He spent three years in MK and in 1987 became the commander of an assassination squad in Swaziland. In 1988, he went on to work in MK intelligence. After a year, three of his comrades were killed when crossing into South Africa – it acted as a lightbulb moment for him, and he requested to leave MK to return to Tanzania.

David travelled from London to SOMAFSCO in his mid-20s because he believed that only in the frontline states would he be able to create real change.¹³³¹ He spent three and a half years at SOMAFSCO, primarily in its photography laboratory. Only at SOMAFSCO did he come to realise what the ANC meant to its members, suggesting that previously he had been excluded from this narrative:

They used to say to us: “Now we are your parents, your grandparents, your, your everything. This is your extended family.” And for me it was just an incredible... everything, my whole life turned upside down, I’ve never seen something like it.¹³³²

He wrote: ‘I imagined myself as the new revolutionary in the family, taking up the mantle where my parents had seemingly left off.’¹³³³ Nadine also travelled from London to SOMAFSCO, ‘[b]ecause (...) I really thought I could do something there. I really thought I could help or put my energies there. They would be more effective there than what I was doing in England.’¹³³⁴ For Andrew, joining MK offered a chance to commit further to the struggle. Since his teenage years, Andrew had worked in the ANC DIP in London. Inspired by the ANC activists that surrounded him, he ‘(...) wanted to do more, and I was excited to do more and commit further in the ANC struggle.’¹³³⁵ His parents and other activists were at first wary but informed MK commander Joe Modise of his intentions:

But they all were, they were all slightly doubtful. They were all glad I was saying it and but what the message I was getting back was okay, so listen, you know, it’s tough there. You’ve been working here now with Gill in DIP for a couple of years

¹³³¹ Brown, interview.

¹³³² Brown, interview.

¹³³³ Lindiwe Mabuza, ed. *Conversations with Uncle OR Tambo* (Johannesburg: Real African Publishers, 2017), 46-7.

¹³³⁴ Nannan, interview.

¹³³⁵ Kasrils, interview.

and you're showing good commitment. But we just want to see you work a bit more. And we want to feel confident that if we get you all the way over there, that you're not going to suddenly change your mind.¹³³⁶

After five years of work at DIP, he was finally allowed to join MK in 1987. He recalled his feelings about the first time that he partook in the toyi-toying in the Angolan bush:

(...) that's when I had my emotional moment and it was one of the few I mean, it was kind of like, you know, actually had tears in my eyes. (...) I'm actually in the middle of it now. I've always wanted to be here and now I'm in the middle of it. (...) That was the big okay, 'You're in Angola now' moment.¹³³⁷

By embarking on ANC scholarships to study degrees that the ANC had deemed useful for either its current or post-apartheid needs through its National Scholarship Committee, children of activists (alongside others) were also seen as contributing directly to the struggle.¹³³⁸ Children took on scholarships, particularly in the Eastern Bloc, including the USSR, Bulgaria, Germany, and Cuba, but also in the USA and Canada.¹³³⁹ Upon graduating, students were expected to return to Tanzania, where the ANC Department for Manpower channelled them into ANC work.¹³⁴⁰ As in the late 1960s, the fact that children of activists took up scholarships caused dissatisfaction amongst ANC members in the 1970s and 1980s, who accused children of high-ranking activists of being prioritised in the distribution of scholarships, while non-elite children were sent to MK. As discussed in regard to those who took up scholarships in the 1960s (see above), it appears to be only a small number of children of activists who were actively prioritised.¹³⁴¹ While quantifying exact numbers proves highly complex both in terms of tracing familial connections and due to changing definitions of activism and family, further research on the scholarships lists is

¹³³⁶ Kasrils, interview.

¹³³⁷ Kasrils, interview.

¹³³⁸ Morrow et al., *Education in Exile*, 169.

¹³³⁹ Gevisser, *Legacy of Liberation*, 165.

¹³⁴⁰ Fifth National Education Council Meeting, 17-21 August 1983 – National Scholarship Committee Report for the Academic Year 1982/83, Box 9, Folder, 18-19 ANC London Mission, UFH; Letter from Henry G. Makgothi, Secretary for Education, to the ANC Chief Rep in Angola, Cde Mokeba, 31 July 1984, Box 145, Subject Files, ANC Lusaka Mission, UFH.

¹³⁴¹ Ndlovu, "The ANC in exile," 471-3.

required. Meanwhile, oral histories suggest a mixed picture. Letebele noted that her father, who was involved in distributing scholarships, initially refused to include her at all, careful to avoid any appearance of favouritism, before her mother intervened.¹³⁴² Meanwhile, other cases suggest that parents did step in to ensure that their children went down their preferred route: Pregassen Naicker had wanted to join MK in the 1970s, but his ‘extra uncle’, close to the leadership, had hampered this wish.¹³⁴³

De Sas Kropiwnicki suggests that daughters were more likely to face opposition from their parents about joining MK; my oral histories underlined this gendered pattern.¹³⁴⁴ Reva was determined to join MK but was told to study medicine in the USSR, as part of Tambo’s efforts to prepare for post-apartheid South Africa.¹³⁴⁵ Her brother, however, did join MK. For both Themba and Elizabeth, it had been clear that they would pursue tertiary education, despite Elizabeth’s father being involved in MK.¹³⁴⁶

Despite some accusations of favouritism within MK (as already discussed), children highlighted that the use of *noms de guerre* meant that few people were aware of their backgrounds. Based on his London accent, others assumed that Andrew, going by ‘Mike Wells’ in MK, had grown up in the UK and was likely the child of activists, although he only confided in one person, who themselves were related to an activist.¹³⁴⁷ Similarly, only a few people knew of Zola’s background.¹³⁴⁸ Zola opened up to Andrew after he figured out

¹³⁴² Masemola-Jones, interview.

¹³⁴³ Naicker, interview.

¹³⁴⁴ De Sas Kropiwnicki, *Exile*, 101.

¹³⁴⁵ Reva, interview.

¹³⁴⁶ Elizabeth, interview; Themba, interview.

¹³⁴⁷ Andrew Kasrils, interview.

¹³⁴⁸ Maseko, interview

the latter's connection to Ronnie Kasrils, as whenever Kasrils visited the camp, Andrew suddenly had Peter Stuyvesant cigarettes.

In the previous chapter, I discussed how activists' children became perceived as a necessary sacrifice in the quest for liberation. I also highlighted that these children simultaneously – and somewhat contradictorily – represented the future of South Africa.

Sisonke Msimang wrote:

I was born into an Africa that was waiting for me and into a movement that needed children as emblems of the future. We were totems, all of us – grand experiments who were testament not just to our parents' love, but to the ability of the struggle to regenerate, to sustain itself.¹³⁴⁹

The ANC tried to instil a sense of duty, and as de Sas Kropiwnicki argues, a sense of reciprocity, in their children.¹³⁵⁰ In return for their parents' sacrifices and the ANC's investments in them, children were expected to contribute to the struggle, as well as post-apartheid South Africa. Ntombi recalled:

I was very conscious of it. I mean, that's why we had the Pioneers, because we were understanding ourselves to be the future, right. That all this crap that was going on, you know, with us having the kinds of families that we did have, it was because there was a need to ensure that our children didn't have to do this. You know, we, I think there was an understanding of the sacrifice that those guys were making so that we could have a brighter future.¹³⁵¹

De Sas Kropiwnicki suggests that her interviewees struggled with the pressure this placed on them, so one interviewee, 'Lungile', stated: 'There was all this pressure. It felt like I was carrying the weight of the world.'¹³⁵² Dali Tambo also struggled under the weight of comparison to his father: 'And so it would make me a little antagonistic, I must say, you know. I mean I just didn't like it and I knew the kind of man he [his father] was, I knew that

¹³⁴⁹ Msimang, *Always Another Country*, 182.

¹³⁵⁰ De Sas Kropiwnicki, *Exile*, 89, 114.

¹³⁵¹ Langa-Royds, interview.

¹³⁵² De Sas Kropiwnicki, *Exile*, 101.

there was no way I was like him.’¹³⁵³ Until the age of 13/14 (when he returned to South Africa), Sechaba believed that he would one day join MK: ‘(...) we were raised as contributors (...)’.¹³⁵⁴ While activist Ronnie Kasrils argued that ‘we never pressurised these boys to join the ANC or be associated at all’, he also expressed a strong sense of pride at his sons’ involvement, suggesting that parents might have also subconsciously impacted their children.¹³⁵⁵

However, not all children experienced this sense of duty, as discussed in the first section on children’s disposition for activism. Most children generally rejected the notion that their parents were deliberately pushing them into politics. Themba, who grew up between Lusaka and Mazimbu, experienced the care of the ANC and its community but did not internalise this as being the future leader of South Africa.¹³⁵⁶ This likely indicated that, much like the narratives of sacrifice and the political family, the extent to which children felt pressured to join the movement was shaped by individual family dynamics.

By the time many of them had graduated from university, apartheid had ended, and their immediate services to the ANC were no longer required. The ANC in exile anticipated children’s active participation in shaping post-apartheid South Africa – the extent to which this came to fruition will be discussed in the next chapter.

¹³⁵³ Dali Tambo, interview. Dali suggested that his mother wanted to keep him out of politics, despite his interest in it, as she already had one man in the family deeply involved.

¹³⁵⁴ Mogale, Kgositsile, interview.

¹³⁵⁵ Ronnie Kasrils, interview by Hilda Bernstein, n.d., Hilda Bernstein Collection, MCA 7 – 1528, Mayibuye Archives, UWC.

¹³⁵⁶ Themba, interview.

Political Participation in South Africa in the 1970s and 1980s

During the early 1970s, following the destructive 1960s, children of activists, who stayed in South Africa, were either repressed as adults/activists themselves or found little opportunity to enter their parents' secretive organisation, although university groups offered some scope for involvement. With the outbreak of the Soweto Uprising and through the youth involvement in the 1980s, children (of non-political families and activist families) became 'active participants' in the struggle – as defined by Rodgers – deeply involved in the political activity in South Africa and/or leaving for military training in exile.¹³⁵⁷

Those who had become active in the 1960s but did not go into exile were – as their parents – severely repressed, facing banning orders, detentions, and house arrests. After her release from prison in 1966, Sheila Weinberg was inactive until 1971/2 when she became involved with the HRC.¹³⁵⁸ From 1976 to 1981, she was under complete house arrest, followed by a less strict house arrest until 1983. Soon after, she attended the UDF launch and became involved in the Johannesburg Democratic Action Committee (JODAC), a UDF affiliate, aimed at involving whites in the struggle. As she was listed, Ilse was also not 'madly active' during the 1970s and 1980s, although she enabled activists to use her flat for secret meetings.¹³⁵⁹

Some – often white – younger children who had spent their formative years during the repressive period in the late 1950s and 1960s, and now became adults in the 1970s, were involved only to a very limited extent or made conscious decisions to stay out of politics. Their childhood had been marked by increasing repression, social ostracisation, a lack of

¹³⁵⁷ Rodgers, *Children in Social Movements*, 2.

¹³⁵⁸ Sheila Weinberg, interview.

¹³⁵⁹ Wilson, interview.

political community, and limited political understanding. Excluded from their parents' politics, they sought stability and safety outside of activism. Linda recalled:

I think they would have liked it if I had asked many more questions. I think I was more angry... I did ask questions you know she told me about life in prison and she told me you know how they became actively involved and you know there were lots of times but there was never any push for me to become active.¹³⁶⁰

Sonya argued: 'I don't do anything risky. I don't... I will not bring shame upon my family because I lived with shame and being shunned.'¹³⁶¹ Marriage offered security and, through a change of surname, lessen public scrutiny.¹³⁶² Sonya married her husband, aged 20, in 1968: 'It's very young, but it was a way of getting out of my parents' house.'¹³⁶³ Evoking familial language, she discussed having 'divorced' from the political 'family' of the struggle.¹³⁶⁴ Winnie Mandela also suggested that Zenani sought stability through marriage. She suggested that because Liliesleaf – the Johannesburg farm where Nelson Mandela had hid in 1962 – had been the only place the family could create a semblance of domestic life, Zenani and her husband chose to settle in a similar place:

Her marriage to Muzi and the environment where they live in Swaziland I think reminds her of those days. And with the first few wages they got, they found themselves a farmhouse which is something like Liliesleaf. It has never left her mind that that was her home.¹³⁶⁵

Other children strategically stayed out of politics to keep in contact with their parents, either exiled or in prison. Jeanne did not get politically involved as she hoped to continue visiting their parents in exile; nonetheless, she was banned in the mid-1970s.¹³⁶⁶

¹³⁶⁰ Shapiro, interview.

¹³⁶¹ Lubner, interview.

¹³⁶² Shapiro, interview; Lubner, interview; Strasburg, interview; Gevisser, *Legacy of Liberation*, 54; Toni wrote that 'the insecurity of my life at the time made me long for the apparent security of marriage', although during the interview, she emphasised that she did not do so to change her name (Strasburg, *Fractured Lives*, 14).

¹³⁶³ Lubner, interview.

¹³⁶⁴ Lubner, interview.

¹³⁶⁵ Mandela, *Part of My Soul*, 74.

¹³⁶⁶ Jeanne, interview.

One avenue of political engagement for young whites during the early 1970s was through student involvement, particularly through NUSAS. Following SASO's breakaway in 1968, NUSAS focused on organising workers, including through the Wages Commission.¹³⁶⁷ Neville and Jeanette Curtis' parents, Jack and Joyce, had been politically active – both had been founding members of the Progressive Party, and Joyce had also been involved in the Black Sash.¹³⁶⁸ Jeanette (born in 1949) and Neville (born in 1947) became involved in student politics at Wits in the late 1960s and later at UCT. Neville was NUSAS President from 1969 onwards, and Jeanette became Vice President of NUSAS in 1972.¹³⁶⁹ Upon her return to Johannesburg, Jeanette helped set up the Industrial Aid Society, an advice bureau for the black trade union movement. Additionally, she worked as an archivist for the South African Institute for Race Relations (SAIRR).¹³⁷⁰ Both Neville (in 1973) and Jeanette (in 1977, alongside her husband, Marius Schoon) went into exile, as the apartheid state banned and repressed them.¹³⁷¹ Pretoria assassinated Jeanette and her six-year-old daughter in 1984 (see Chapter 4).¹³⁷²

Merle also became involved in student politics and the Wages Commission in the early 1970s, in her case, through a boyfriend:

And the boyfriend had access to a lot of these student organisations and I kind of went along until I was told that it was dangerous to go. (...) we used to go and interview workers take down their stories and get chased by the police and things like that, so I did that.¹³⁷³

¹³⁶⁷ Moss, *New Radicals*.

¹³⁶⁸ Jonathan Ancer, *Spy: Uncovering Craig Williamson* (Johannesburg: Jacana Media, 2017), 169. The Progressive Party was founded in 1959 by former members of the United Party and opposed the government's apartheid policies from within parliament through its long-term lone representative, Helen Suzman.

¹³⁶⁹ Ancer, *Spy*, 171-2.

¹³⁷⁰ Ancer, *Spy*, 172.

¹³⁷¹ Ancer, *Spy*, 173-6.

¹³⁷² I discussed Jeanette in Chapter 4 under her married name Schoon.

¹³⁷³ Ruff, interview.

Her mother warned her of becoming too involved: as their daughter, she posed an easy target for the SB:

The last thing they wanted was for us to be interrogated or detained or anything. (...) They knew exactly what it was like. So, they wanted us to follow in their steps, but they didn't want us to.¹³⁷⁴

She also got involved in semi-underground ANC politics: 'My mother shouldn't have stopped me [from NUSAS] because it would have been safer, but I never ever got detained.'¹³⁷⁵ Her family connection ensured that she was trusted more readily amongst activists. Merle briefly joined her boyfriend in London, before her sister came to take her back to South Africa: 'But that, but that's when I came home and I started hating the struggle. My little... freakout for a few years.'¹³⁷⁶ Merle's thoughts regarding her mother and her own activism became closely intertwined:

(...) as I grew up, I realised it was abandonment. So, you know, we kind of weren't good friends for about five years, but then, you know, I didn't want to leave, I didn't want to hate my mother for the rest of my life. I had my time and I think it was necessary.¹³⁷⁷

Merle's experiences emphasise a thread I have traced across chapters: for children of activists, the political was highly personal.

A significant number of children of colour, whose parents were activists, got involved in the BCM in the early 1970s and the ensuing student protests from 1976 onwards. Zoleka Dilimeni's family had been banished to Dimbaza because of her father's ANC activism. She recalled: 'Mostly, Dimbaza was a place where all these people from Robben Island they were dumped in. So mostly we were children of those political prisoners.'¹³⁷⁸ Following Steve Biko's death in 1977, she and her classmates protested against classroom

¹³⁷⁴ Ruff, interview.

¹³⁷⁵ Ruff, interview.

¹³⁷⁶ Ruff, interview.

¹³⁷⁷ Ruff, interview.

¹³⁷⁸ Bernstein, *Rift*, 72.

conditions.¹³⁷⁹ At age twelve, she was arrested. The police suspected her of being a ringleader, connecting students with her father, who they believed was pulling the strings. In prison, she was beaten so severely she was hospitalised, before being returned to detention for a further two months. After her trial and release, no school in Dimbaza was willing to accept her, so she attended a school in Somerset East, approximately 180 km away. When protests erupted in Somerset East, she was once again detained and beaten. Nomkhosi ‘Mary’ Mini, the daughter of Vuyisile Mini, a Treason Trialist and one of the first three MK men to be executed in 1964, also became involved through the Soweto Uprising, later joining the exiled ANC.¹³⁸⁰ In Angola, she survived a SADF attack in 1979 but was later killed in a 1985 Vlakplaas raid on Maseru.¹³⁸¹

The involvement of youth in the Soweto Uprising is generally seen as a rejection of their parents’ ‘perceived political passivity’, so Glaser argues: ‘The 1976 generation had not experienced the bitterness of defeat in the early 1960s and they were angry with their parents, who they perceived to be ignorant, docile and resigned to their fate.’¹³⁸² Lindiwe Sisulu stated: ‘Their lack of action confirmed my idea of a dead organisation.’¹³⁸³ Her (adopted) brother, Jongumuzi, perceived his parents’ initial approach of non-violence (prior to MK’s establishment in 1961) as fruitless:

These things made me feel that violence was the only alternative, because our fathers had tried to negotiate with these people without any achievement. These were the things which influenced me to join MK.¹³⁸⁴

¹³⁷⁹ Zoleka Dilimani, interview by Hilda Bernstein, 1989, Hilda Bernstein Collection, MCA 7 – 1487, Mayibuye Archives, UWC.

¹³⁸⁰ Levy, *Final Prize*, Chapter 9; Kasrils, *Armed & Dangerous*, 183.

¹³⁸¹ Truth and Reconciliation Commission, *Report, Volume 2*, 109.

¹³⁸² Posel, “The ANC youth league,” 62; Glaser, “Youth and generation,” 128.

¹³⁸³ Sisulu, *Walter and Albertina Sisulu*, 347.

¹³⁸⁴ Sisulu, *Walter and Albertina Sisulu*, 450.

Jongumuzi had, alongside his (adopted) sister, Nkuli, been involved in the planning of the 1976 student protests.¹³⁸⁵ Nkuli attended Morris Isaacson School, one of the schools at the centre of the uprising. They had been instructed not to tell their mother about their activities, although Albertina Sisulu had suspected them. During the protest, a bullet narrowly missed Nkuli, hitting her schoolmate. Jongumuzi attempted to leave the country repeatedly, but all efforts were thwarted, including, he suspected, by his mother.¹³⁸⁶ In 1983, he formed an MK unit with two others, but was eventually arrested in July 1984.¹³⁸⁷

Raised in Congress traditions, these children of activists often clashed ideologically with some of the more radical ideas within BCM. Shamim Meer became involved in SASO in 1972, while studying social work at the University of Durban-Westville.¹³⁸⁸ Too young for her parents' organisation, SASO was the first major political organisation she joined. Yet, she struggled with some of SASO's ideas, especially their rejection of communism and class as a defining feature of the struggle. Lindiwe, who had joined BPC in 1971, struggled with the militancy and anti-white sentiments within the organisation.¹³⁸⁹ In 1974, she attended university in Swaziland, where she reconnected with her exiled brother, Max, and Thabo Mbeki. Alienated from the BCM due to her Congress background, she turned towards the ANC.¹³⁹⁰ Children like Lindiwe were able to act as a connection between the exiled ANC and the politicised youth leaving the country.¹³⁹¹ As much of the ANC's contacts within South Africa were ageing, children of activists acted as a bridge to the younger generation – a fact that the apartheid state was clearly concerned about, as the treatment of Zoleka

¹³⁸⁵ Sisulu, *Walter and Albertina Sisulu*, 363.

¹³⁸⁶ Sisulu, *Walter and Albertina Sisulu*, 451.

¹³⁸⁷ Sisulu, *Walter and Albertina Sisulu*, 452.

¹³⁸⁸ Meer, interview.

¹³⁸⁹ Sisulu, *Walter and Albertina Sisulu*, 347.

¹³⁹⁰ Sisulu, *Walter and Albertina Sisulu*, 352.

¹³⁹¹ Gevisser, *Legacy of Liberation*, 134.

Dilimeni shows.¹³⁹² Lindiwe and her brother, Lungi, were detained in 1976, and Lindiwe was detained for 11 months.¹³⁹³

Children's decision to join the movement in exile also posed attempts to reconnect with their absent political parents. Chapter 6 narrated the experiences of a young man who joined MK to connect with his exiled father but felt rejected upon finally meeting him. Before he went into exile, Thabo Mbeki fathered a child, Monwabisi Kwanda, with his teenage love, Olive Mpahlwa.¹³⁹⁴ At the TRC, Olive explained her son's deep desire to meet Thabo:

Monwabisi last saw his father when he was two years old. Not knowing him hurt him very badly especially when his friends were visited by their fathers at boarding school. He complained bitterly to me about this. (...) So this was a very sore point with him because he did not know his father.¹³⁹⁵

He became involved in the Soweto Uprising, intent to join the ANC and meet his father.¹³⁹⁶ By 1981, neither Olive nor Thabo's mother had heard of him and they assumed he had succeeded in reaching exile; it is now assumed that he died as a consequence of everyday apartheid before ever reaching exile.¹³⁹⁷ Archie Sibeko also explained his son's involvement in the student protests as a consequence of his absence.¹³⁹⁸ Sibeko eventually reunited with his son, Nqaba, then going by Vuyo, in Gaborone in 1975. Vuyo struggled deeply in adjusting to exile – he was sent to Moscow for further education but was expelled, travelled to Tanzania, and then joined Sibeko in Manchester, where he dropped out of college.¹³⁹⁹

¹³⁹² Davis, *Apartheid's Rebels*, 28.

¹³⁹³ Sisulu, *Walter and Albertina Sisulu*, 364, 370-1, 375.

¹³⁹⁴ Gevisser, *Legacy of Liberation*, 59-60.

¹³⁹⁵ Truth and Reconciliation Commission of South Africa, *Truth and Reconciliation Commission Hearings, Port Elizabeth*, 23 May 1996, <https://www.justice.gov.za/trc/hrvtrans/hrvpe1/day3.htm>.

¹³⁹⁶ Gevisser, *Legacy of Liberation*, 58-9.

¹³⁹⁷ Gevisser, *Legacy of Liberation*, 62-3.

¹³⁹⁸ Sibeko, *Freedom*, 110.

¹³⁹⁹ Sibeko, *Freedom*, 159-60.

In the context of the pivotal role that youth organisations played in the late 1970s and 1980s, the children of activists, involved in these organisations, perceived themselves as politically active. For them, youth organisations acted both as a politicising process (see Chapter 5) and the main arena for their activism. Kuben and Myan Naidoo became involved in the Lenasia Youth League (LYL) in Johannesburg, founded in 1982, while their father was detained.¹⁴⁰⁰ This formed an important part of their political education, so Kuben recalled:

So, I had a relatively good sense of history and understanding, political education, you know it was only, I mean, when I was about thirteen-ish, you know, and I was part of the Lenasia Youth League structures, we had formal political education classes once a week before school started, you know, with we went to a house and there were two or three people who ran the political education classes. We were given readings. We'd come there next week, and we discussed them and that was probably from the time I was about fourteen-ish.¹⁴⁰¹

The LYL hosted a homework club with Wits students, at which school students socialised and engaged with older activists, and also ran Operation Winter Warm to provide essentials to people in need. Kuben and Myan defined their participation in these initiatives as active political participation, as Kuben recounted:

I joined the LYL and got involved in many of its campaigns. (...) I served on various... the Lenasia Student Congress, we were affiliated to Transvaal Students Congress, which was a UDF affiliate. When my dad was released in '83, we all went down for the UDF launch (...) and you know, by the time I got to matric, I was sort of in some ways a *senior activist* in Lens.¹⁴⁰² [italics added for emphasis]

On 28 August 1984, the day of elections for the Indian House of the Tricameral Parliament, violence broke out in Lenasia, Kuben recalled: '(...) in Lenz [Lenasia], you had big riots between the police and students. I was 14, I was throwing stones and throwing stones for weeks on end.'¹⁴⁰³ In 1986, Kuben took part in establishing the Lenasia Students' Congress (LESCO), which was affiliated with the Transvaal Students' Congress

¹⁴⁰⁰ Kuben Naidoo, interview.

¹⁴⁰¹ Kuben Naidoo, interview.

¹⁴⁰² Kuben Naidoo, interview.

¹⁴⁰³ Kuben Naidoo, interview.

(TRASCO), of which he joined the executive in 1988/89.¹⁴⁰⁴ On 17 October 1988, he was detained for 22 days for inciting a school boycott to protest municipal elections, spending ten days in solitary confinement at Protea Police Station before being transferred to Diepkloof Prison.¹⁴⁰⁵ He was the first Indian student to write his matric exams while detained, resulting in media attention: ‘There were thousands of African students who wrote their matric exams in prison, right. And it wasn’t a news issue.’¹⁴⁰⁶ He recounted:

It was heaven, right? I mean, you know, even though I was in prison. A) I got to meet all of these leaders, b) there are people my age, my interest, you know, I just sucked it all up, right. You know, I was like a sponge, you know, just talking to people and in detention, we had political education classes and you know, we would smuggle in newspapers and one person would read it.¹⁴⁰⁷

Kuben was detained three more times. Kuben’s detention at his age was by no means unusual within the political context of the mid-1980s, as estimates suggest ‘that from 1984-1986 300 children were killed by police, 1000 wounded, 11,000 detained without trial, 18,000 arrested on charges arising out of protest and 173,000 held awaiting trial in police cells’.¹⁴⁰⁸

These youth and student groups not only appealed to the politicised children of activists but also to a much wider set of youth. Examining this heightened youth participation, Lodge, Glaser, and Seekings, amongst others, stress the impact of drastically increasing rates of secondary education amongst African youth in South Africa after 1960 and high unemployment amongst black school-leavers.¹⁴⁰⁹ Youth organisations adopted specific tactics to appeal to a wider audience, so Ismail Vadi wrote about the LYL:

¹⁴⁰⁴ Vadi, *Thambi Naidoo*, 227; Kuben Naidoo, interview.

¹⁴⁰⁵ Vadi, *Thambi Naidoo*, 228.

¹⁴⁰⁶ Kuben Naidoo, interview.

¹⁴⁰⁷ Kuben Naidoo, interview.

¹⁴⁰⁸ Leslie Swartz and Ann Levett, “Political Oppression and Children in South Africa: the Social Construction of Damaging Effects,” in *Political Violence and the struggle in South Africa*, eds. N. Chabani Manganyi and André du Toit (London: Macmillan, 1990), 741.

¹⁴⁰⁹ Lodge, “Rebellion,” 31; Glaser, “Youth and generation,” 127; Seekings, *Heroes or Villains?*, 12, Bundy, “Street sociology,” 311.

The strategic approach adopted was to tactically blend seemingly non-political activities that appealed to young people with programmes of a more political nature that attracted politically conscious youth.¹⁴¹⁰

Consequently, only a relatively small number of children involved in these organisations had a family background in politics, as Kuben noted: ‘(...) if I were to put a number to it, I’ll probably say somewhere between 1/4 and 1/3 of the activists had family backgrounds in politics or in activism.’¹⁴¹¹ To ascertain the exact numbers of children of activists’ involvement, historians lack available data and face previously mentioned issues regarding the definition of activism; thus, Kuben’s experiences remain anecdotal evidence.

Their parents’ prior experience with activism seems to have had varying effects on their children’s activism, so Naazim Adam, whose uncle, Farid Adam, had been Accused Number 1 in the Treason Trial, recounted:

I was fortunate in that unlike many other comrades, I had the support of my family and the space and freedom of a home open to all. It was not uncommon for my father to assist and guide us in making banners.¹⁴¹²

Kuben’s family also encouraged his political work, as long as it did not affect his education.¹⁴¹³ For Nazir, the opposite occurred: his uncle, Ahmed Kathrada, had been imprisoned on Robben Island since the Rivonia Trial in 1964.¹⁴¹⁴ Nazir was ‘reasonably politically’ active during his high school period, including as part of his school’s SRC in the late 1970s.¹⁴¹⁵ Yet, his otherwise non-political family did not want Nazir to become further involved, fearing further repression. He finished his matric in 1980 – a year in which he experienced only three to four months of schooling due to ongoing boycotts and strikes. He initially enrolled at the University of Durban-Westville, but following further boycotts, his

¹⁴¹⁰ Ismail Vadi, *Young Lions of Lenz – Lenasia Youth League (1982-1991)* (Johannesburg: Our Reading Tree, 2022), 23.

¹⁴¹¹ Kuben Naidoo, interview.

¹⁴¹² Vadi, *Young Lions*, 34.

¹⁴¹³ Kuben Naidoo, interview.

¹⁴¹⁴ Kathrada, interview.

¹⁴¹⁵ Kathrada, interview.

father asked him not to return to Durban, as he feared his family links would lead to Nazir's arrest.

In 1984-6, a third major wave of young activists fled into exile, following the township uprisings and two consecutive states of emergency. Nhlanhla had joined an underground MK cell at the age of 16 in 1985.¹⁴¹⁶ Growing up, he had been unaware that his mother had joined an underground cell. In October 1984, his house was raided, and the SB arrested his parents, taking his three-year-old sister, Nonkululeko, with them.¹⁴¹⁷ While Nonkululeko was rescued by relatives the next day, his parents were detained for six months at Diepkloof prison. Nhlanhla joined the Young Christian Students (YCS) that his (also political) aunt had introduced him to.¹⁴¹⁸ They formed a group called the Faith and Action Group, criticising the Church's sole focus on prayers. He attended workshops and conferences and became involved in collecting signatures in the UDF's Million Signatures campaign against the Tricameral Parliament in 1984. Eventually, he was recruited into MK and completed two military trainings.¹⁴¹⁹ In 1986, his cell feared that their cover was blown when one of their members was caught in a shootout. They prepared to use an upcoming World Council of Churches (WCC) Children of War Tour to the US as cover to go into exile. After the tour, the ANC in Lusaka sent both students to Australia to finish their matric before joining MK.

Nhlanhla understood himself as an activist, not as the child of activists. He found some irony in being positioned as the child of activists in the interviewing process, as he had

¹⁴¹⁶ Nhlanhla Mabaso, interviewed by author, Pretoria, 3 February 2023.

¹⁴¹⁷ Sunday Times, "Children Who Took Up Arms."

¹⁴¹⁸ Nokuthula Mazibuko, "Life Stories and Memory Making in South Africa," 26 February 2007, *Library of Congress, Washington D.C.*, <https://www.loc.gov/item/2021687845/>.

¹⁴¹⁹ Mabaso, interview.

lamented his parents' (perceived) inactivity during his youth.¹⁴²⁰ The distinction as an activist (not a 'child of') is further underlined by the way he was perceived in exile. While based in Harare, Nhlanhla fell in love with Phola (also interviewed). As she was the daughter of the ANC Chief Representative in Harare, their courtship caused tensions: while Nhlanhla was perceived as an activist, Phola was seen as a child, despite being only a year younger.

During the Soweto Uprising and throughout the 1980s, children – including the children of activists – became active participants in the struggle, as Rodgers categorises it, and thus no longer were identified by their parents.¹⁴²¹ Through their activities, these children became adult-like – their conceptual recategorisation is highlighted by a discussion of Stompie Seipei, a young activist who was later kidnapped, tortured, and killed by the Mandela United Football Club:

When the police come looking for him, people have never seen him, but they know of him. One of the men who knocks on his mother's door says, 'We don't know - *is he a child or is he a person?* Why do you let him go into politics?' (...) When he is detained in July 1986, Stompie is not treated like a child. The apartheid regime is incapable of seeing black children for what they are.¹⁴²² [italics added for emphasis]

Conclusion

This chapter has discussed the extent to which children of activists became politically active and challenged some of the conceptual categorisations around childhood, youth, and activism.

Despite the (post-1976) ANC's stated educational aims for its children, and children's 'disposition for activism', not all followed the expected path into the liberation

¹⁴²⁰ Mabaso, interview.

¹⁴²¹ Rodgers, *Children in Social Movements*, 2.

¹⁴²² Sisonke Msimang, *The Resurrection of Winnie Mandela* (Johannesburg: Jonathan Ball Publishers, 2018), 116-7.

struggle. While some gravitated towards alternative socio-political movements in exile, others disengaged entirely from public politics. I argued that this divergence was shaped by the drastically shifting political landscape in which children were politicised (see Chapters 5 and 6), as well as the structural opportunities for activism that were available to children.

Children who grew up in the highly politicised communities of the 1940s and 1950s often entered activism in their late teens or early twenties by joining their parents' political organisations. As political repression escalated in the early 1960s, these individuals – now adults – were also targeted by the state. In exile, they played formative roles in building youth structures and acquiring leadership positions within the movement. Figures such as Thabo Mbeki, Pallo Jordan, and the Pahad brothers exemplify this trajectory, and though they are shaped by their upbringing, they are remembered today as activists in their own right.

By contrast, children who experienced their formative years during the late 1950s and 1960s in South Africa often experienced more isolation and trauma, compounded by high levels of secrecy and the absence of the strong activist networks that had previously facilitated political socialisation, offered support, and enabled integration into the liberation movements. Consequently, many children found themselves structurally unable, but also unwilling to 'graduate' into their parents' movement. Political disengagement constituted a deliberate pursuit of safety and stability in the face of repression. South African university politics in the 1970s offered renewed opportunities for engagement, though parents, aware of the risks, also actively discouraged their children's involvement.

The rise of the BCM and the 1976 Soweto Uprising presented a new set of possibilities for children of colour to become politically active. For children of activists, involvement in these movements was shaped by their disillusionment with the perceived passivity of their parents' generation and, in some cases, a desire to reconnect with exiled parents. The rise in youth and student organisations throughout the 1980s further enabled children's political participation. Here, children of activists served as important bridges between the older generation of their parents and young activists. Within this context of youth involvement, these children perceived themselves as activists and were perceived and treated as adults, despite their young age, emphasising the social construction of childhood and age.

As discussed in Chapter 5, the political consciousness of children who went into exile at a young age or were born in exile, as well as their sense of belonging to the broader liberation struggle, was shaped by geography and timing. Those raised in frontline states often participated more directly in the liberation effort; especially as their pursuit of tertiary education was seen as a contribution to the future South Africa. By contrast, children raised in the UK felt less connected to and often even excluded from the struggle, turning toward other political movements to express their 'disposition for activism'.

Across these contexts, family dynamics and children's relationships to their parents were central to their political engagement, underscoring this thesis's broader argument about how intimately the personal and political were intertwined for the children of activists.

This chapter has also demonstrated that children were frequently recruited into activism not by their parents, but by other activists. Chapter 7 has, thus, reinforced the significance of alternative politicising agents in shaping children's political trajectories.

Finally, this chapter has reflected on the category of ‘children of activists’ as it intersects with oral history methodology and memory. Children who later became politically active are often remembered not as the ‘children of’ but as activists in their own right, a framing that may serve to deflect accusations of nepotism – particularly salient in the exile context. Conversely, children who did not become politically active tend to be remembered only in relation to their parents, conceptually fixed in a state of childhood, in historiography and public memory.

Chapter 8: Return and Reckoning – The End of Apartheid to the Present

My parents were freedom fighters, so they cast our journeys around the world as part of a necessary sacrifice. Our suffering was noble. South Africa would one day be great because the indignities meted out to us were teaching us to abhor injustice, in order to inoculate us against inequality. And yet here we stand in a South Africa that is free but not just. For me, this is perhaps the most difficult fact of all to accept.¹⁴²³

Introduction

This final chapter, covering the period from 1990 to the present, is organised into two thematic sections: ‘*Return*’, which explores the psychological, social, and physical challenges of repatriation (and the choice thereof), and *Reckoning*, which examines how these individuals have engaged – publicly and privately – with their pasts, their parents’ legacies, and the promises and failures of the post-apartheid state.

The first section, ‘*Return*’, interrogates the ambivalent responses of exiled children to the possibility of ‘returning’ home after 1990. Confronted with the sudden possibility of ‘return’, children began questioning their identification with South Africa, resisting the narrative of ‘home’ that their parents had maintained throughout exile. Alienation from the liberation struggle and their parents, fears of renewed upheaval, anxieties about abandoning established careers and networks, as well as concerns about dislocating their own children, all shaped decisions not to ‘return’.¹⁴²⁴ Those who did ‘return’ encountered significant challenges impacting adaptation: navigating language barriers, (re)integrating into extended families, facing hostility from ‘insiles’, confronting the prevailing racism and the realities of apartheid South Africa, professional and educational issues, and a lack of general and psychological support.

¹⁴²³ Msimang, *Always Another Country*, 16.

¹⁴²⁴ I have placed the word ‘return’ in quotation across this chapter when referring to children’s migration to South Africa after 1990 to emphasise that for many this was not a ‘return’ to South Africa, as their parents contextualised it, but their first remembered visit to the country.

The second section, *Reckoning*, is based on the notion that memory is not a ‘static blueprint of the past’ but ‘always as much about the present as it is about the past.’¹⁴²⁵ It questions how children of activists have reckoned with their past, their parents’ actions, and the liberation movement – in public and in private and as those spheres occur in constant negotiation. Children positioned themselves as ‘children of activists’ through legal injunctions, art, film, and literature to demand legal justice and ensure public recognition of their parents’ achievements. Additionally, children have used these forums to demand recognition of their own often-overlooked suffering, asserting a powerful claim to neglect. Focusing on three memoirs – by Msimang, Slovo, and Levy – I argue that these works articulate identity claims that position their authors within (or deliberately outside of) the post-apartheid nation. Through these memoirs and other cultural productions, children of activists seek to reclaim the public as personal, creating an inherent tension: they rely on the personal to make their claim to the public.

Next, I explore how children have voiced political criticism by invoking their ‘political childhood’. These claims have faced significant pushback and have not consistently translated into meaningful influence or change. Raised as contributors, many feel excluded from formal politics; instead, they have turned to alternative avenues – personal and professional – to enact change. In narrating their exile experiences in Lusaka and Maputo as non-racist, near-utopian spaces and evoking scenes of familial intimacy,

¹⁴²⁵ Sean Field, “Memory, the TRC and the Significance of Oral History in Post-Apartheid South Africa,” (paper presented at the History Workshop “The TRC: Commissioning the Past,” 11-14 June 1999, Wits), 4; Sarah Nuttall, “Telling ‘free’ stories? Memory and democracy in South African autobiography since 1994,” in *Negotiating the Past: The Making of Memory in South Africa*, ed. Sarah Nuttall and Carli Coetzee (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 76.

these children take part in theorising a ‘fantasy state’: an imagined South Africa that failed to materialise.¹⁴²⁶

Finally, this chapter reflects on the evolving private dynamics between parents and children, shaped by ageing, generational shifts, the experience of becoming parents themselves, and changing socio-political realities. Despite these shifts, many families have struggled to move beyond entrenched patterns of secrecy. I also explore how the political decline of the ANC and the difficulties of (re)integrating into South African society have contributed to some children’s increased identification with cosmopolitan ideas.

‘Return’

When asked about the transitional period of 1990 to 1994, almost all children interviewed initially described feelings of ‘euphoria’ or ‘total satisfaction’.¹⁴²⁷ Peter Hain later recounted the moment:

It was breathtaking, almost unreal. I suppressed a surge of tears, phoning my parents, my mother openly sobbing with joy. Relatives, friends and colleagues phoned each other or chatted excitedly as they gathered in front of televisions or radios. We could hardly believe it. But there was no going back. The new South Africa now beckoned at last.¹⁴²⁸

Yet, the period was also marked by uncertainty of ‘return’, concerns about continuing violence and poverty, fear of persecution, and worries about renewed upheaval, shaping both children’s decision to and experiences of ‘return’.

The National Coordinating Committee for Repatriation (NCCR), guided by the South African Council of Churches (SACC) and consisting of representatives from the

¹⁴²⁶ Rachel Sandwell, “Fantasy States: Nationalism, Intimacy, and Transgression in South African Women’s Political Memoirs,” *Signs* 47, no. 3 (2022): 765.

¹⁴²⁷ Shapiro, interview; Langa-Royds, interview; Lyndall Stein, interview; Nicholas Wolpe, interview.

¹⁴²⁸ Hain, *Pretoria Boy*, 195.

ANC, PAC, AZAPO, and church representatives, was formed in May 1990 to coordinate the 'return' of South African exiles.¹⁴²⁹ From the outset, the NCCR faced financial difficulties and an uncooperative South African government, especially regarding the provision of indemnity to returning exiles.¹⁴³⁰ In September 1991, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) stepped in to assist the NCCR's negotiation with the government, culminating in the Memorandum of Understanding.¹⁴³¹ The UNHCR was concerned about the state's reluctance to repeal apartheid-era security laws and its continued harassment of political activists.¹⁴³² According to Israel, 24 returnees were killed, 21 arrested, 103 harassed, and one was reported missing in South Africa.¹⁴³³ Initially, the UNHCR estimated that 40,000 exiles would 'return' to South Africa, allocating a budget of \$29 million.¹⁴³⁴ Receiving fewer than expected applications, the UNHCR revised this number to provide for 15,000 people in March 1992.¹⁴³⁵ 7849 people (excluding minors) filled out the UNHCR Voluntary Repatriation Application Form.¹⁴³⁶ By late August 1992, 5,452 UNHCR charges had returned to South Africa (with only 79 coming from Europe), although it was estimated that a further 6,850 returned pre-UNHCR and that significant numbers returned without UNHCR assistance.¹⁴³⁷ For children born outside the country or without South African documents, legal provisions were made to enable them to take up South African citizenship.¹⁴³⁸ Initially, the NCCR was largely involved in organising reception activities and centres, counselling services, medical assistance, legal aid, skills

¹⁴²⁹ De Sas Kropiwnicki, *Exile*, 196; Majodina, "Home at Last," 102.

¹⁴³⁰ Majodina, "Home at Last," 100.

¹⁴³¹ Majodina, "Home at Last," 106-7.

¹⁴³² Israel, *South African Political Exile*, 212.

¹⁴³³ Israel, *South African Political Exile*, 212.

¹⁴³⁴ Israel, *South African Political Exile*, 211.

¹⁴³⁵ Israel, *South African Political Exile*, 211.

¹⁴³⁶ Israel, *South African Political Exile*, 211.

¹⁴³⁷ Israel, *South African Political Exile*, 211-2; Delphine Marie, "Lesotho Marks the End of an Era for Apartheid's Refugees," *UNHCR*, August 26, 2002, cited in de Sas Kropiwnicki, *Exile*, 197.

¹⁴³⁸ De Sas Kropiwnicki, *Exile*, 198.

training, and job placements.¹⁴³⁹ By early 1992, the NCCR's focus shifted towards development projects, education, ongoing protection of returnees' rights, and housing. By 1993, the NCCR was dissolved because of fraud and corruption charges, after which the UNHCR took over.¹⁴⁴⁰ The UNHCR granted 'transportation, immediate assistance of a grant for food, basic domestic utensils and temporary shelter for each returning family and/or a one-time cash grant to cover essential needs'.¹⁴⁴¹ According to de Sas Kropiwnicki, some of these funds were embezzled or lacked transparency regarding their use and distribution.¹⁴⁴²

As Lissoni and Suriano find, ANC fathers also left behind children and wives returning from Tanzania.¹⁴⁴³ In 1998, 340 children, based in Tanzania, officially requested assistance from the ANC.¹⁴⁴⁴ Between 2000 and 2006, women, who had been married to ANC members and/or had children with them, formed the organisation 'Kikundi cha Wakina-Mama Watelekezwa na Wacomrade wa Afrika ya Kusini (ANC) Mazimbu na Dawaka Morogoro', which petitioned Tanzania to put them in touch with the ANC to request pensions and assistance for their support of the ANC in Tanzania.¹⁴⁴⁵ Despite some initial contacts, these attempts eventually failed.

Possibility for 'Return'

For the children interviewed as part of this study, the question of 'return' and their responses to it were highly varied. For Busisiwe, 'return' was clear-cut: 'There was no question about it.'¹⁴⁴⁶ Minors had little choice – Sechaba's grandfather simply told him to pack his bags.¹⁴⁴⁷

¹⁴³⁹ Majodina, "Home at Last," 100-1.

¹⁴⁴⁰ De Sas Kropiwnicki, *Exile*, 196.

¹⁴⁴¹ De Sas Kropiwnicki, *Exile*, 197.

¹⁴⁴² De Sas Kropiwnicki, *Exile*, 202.

¹⁴⁴³ Lissoni and Suriano, "Married to the ANC," 147.

¹⁴⁴⁴ De Sas Kropiwnicki, *Exile*, 239.

¹⁴⁴⁵ Lissoni, Suriano, "Married to the ANC," 147.

¹⁴⁴⁶ Chaane, interview.

¹⁴⁴⁷ Mogale, Kgositsile, interview.

Although a part of him had always felt excited about the prospect, he also felt a deep sense of trepidation at leaving his life and friends in Lusaka behind. De Sas Kropiwnicki's interviewee 'Leevasha' discussed being 'traumatised' by the prospect of leaving Denmark, even contacting the Danish social services to evade the move.¹⁴⁴⁸ Others initially came to South Africa to 'try out' living there, or only came for short visits.¹⁴⁴⁹ Sam visited South Africa over Christmas 1990/1991.¹⁴⁵⁰ He described this visit – his first ever, as he was born in London – as a 'weird experience': while his father was busy handling negotiations, he met his extended family, who included him readily. Nonetheless, Sam was not inclined to move permanently and has since continued to live in the UK. Also born in exile, Anand went to South Africa for the first time in 1990.¹⁴⁵¹ Yet, he argued that '[i]t wasn't a place I felt I wanted to live.'¹⁴⁵² Since then, he has lived in the UK, France, and the USA. De Sas Kropiwnicki argues that children's choices around 'return' emphasised their 'negotiated interdependencies', as they 'tried to balance their own need for autonomy while considering their responsibilities to the household and the liberation struggle.'¹⁴⁵³

In the second chapter, I emphasised that identification with South Africa and the liberation movements was fluid, impacted by time and location. The possibility of 'return' after 1990 challenged their existing identifications and notions of home, so Israel writes: 'As long as they [the second generation] could not go to South Africa, they could continue to regard South Africa as home. Once they could go, they found it hard to maintain the myth.'¹⁴⁵⁴ In the Joseph home, South Africa had always been seen as home; however, when

¹⁴⁴⁸ De Sas Kropiwnicki, *Exile*, 183.

¹⁴⁴⁹ Israel, *South African Political Exile*, 227, Alexandra Stein, interview; Gurney, interview; Jackie Motsepe, interview by Hilda Bernstein, n.d., Hilda Bernstein Collection, MCA 7 – 1616, Mayibuye Archives, UWC.

¹⁴⁵⁰ Gurney, interview.

¹⁴⁵¹ Anand Pillay, interview.

¹⁴⁵² Anand Pillay, interview.

¹⁴⁵³ Samantha Punch, "Negotiating Migrant Identities: Young People in Bolivia and Argentina," *Children's Geographies* 5, no. 1-2 (2007): 95-112, cited in de Sas Kropiwnicki, *Exile*, 213.

¹⁴⁵⁴ Israel, *South African Political Exile*, 219.

'return' became possible, their daughters began asserting London as their home.¹⁴⁵⁵ De Sas Kropiwnicki's interviewee 'Leevasha' stated: 'It was the first time in my life that I realised that I don't want to be South African, I am Danish.'¹⁴⁵⁶

Majodina argues that exiles' 'sense of mission' meant that 'there was no hesitation about coming back. The decision to return was reached without difficulty'.¹⁴⁵⁷ As discussed in previous chapters, the ANC positioned children as having 'a role to play in the future South Africa'.¹⁴⁵⁸ Ellwyn Othneil Beck felt

that I have to contribute to a post-apartheid South Africa. I have the education for it and I feel I have to contribute so, its a commitment somehow for me to return to South Africa.¹⁴⁵⁹

Others wanted to 'return' upon graduation as to contribute most effectively and not rely on relatives for support.¹⁴⁶⁰ However, Majodina's assertion is limited by confirmation bias, as her research focuses on those who did 'return', paying little attention to the distinct perspectives of children who did not 'return'. As previously suggested, not all children had integrated into their parents' movements, shaping their lack of desire to 'return' to South Africa in the 1990s.

The prospect of 'return' furthermore threatened to overturn children's worlds once more, so Nicholas recounted:

(...) I remember, there was a heavy atmosphere in the room. There was a lot of trepidation, anxiety, fear and when Nelson appeared there was jubilees and joys and I remember my sister Tessa turning to my father saying, "What does this mean?", because suddenly our world, yet again, had been shattered.¹⁴⁶¹

¹⁴⁵⁵ Israel, *South African Political Exile*, 218-9.

¹⁴⁵⁶ De Sas Kropiwnicki, *Exile*, 183.

¹⁴⁵⁷ Majodina, "Home at Last," 239.

¹⁴⁵⁸ De Sas Kropiwnicki, *Exile*, 77.

¹⁴⁵⁹ Othnell E. Beck, interview.

¹⁴⁶⁰ Paul Mohamed, interview by Hilda Bernstein, n.d., Hilda Bernstein Collection, MCA 7 – 1611, Mayibuye Archives, UWC; Matsobane Sexwale, interview by Hilda Bernstein, n.d., Hilda Bernstein Collection, MCA 7 – 1688, Mayibuye Archives, UWC; de Sas Kropiwnicki, *Exile*, 215.

¹⁴⁶¹ Nicholas Wolpe, interview.

His father, Harold, was determined to return, with or without his family. Nicholas's sister, Tessa, experienced this determination to return as renewed abandonment and prioritisation of politics over his children.¹⁴⁶²

The ongoing violence in South Africa further impacted children's uncertainty about 'returning'.¹⁴⁶³ Activists worried that the possibility of 'return' was a trap – anxieties that children picked up on.¹⁴⁶⁴

Many of my interviewees had gotten married, raised children, and established careers in exile, further shaping their decision (not) to 'return'.¹⁴⁶⁵ Having experienced upheaval in childhood, they were reluctant to impose this predicament upon their own children.¹⁴⁶⁶ Ruth initially oscillated between South Africa and the UK: 'My chest is heavy. My family is scattered all over the world again. What does it mean to my sons, to have a fragmented family?'¹⁴⁶⁷

Experiences of 'Return'

I draw primarily on Majodina and des Sas Kropiwnicki in this section, highlighting to what extent their studies correlated to the experiences of my interviewees. Majodina's study of returnees (including children) argues that 're-entry difficulties contributed more than any

¹⁴⁶² Tessa Wolpe, interview; Wolpe, *Long Way Home*, 12.

¹⁴⁶³ De Sas Kropiwnicki, *Exile*, 215; Nicholas Wolpe, interview.

¹⁴⁶⁴ Msimang, *Always Another Country*, 140-1.

¹⁴⁶⁵ Strasburg, *Fractured Lives*, 112. My interview sample was generally older than that of de Sas Kropiwnicki. Her interviewees were between 10-17 years old when they returned to South Africa from 1990-1994, see de Sas Kropiwnicki, *Exile*, 212, 276. Meanwhile, my interviewees were between 13 and 48 years old upon 'return'.

¹⁴⁶⁶ Israel, *South African Political Exile*, 216; Strasburg, interview; Carneson-McGregor, interview; Naicker, interview; Hain, *Pretoria Boy*, 208.

¹⁴⁶⁷ Carneson, *Girl On the Edge*, Ch.51, 54.

other variable to adaptation outcome.’¹⁴⁶⁸ She suggests that material conditions, as well as socio-emotional difficulties (‘coming to terms with changed living conditions, meeting family expectations, experiencing an atmosphere of tension in the country and children adjusting to life in South Africa’) posed the most difficulties to her sample.¹⁴⁶⁹ Specifically, she also highlights how returnees struggled due to their

change of status from an identity that was strongly political to one that is less well-defined; by loss of social networks that were cultivated throughout the long years in exile; by having to renegotiate one’s way into a society that has changed.¹⁴⁷⁰

Echoing some of Majodina’s and de Sas Kropiwnicki’s findings, my interviewees expressed difficulties witnessing the escalation of violence in 1990-1994 and life under apartheid, their personal encounters with racism (especially for those who came from the frontline states and were less accustomed to racism), language difficulties, (re-)integration into extended families, as well as educational and professional difficulties.¹⁴⁷¹ De Sas Kropiwnicki extensively discusses the organisations put in place to counter the latter two issues, including the Batlagae Trust, the Yeoville Community Schools, and the Returned Exiles Children’s Playgroup, run by the Trauma Centre for Victims of Violence and Torture in Cape Town, in her analysis of the *Masupatsela* generation.¹⁴⁷² As majority of my interviewees had finished their education before 1990, I do not dwell further on these organisations. Children also emphasised the tensions between exiles and ‘insiles’ (those that had not been exiled) – upon ‘return’, exiled children struggled with (perceived) accusations of blame for having ‘abandoned’ South Africa, resentment towards the (perceived) benefits

¹⁴⁶⁸ Majodina, “Home at Last,” 221.

¹⁴⁶⁹ Zonke Majodina, “Dealing with Difficulties of Return to South Africa: The Role of Social Support and Coping,” *Journal of Refugee Studies* 8, no. 2 (1995): 219.

¹⁴⁷⁰ Majodina, “Dealing with Difficulties,” 223.

¹⁴⁷¹ De Sas Kropiwnicki, *Exile*, 220-336; Reva, interview; McNabb, interview; Mogale, Kgositsile, interview; Mabizela-Mabaso, interview; Masemola-Jones, interview. Here, I emphasise the breadth of issues child exiles, including my interviewees, faced upon ‘return’. For a more in-depth discussion of these, please see the works of de Sas Kropiwnicki (2014, 2017) and Zonke Majodina (1995, 1998).

¹⁴⁷² De Sas Kropiwnicki, *Exile*. 200.

of exile, and a lack of interest in their experiences as they tried to (re-)connect with relatives and peers.¹⁴⁷³

Majodina's study also compares returnees' sources of support upon 'return': while family was perceived as the most supportive institution, political organisations and churches were 'seldom ranked as the most significant source of support'.¹⁴⁷⁴ Some children (albeit not in my interview sample) expressed feeling abandoned by the ANC upon 'return' to South Africa, as de Sas Kropiwnicki suggests.¹⁴⁷⁵ At a TRC hearing, Nomzamo Nyawose, who lost her parents in a car bomb in 1982 in Swaziland, described her family's attempt to receive support upon 'return':

Yes, we tried. We tried. My father was a member of Umkhonto. There are certain things that they say that members of Umkhonto we Sizwe are getting demobilised and they are not getting any money. There's absolutely nothing we didn't try, but up til [sic] today nobody has ever come to our assistance. (...) We are used to suffering. There's no type of suffering we haven't gone through.¹⁴⁷⁶

The ANC's move away from the 'welfare state' system it had operated in exile was 'indicative of a change in the role of political organisations now that they were operating on home ground'.¹⁴⁷⁷ While children of more prominent ANC members were able to get the necessary documentation to apply for citizenship and support more quickly, children of MK foot soldiers faced long queues and years of waiting.¹⁴⁷⁸ Overall, this thesis' interviewees' limited reliance on the ANC or other political movements upon 'return' further reflects the

¹⁴⁷³ Mogale, Kgositsile, interview; Stephanie, interview; Mabizela-Mabaso, interview; Majodina, "Home at Last," 222, 225-6; De Sas Kropiwnicki, *Exile*, 220-2.

¹⁴⁷⁴ Majodina, "Home at Last," 170.

¹⁴⁷⁵ De Sas Kropiwnicki, *Exile*, 234.

¹⁴⁷⁶ Truth and Reconciliation Commission of South Africa, *Human Rights Violation Hearings, Pietermaritzburg, Day 3*, n.d., accessed 4 September 2025,

<https://sabctrc.saha.org.za/documents/hrvtrans/pietermaritzburg/56216.htm?t=%2Bnxumalo+%2Bwelcome+%2Bbongani&tab=hearings>.

¹⁴⁷⁷ Majodina, "Home at Last," 170; Davis, *Apartheid's Rebels*, 72.

¹⁴⁷⁸ De Sas Kropiwnicki, *Exile*, 234.

generally higher-class status of my interviewees (see *Research Methods and Methodology*) compared to those interviewed by Majodina and de Sas Kropiwnicki.

Upon children's 'return', the myth of 'home' clashed with the realities of South Africa. De Sas Kropiwnicki argues that to

conceptualise return for exiles, it is necessary to disengage "home-coming" from a simplistic association with location, space and geography. Exiles do not merely return to a geopolitical concept of "country of origin," but they return to imagined notions of home centred on remembered attachments and associations (...).¹⁴⁷⁹

So, Liepollo Lebohang Pheko wrote:

To my dismay, the sentimental idea that I would come 'home' and settle among my people and be part of the liberation struggle was no longer viable. I was a foreigner in my own country. I could not relate or share in the experiences, culture and norms of the country of my birth.¹⁴⁸⁰

This 'meeting of myths and reality' 'can be as stressful as fleeing into exile.'¹⁴⁸¹ When Lynn visited Johannesburg, she felt highly distressed:

I don't know what I had expected to find or feel, I simply felt disconnected. Johannesburg was both familiar and deeply foreign. The light was too bright, the people too "other". The city had changed. This was not the place of my dreams.¹⁴⁸²

According to de Sas Kropiwnicki, this initial distressing interaction with South Africa 'set the tone for ongoing challenges in integration', which 'fuelled disappointment, frustration, and nostalgia towards the exile experience'.¹⁴⁸³ Consequently, as Majodina argues, exiles 'coming home produced a state of internal exile'.¹⁴⁸⁴

¹⁴⁷⁹ Daniel Warner, "Voluntary Repatriation and the Meaning of Return to Home: A Critique of Liberal Mathematics," *Journal of Refugee Studies* 7, no. 2-3 (1994): 165, cited in De Sas Kropiwnicki, *Exile*, 209.

¹⁴⁸⁰ Pheko, *Prodigal Daughters*, 167.

¹⁴⁸¹ Flora Cornish et al., "Returning Strangers: The Children of Malawian Refugees Come 'Home'?" *Journal of Refugee Studies* 12, no. 13 (1999): 265, cited in De Sas Kropiwnicki, *Exile*, 210.

¹⁴⁸² Carneson-McGregor, *Homage to Hope*, 111.

¹⁴⁸³ De Sas Kropiwnicki, "Meeting of Myths and Realities," 88.

¹⁴⁸⁴ Majodina, "Home at Last," 197; see also de Sas Kropiwnicki, *Exile*, 212.

Upon ‘return’, children struggled with psychological issues and substance abuse.¹⁴⁸⁵

Following the assassination of her father in 1993, Lindiwe Hani attempted suicide:

(...) [I] felt a terrible silence descend on me. Try as I might, I could not find that carefree little girl I had one been. Almost overnight and without warning, I’d lost my voice. I now had my guard up; there was no laughter in my heart. I felt like I hadn’t just lost Daddy, I had lost me. And so my love affair with alcohol and drugs began.¹⁴⁸⁶

She had started drinking aged 14, followed by marijuana, before turning towards cocaine in 2000.¹⁴⁸⁷ Pamela Nomvete recounted: ‘Suddenly you realise that you face most days under a haze of alcohol, somehow believing that might cushion the blow.’¹⁴⁸⁸ Exile patterns (see Chapter 4) continued upon ‘return’.¹⁴⁸⁹ Zola said:

I was drinking very heavily from Tanzania because Tanzania, that’s what we all did was drink. (...) So, when I came back, my drinking got out of hand and I realised I was an alcoholic and I went into AA, I sobered up in 1996 and I stayed dry for about 10 years. The last time...the last drink I had was the 31st of July 1996.¹⁴⁹⁰

Around 2007/8, he turned towards cocaine as his ‘drug of choice’, followed by crack cocaine, but became sober in 2020.¹⁴⁹¹ He reflected on his family’s wider struggle with substance abuse – his older brother died a few days before his 50th birthday as a consequence of alcohol, while his other brother developed alcohol-related dementia: ‘They say it’s nurture or nature and with us it was definitely nurture.’¹⁴⁹² Societal silences around these issues persist: while many interviewees spoke of knowing others who struggled with mental health or substance abuse, few, except Zola, were willing to discuss their own experiences.

These issues were compounded by the lack of psychological support available to children or adult second-generation exiles.¹⁴⁹³ While their parents ‘hit the ground running’,

¹⁴⁸⁵ De Sas Kropiwnicki, *Exile*, 237.

¹⁴⁸⁶ Hani, *Hani’s Daughter*, 80, 69.

¹⁴⁸⁷ Hani, *Hani’s Daughter*, 80, 91, 94.

¹⁴⁸⁸ Nomvete, *Dancing to the Beat*, 14.

¹⁴⁸⁹ Mogale, Kgositsile, interview; Brown, interview; Maseko, interview.

¹⁴⁹⁰ Maseko, interview.

¹⁴⁹¹ Maseko, interview.

¹⁴⁹² Maseko, interview.

¹⁴⁹³ De Sas Kropiwnicki, *Exile*, 236-7.

receiving psychological support and immersing themselves in politics, Nkuli and Sechaba, who returned as teenagers, lacked similar support.¹⁴⁹⁴ Nkuli's mother, Baleka Mbete, took part in the transition negotiations and the relaunch of the ANC Women's League (ANCWL). She was the ANCWL's Secretary General from 1991-3, before being elected to parliament in 1994 and later serving as the Speaker of the House (2004-08 and 2014-19) and Deputy President (2008-9). Following Mbete's separation from her partner upon return, Mbete struggled to take care of her children, eventually sending two of them to stay with relatives in Mafeking and Durban. The separation of Nkuli's family thus continued into the post-apartheid period. Mandela also discussed the disappointments his children faced upon his release from prison and his separation from Winnie Mandela:

As I later said at my daughter Zindzi's wedding, it seems to be the destiny of freedom fighters to have unstable personal lives. (...) "We watched our children growing without our guidance," I said at the wedding, "and when we did come out [of prison], my children said, "We thought we had a father and one day he'd come back. But to our dismay, our father came back and he left us alone because he has now become the father of the nation." To be the father of a nation is a great honour, but to be the father of a family is a greater joy. But it was a joy I had far too little of.¹⁴⁹⁵

Children continued to rely primarily on their exile communities for social networks after they 'returned', as research in other contexts, including Afghanistan, echoes.¹⁴⁹⁶ In Johannesburg, 'returnees' moved to areas including Yeoville, Berea, and Hillbrow, where they formed small communities.¹⁴⁹⁷ Zola arrived in Johannesburg in 1994, moving to Yeovil, where left-wing radical people, including many exiles, offered him a sense of community, when his reintegration into family was marred by jealousy and an 'educational

¹⁴⁹⁴ Mogale, Kgositsile, interview.

¹⁴⁹⁵ Mandela, *Long Walk Home*, 719-720.

¹⁴⁹⁶ Dawn Chatty et al., "Identity With/Out Territory: Sahrawi Refugee Youth in Transnational Space," in *Deterritorialized Youth: Sahrawi and Afghan Refugees at the Margins of the Middle East*, ed. Dawn Chatty (New York: Berghahn Books, 2012), 69, cited in De Sas Kropiwnicki, *Exile*, 250; Yasmin, interview; Stephanie, interview.

¹⁴⁹⁷ Ngcobo, interview; Maseko, interview; Andrew Kasrils, interview; Mogale, Kgositsile, interview.

and cultural gap'.¹⁴⁹⁸ Stephanie had expected her 'return' to South Africa to feel like home – when it didn't, she found resonance only amongst other exiles.¹⁴⁹⁹ De Sas Kropiwnicki suggests that children's continued identification with other exiles, as a consequence of their 'dashed expectations' can contribute to further 'isolation from local communities'.¹⁵⁰⁰

Activists also returned from prison, yet their reintegration – and specifically the way this impacted their children – remains under-researched.¹⁵⁰¹ Analysing father-son relationships of male ex-combatants, Cyril Adonis finds evidence of strained relationships and a lack of communication, the seeking of alternative father figures, sons' emotional-behavioural problems and a lack of seeking psychological counselling for ex-combatants.¹⁵⁰² His study is, however, limited in scope, focusing on only six father-son pairs. Bill Rolston and Lillian Artz also analysed some of the reintegration difficulties ex-political prisoners faced in South Africa in comparison to ex-combatants in Northern Ireland, including relating to their familial relationships, but make no distinction between ex-political prisoners and of ex-combatants (out of methodological issues).¹⁵⁰³

Tom Winslow, who worked for Cowley House, which provided support to families of prisoners (see Chapter 3), recounted the lack of support political prisoners from Robben Island received upon release in February 1990:

¹⁴⁹⁸ Maseko, interview.

¹⁴⁹⁹ Stephanie, interview.

¹⁵⁰⁰ De Sas Kropiwnicki, "Meeting of Myths and Realities," 81.

¹⁵⁰¹ See for example Monica Bandeira, "Restoring Dignity – Current Psychosocial Interventions with Ex-Combatants in South Africa: A Review, Discussion and Policy Dialogue Project," *CSVR Trauma and Transition Project* (2008); Lephophotho Mashike and Mafole Mokalobeforamat, "Reintegration into Civilian Life – The case of former MK and APLA combatants," *Track Two: Constructive Approaches to Community and Political Conflict* 12, no.1 (2003): 9-38; Guy Lamb, "From military to civilian life: the case of retired Special Forces Operators," *Track Two: Constructive Approaches to Community and Political Conflict* 12, no.1 (2003): 39-62.

¹⁵⁰² Adonis, "Ex-combatant fathers and their sons in post-apartheid South Africa," 65-68.

¹⁵⁰³ Bill Rolston, Lillian Artz, "Re-entry problems: the postprison challenges and experiences of former political prisoners in South Africa and Northern Ireland," *International Journal of Human Rights* 18, no. 7-8 (2014): 864.

And what they did is they dropped them off at the harbour and they were left to their own devices. They were given no advance warning, they weren't given any assistance whatsoever, they were wearing prison uniforms and they were a little bit bewildered, and the only people there to meet them (...) were people from Cowley House, who were taking the families back and forth on this little kombi.¹⁵⁰⁴

Regarding their familial relationships, Winslow described that:

[t]he reunions with their families were quite difficult at times as well. They'd been separated from their spouses for a number of years and seen them maybe once or twice or three times a year. They had had children before they went into exile in 1976, they went to prison, they came out in 1990/1991 and these kids are teenagers and they have to start a new relationship with them.¹⁵⁰⁵

Recognising their need for material, medical and psychological assistance, Cowley House developed a 'program of reintegration, that combined some social support, some psycho social [sic] assistance, some pure counselling, medical exams, [and] some material support systems' from early 1990 to 1991, supporting around 450 ex-political prisoners.¹⁵⁰⁶ This developed into the Trauma Centre of Survivors of Violence and Torture, expanding its support to returning exiles.¹⁵⁰⁷ A number of government and non-government initiatives were also set up to address the challenges of former prisoners, exiles, and their families. The Special Pensions Act of 1996, one of such initiatives, became marred by financial issues – it took until 1996 for payments to begin, and by the end of 2000, only 11,917 out of 29,766 applications had been processed.¹⁵⁰⁸ While the Cowley House papers are currently inaccessible following the fire at the UCT Archives in April 2021, their survival suggests the possibility of future research into the question of how children experienced their parents' reintegration post-imprisonment.

¹⁵⁰⁴ Tom Winslow, interview by Southern Africa Legal Services Foundation, 29 July 2008, AG3298 Legal Resources Centre Oral History Project, Historical Papers, Wits, Johannesburg.

¹⁵⁰⁵ Winslow, interview.

¹⁵⁰⁶ Winslow, interview.

¹⁵⁰⁷ Winslow, interview.

¹⁵⁰⁸ Buntman, *Robben Island*, 290-1.

Reckoning

Children of Activists in the Public Sphere: Legal Battles and Life-writing

I started this thesis with a quote from Gordimer's *Burger's Daughter*. Since Gordimer's fictionalised take, various autobiographical, biographical, and fictional productions have been produced, including by children themselves, in writing (through memoirs, novels, or poems), in film and play, or through exhibitions.¹⁵⁰⁹ In 1987, 'Cry Freedom' – a movie based on the lives of Donald and Wendy Woods – had also explored how apartheid repression had impacted their six children.¹⁵¹⁰ The movie 'A World Apart', screenwritten by Ruth First and Joe Slovo's eldest daughter, Shawn Slovo, in 1988, was fictional, but largely inspired by Slovo's own experiences.¹⁵¹¹ In 1997, her younger sister, Gillian Slovo, published her family memoir *Every Secret Thing – My Family, My Country* – a memoir that has perhaps come to define the public notion of the 'child of anti-apartheid activists'.¹⁵¹² The memoir was criticised for its portrayal of her parents, especially First, and her disclosure of family secrets, including her grandmother's abortion, First's affair, and Slovo's child out of wedlock.¹⁵¹³ Senior cabinet ministers publicly reprimanded Slovo.¹⁵¹⁴ Only a couple of years into South Africa's new democracy, criticism of the struggle's celebrated leaders proved politically untimely.

¹⁵⁰⁹ Zola, Toni, Letebele, David, Kethiwe, and Themba have all (co-)produced films about the struggle and often their own or their parents' lives. Hlumelo Biko's *Black Consciousness: A Love Story* (Johannesburg: Jonathan Ball Publishers, 2021) and Lynn Carneson-McGregor's much cited *Red in the Rainbow* are examples of books written by children of activists about their parents' lives. The latter also became an exhibition at the Iziko Slave Lodge Museum in Cape Town. Fictional examples include Mphuthumi Ntabeni's *The Wanderers* (Cape Town: Kwela Books, 2021) and Reviva Schermbrucker's *Lucky Fish* (Johannesburg: Jacana Media, 2003). The latter is mostly based on real events, although the person that inspired the main character requested anonymity. Makhaola Siyanda Ndebele wrote a one-man play, called 'Cantos of a Life in Exile' (2014), that grapples with the experiences of second-generation exiles. Afzal Moola (*Struggle, Exile & Love: Prose and Poems* (Johannesburg: Ahmed Kathrada Foundation, 2020)) and Lebogang Mashile (for example *Flying Above the Sky* (Johannesburg: self-published, 2008) and *In a Ribbon of Rhythm*, ed. Don Mattera (Johannesburg and Cape Town: Mutloatse Arts Heritage Trust and Oshun Books, 2005)) have written poems about this issue.

¹⁵¹⁰ Richard Attenborough, director. *Cry Freedom*. Marble Arch Productions, 1987.

¹⁵¹¹ Chris Menges, director. *A World Apart*. Working Title Films, 1988. [written by Shawn Slovo].

¹⁵¹² Slovo, *Every Secret Thing*.

¹⁵¹³ Slovo, *Every Secret Thing*, 239, 294.

¹⁵¹⁴ Unterhalter, "The Work of the Nation," 170.

More recently, further books by children of activists have been published, including Lynn Carneson-McGregor's biography of her parents *Red in the Rainbow – The Life and Times of Fred and Sarah Carneson* (2010), Ruth Carneson's memoir *Girl on the Edge: A Memoir* (2015), and Toni Strasburg's *Holding the Fort* (2019).¹⁵¹⁵ In her study on the public memory of the Holocaust in Israel, Anita Shapira suggests that private memory became more legitimate as public memory changed during the Six-Day War and the Yom Kippur War, exemplified through the large numbers of books published in the 1970s on the 'existential experiences of ordinary people who struggled to survive'.¹⁵¹⁶ Today, following over 30 years of contentious ruling by the ANC, criticism of the ruling party has found fertile ground, enabling children of activists to write (often critical) assessments of the liberation movement during their childhoods and the ANC's evolution in power. This genre continues to be dominated by mainly white and female writers.¹⁵¹⁷ This gendered dynamic likely reflects literary trends that posit memoir writing – particularly memoirs focusing on the relational – as a female genre; I will discuss the racial dynamics below.¹⁵¹⁸

Given the prominent role of activists' children in South Africa's political, social, and cultural spheres, the following section examines how children have invoked their position as children of activists publicly.

¹⁵¹⁵ Carneson, *Girl On the Edge*; Strasburg, *Holding the Fort*; Carneson-McGregor, *Red in the Rainbow*. Lynn Carneson-McGregor also wrote the memoir *Homage to Hope* in 1996, but received less critical attention than Slovo did.

¹⁵¹⁶ Anita Shapira, "The Holocaust: Private Memories, Public Memory," *Jewish Social Studies* 4, no. 2 (1998): 52.

¹⁵¹⁷ Some exceptions to this pattern include Hani, *Hani's Daughter*; Calata and Calata, *My Father*; Hain, *Pretoria Boy*; Hirson, *Thirty-Minute Bar Mitzvah*; Carneson, *John and Ntombi*, and Msimang, *Always Another Country*.

¹⁵¹⁸ Mary Mason, "The other voice: autobiographies of women writers," in *Autobiography: Essays Theoretical and Critical*, ed. James Olney (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980), 207-235; Estelle C. Jelinek, "Introduction: Women's Autobiography and the Male Tradition," in *Women's Autobiography: Essays in Criticism*, ed. Estelle C. Jelinek (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1980), 7-8.

The legal arena – through the establishment of the TRC and beyond – was one of the first post-apartheid public spaces through which children of activists voiced their needs and demands for justice, including by openly criticising the process. The Slovo and Schoon families strongly opposed the amnesties of Craig Williamson and Jerry Raven, both of whom had applied for the First and Schoon assassinations.¹⁵¹⁹ Just before the TRC commenced, Marius Schoon – husband of Jeanette and father of Kathryn Schoon, both killed in 1984 – had instituted civil proceedings against Williamson for damages of just over R2 million on behalf of his son, Fritz.¹⁵²⁰ Williamson requested courts to hold legal proceedings in light of his intended amnesty application, yet missed the (extended) deadline repeatedly, before eventually submitting his application. Before the TRC, Gillian Slovo had approached Raven – the explosive expert that Williamson implicated – at his workplace to film a documentary but was left stunned when Raven denied any involvement – especially as he applied for amnesty shortly after.¹⁵²¹ It took Slovo ‘months of nightmares to recover from the experience’ of the amnesty hearing:

I had expected the process to be difficult, but I had not anticipated how very difficult it would be. (...) I began to feel that I knew how they were thinking, and what they were thinking. In short, I got to know them— and this intimacy, more than anything else, was what was the most difficult thing to endure.¹⁵²²

Shared intimacy between perpetrator and victim also became the subject of Slovo’s fictional novel *Red Dust* (2000).¹⁵²³ Slovo believed that Raven and Williamson had killed her mother and the Schoons, not out of political motive, but out of ‘slow-burning, premeditated hatred, not just for my mother, but also for my father and for us, their children; for, in fact, all the

¹⁵¹⁹ Ancer, *Spy*, 221.

¹⁵²⁰ Ancer, *Spy*, 217-8.

¹⁵²¹ Slovo, *Every Secret Thing*, ix.

¹⁵²² Slovo, *Every Secret Thing*, xii; Gillian Slovo, “Truth and Reconciliation?,” in *Trauma and Attachment – The John Bowlby Memorial Conference Monograph*, eds. Sarah Benamer and Kate White, The Centre for Attachment-based Psychoanalytic Psychotherapy (London: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2008), 18.

¹⁵²³ Gillian Slovo, *Red Dust* (London: Virago, 2000).

white “traitors” who had let down their side’.¹⁵²⁴ Understanding their intentions eventually promoted her healing:

But later I was to realize that knowing them, and knowing the truth of their untruth, did help me. I stopped wondering so much about what it was that had happened. I didn’t need to – my questions had been answered. Painful as it was, it was better to hear the truth. It’s true, that slogan: the truth does set you free.¹⁵²⁵

In 2000, Williamson and Raven were both granted amnesty against the families’ wishes.¹⁵²⁶ They initially launched review proceedings, although these were later withdrawn – according to Fritz Schoon, to avoid setting a legal precedent for other challenges to amnesty decisions.¹⁵²⁷ In 2002, Williamson, Fritz Schoon (whose father had passed in 1999), and the Slovo daughters settled out of court; according to Ancer, ‘they were tired and despondent and didn’t have the appetite for reliving the pain of another hearing’.¹⁵²⁸ In 2004, a confidential deal was struck, in which Williamson was to pay R325,000 in monthly instalments to Schoon and cover his legal costs.¹⁵²⁹ Beyond the latter, Williamson never paid Schoon; all his assets were in his wife’s name, and their marriage out of community of property rendered them inaccessible.¹⁵³⁰

In 1995, the Biko, Mxenge, and Ribeiro family, represented by AZAPO, challenged the TRC in the landmark case *AZAPO vs The President of the Republic of South Africa*, arguing that the provision of amnesty *through Section 20(7) of the Promotion of National Unity and Reconciliation Act 34 of 1995* and thereby exemption from criminal and civil liability was unconstitutional as it infringed upon their constitutional right to seek legal

¹⁵²⁴ Slovo, “Truth and Reconciliation,” 20.

¹⁵²⁵ Slovo, “Truth and Reconciliation,” 20-1.

¹⁵²⁶ Truth and Reconciliation Commission of South Africa, *Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, Volume 6* (Cape Town: Truth and Reconciliation Commission, 2003), 80.

¹⁵²⁷ Ancer, *Spy*, 235.

¹⁵²⁸ Ancer, *Spy*, 234-5.

¹⁵²⁹ Ancer, *Spy*, 236.

¹⁵³⁰ Ancer, *Spy*, 236-7.

redress.¹⁵³¹ The constitutional court upheld the provision, arguing that the full disclosure of truth, only made possible through amnesty, was necessary for the national reconciliation of South Africa.¹⁵³² In 1997, during his cross-examination at the TRC, Chris Ribeiro, who had repeatedly gone into hiding due to threats received during the proceedings, reconfirmed his opposition:

We are vehemently opposed to the granting of any amnesty to the applicants. (...) The applicants for amnesty have done nothing to ease the pain by their blatant lies about my parents, especially my mother, whom they so unashamedly claim, assisted comrades financially in my father's absence. (...) It is therefore evident to my family that the amnesty applicants have come to this Committee without a modicum of remorse. They have come here just to save their own skins.¹⁵³³

In the case of Steve Biko's murder, five officers – a sixth had already died – applied for amnesty. Although none were granted amnesty due to conflicting statements, the Biko family was denied justice: in 2003, the Ministry of Justice dropped the case, citing insufficient evidence and the expiration of the statute of limitations.¹⁵³⁴ Biko's son, Nkosinathi, who is CEO of the Steve Biko Foundation (SBF), has been outspoken regarding the continued lack of justice regarding his father's murder.¹⁵³⁵ A number of these cases have recently been re-opened, highlighting children's continued efforts to demand justice. In January 2025, 25 families and survivors of apartheid-era political crimes filed a lawsuit against the South African government.¹⁵³⁶ They sought constitutional damages (worth approximately R167 million) for the suppression of apartheid-era cases that had been referred to the National Prosecuting Authority (NPA) after the culmination of the TRC. This

¹⁵³¹ Truth and Reconciliation Commission, *Report, Volume 1*, 175; Jeremy Sarkin, "The Trials and Tribulations of South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission," *African Journal on Human Rights* 12, no. 4 (1996), 625.

¹⁵³² Sarkin, "Trials and Tribulations," 628-9.

¹⁵³³ Truth and Reconciliation Commission of South Africa, "Second Cross Examination of Chris Ribeiro," *Truth and Reconciliation Commission of South Africa – Pretoria Amnesty Hearing*, 3 March 1997, <https://www.justice.gov.za/trc/amntrans/pta/pta.htm>.

¹⁵³⁴ Inigo Gilmore, "Biko Family to Confront His 'Killers'," *Sunday Times (London)*, 7 September 1997.

¹⁵³⁵ Biko, interview.

¹⁵³⁶ Rachel Savage, "'We were betrayed': families of apartheid victims sue South African government," *Guardian*, 23 January 2025, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2025/jan/23/apartheid-victims-families-sue-south-african-government-cradock-four-killings>.

had followed a 2021 ‘supreme court of appeal judgment [which] found that “from 2003 to 2017, investigations into the TRC cases were stopped as a result of an executive decision” and that “this was indeed interference with the NPA”.’¹⁵³⁷ In April 2025, President Cyril Ramaphosa launched an inquiry into these interferences.¹⁵³⁸ That same month, a renewed inquest into the murder of Griffiths Mxenge was opened, followed in September by the re-opening of the Biko inquest.¹⁵³⁹

Although the TRC had projected a reparations programme for victims, this process was fraught with delays and limiting criteria.¹⁵⁴⁰ For individuals, the TRC envisaged Urgent Interim Reparations (UIR) and Individual Reparation Grants (IRG).¹⁵⁴¹ UIRs commenced in mid-1998 but were slow in processing. IRGs were initiated only after the amnesty process ended and were limited to officially recognised victims of gross human rights violations during the TRC. In 2003, Mbeki announced that approximately 214,747 survivors/victims would receive a one-off payment of R30,000 – a drastic change from the Rehabilitation and Reparations Committee’s recommendation to provide R23,923 annually for six years. This, so Annah Moyo et al. argue, occurred ‘against the backdrop of a chastising discourse from Mbeki’,

making Mbeki’s distaste for monetary reparations apparent since it allude[d] to the idea that financial compensation for the participation in the anti-apartheid struggle was an affront to the movement, and that freedom should suffice.¹⁵⁴²

¹⁵³⁷ Savage, “‘We were betrayed’.”

¹⁵³⁸ Rachel Savage, “South Africa to review claims past ANC governments impeded apartheid crimes investigations,” *Guardian*, 30 April 2025, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2025/apr/30/cyril-ramaphosa-sets-up-inquiry-into-whether-past-anc-governments-interfered-with-investigation-of-apartheid-era-crimes>.

¹⁵³⁹ *Guardian*, “South Africa to reopen Steve Biko inquest 48 years after death in police custody,” *Guardian*, 10 September 2025, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2025/sep/10/south-africa-to-reopen-steve-biko-inquest-48-years-after-death-in-police-custody>.

¹⁵⁴⁰ Annah Moyo et al., “Reparations for Apartheid-Era Victims in South Africa: The Unfinished Business of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission,” in *Reparations for Victims of Genocide, War Crimes and Crimes against Humanity – Systems in Place and System in the Making*, ed. Carla Ferstman and Mariana Goetz, 2nd edition (Leiden: Brill Nijhoff, 2020), 672.

¹⁵⁴¹ Moyo et al, “Reparations for Apartheid-Era Victims,” 665.

¹⁵⁴² Moyo et al, “Reparations for Apartheid-Era Victims,” 665.

The exclusion of possible victims who had not come forward during the TRC process was particularly contested in light of Mbeki's amnesty program for perpetrators that had missed the initial amnesty process.¹⁵⁴³ The Khulumani Support Group, the only nationwide membership organisation of victims, representing 54,000 members, was formed in 1995 as a response to the TRC.¹⁵⁴⁴ Amidst government opposition, Khulumani continues to advocate for apartheid victims through legal and social channels, supports community reparations, and addresses victims' medical and material needs.¹⁵⁴⁵ Unlike the TRC, Khulumani relies on self-identification as victims: 'Around 90 per cent of Khulumani's members did not receive reparations.'¹⁵⁴⁶

In addition to these quests for justice, children have also been involved in public history projects to maintain and demand a public record of their parents' achievements and advocate for their ideals through curated exhibitions, oral history projects, heritage sites, biographies of their parents, and participation in family foundations.¹⁵⁴⁷ This was particularly important for children whose parents' achievements fell outside the ANC-dominated narrative.¹⁵⁴⁸ Kethiwe produces films about her parents, although she struggles to find enough video material, especially regarding her father, the PAC activist A.B. Ngcobo:

(...) people knew who he was, but also people didn't, the broader society didn't acknowledge what he had done, didn't acknowledge who he was, so in a way, he died, he came to South Africa in 1993, by 1997 he was dead. And I think there was

¹⁵⁴³ Moyo et al, "Reparations for Apartheid-Era Victims," 73.

¹⁵⁴⁴ Tshepo Madlingozi, "Good victim, bad victim: Apartheid's beneficiaries, victims, and the struggle for social justice," in *Law, Memory and The Legacy of Apartheid – Ten years after AZAPO vs President of South Africa*, eds. Karin van Marle and Wessel Le Roux (Pretoria: Pretoria University Law Press, 2007), 119-20.

¹⁵⁴⁵ Madlingozi, "Good victim, bad victim," 119-120, 122.

¹⁵⁴⁶ Madlingozi, "Good victim, bad victim," 120.

¹⁵⁴⁷ Examples include Lynn Carneson's already mentioned exhibition *Red in the Rainbow* at the Iziko Slave Lodge Museum in Cape Town. Nicholas Wolpe founded and managed Liliesleaf, a museum based on the site of the 1963 Rivonia Raid for over 20 years before it closed in 2021 under allegations of misuse of funds. Dali Tambo was closely involved in the 'Long March to Freedom' exhibition of 100 life sized statues in Century City, Cape Town.

¹⁵⁴⁸ Anand Pillay, interview; Ngcobo, interview.

a pain that, which was to do with not being part of the centre, when his whole life he had fought for this (...) So, I think, that... yeah, that hurts in a way.¹⁵⁴⁹

Slovo also reflected on the impact of her mother's assassination on public memory post-1990:

While Ruth was alive, she had dominated our family. She was the star around which we moved. She was the bread-winner, the intellect, the ground breaker - she, not her husband. (...) It was she, not he, who, in the decades after our flight from South Africa, had made a mark. If time had been frozen, she would have been the one everybody remembered. (...) Meanwhile death's decay was busy mutating memory: turning Ruth into a 'mom' - a woman who had, sometime in her life, bolstered up the great man.¹⁵⁵⁰

Nkosinathi positioned his over 25 years as part of the SBF as an act of defending his father's and other BCM activists' contributions and place in history.¹⁵⁵¹

Children's efforts to position their parents' achievements publicly and guide the historical narrative have not gone uncontested. Former ANC Cabinet member Naledi Pandor's discussion of her father and grandfather's legacy in 'Through the Generations', publicised in *New Age* in 2012, saw her accused of 'a deliberate attempt to mislead the general public, especially the SA youth, about the extent to which Joe Matthews [her father] zigzagged away politically from the great political path that was cleared and trod by 'ZK' Matthews [her grandfather]'.¹⁵⁵² While Joe Matthews had initially followed his father's footsteps into the ANC, including its NEC, also joining the SACP, he eventually abandoned both, working in Botswana, before joining the IFP, a rival of the ANC.¹⁵⁵³

Furthermore, while some, like Nkosinathi, are deeply involved in continuing their parents' legacy through family foundations, others perceive themselves as excluded from

¹⁵⁴⁹ Ngcobo, interview.

¹⁵⁵⁰ Slovo, *Every Secret Thing*, 224.

¹⁵⁵¹ Biko, interview.

¹⁵⁵² Isaac Mpho Mogotsi, "Naledi Pandor and Joe Matthews," *politicsweb*, 17 January 2013, https://www.politicsweb.co.za/news-and-analysis/naledi-pandor-and-joe-matthews#google_vignette.

¹⁵⁵³ Ellis, *The External Mission*, 103.

these foundations and, thus, from the processes and institutions guiding their parents' legacies. Nazir, Ahmed Kathrada's nephew, described his family's difficult relationship with the Ahmed Kathrada Foundation, which no longer has any family involvement (other than from Kathrada's partner, Barbara Hogan), expressing contention with the Foundation's chosen path.¹⁵⁵⁴

Through various forums, children of activists have furthermore publicly demanded an acknowledgement of their difficult experiences and their omission from the historical narrative. Slovo clearly articulated this demand:

And then another, contradictory voice, rises up in protest. We were not asking them to stay silent, that voice says, or to put our needs before the needs of the oppresses. All we wanted was a simple acknowledgement that no political movement can ever fight justice without there being casualties.¹⁵⁵⁵

Nicholas also argued: 'And again I come back, it's just no one paid attention to us (...) But when it comes to the children of political activists, we are ignored. We are brushed aside (...).'¹⁵⁵⁶ Similarly, Zola argued that 'our story hasn't been told'.¹⁵⁵⁷ During a documentary, Mac Maharaj spoke out about how the movements' children were sacrificed in the processes of liberation – for Zola, this public acknowledgement of the suffering of children was extremely moving.

This demand for acknowledgement and claim to neglect, has, however, not been without pushback, especially as it intersects with questions of race. So, Slovo recounted a lunch meeting with Maharaj, who described how he had watched her sister's movie 'A

¹⁵⁵⁴ Kathrada, interview. Ahmed Kathrada had no biological children.

¹⁵⁵⁵ Slovo, *Every Secret Thing*, 127.

¹⁵⁵⁶ Nicholas Wolpe, interview.

¹⁵⁵⁷ Maseko, interview.

World Apart’ alongside other ANC comrades.¹⁵⁵⁸ During the movie, an African comrade had remarked that the protagonist, Molly (representing Shawn Slovo), needed ‘a good slap’:

A good slap - it felt like that to me. I read behind the words and breathed in their implications. They conjured up a judgement I knew only too well, that we were white kids who indulged ourselves in whining.¹⁵⁵⁹ [italics in original]

Nicholas also discussed the pushback he received about his exile experience: ‘People say... and I know they don’t say it, but they think “You had it easy, you lived in England, you had schooling, you didn’t get beaten up.” It’s not that simple.’¹⁵⁶⁰

Literature and the arts have offered children a means of coping, turning public expression into a space for private healing.¹⁵⁶¹ Ruth described writing her memoir as a therapeutic process to make sense of herself – while she initially wrote it from another perspective, she eventually claimed the story as her own, publishing it as a memoir.¹⁵⁶² Zola, now a notable filmmaker, is drawn to stories of justice, exile and loneliness due to his experiences: ‘it’s very expensive therapy, very expensive [laughs]’.¹⁵⁶³

The act of making these projects public – for example, by publishing memoirs – also becomes an act of identity construction and claim. I want to illustrate this point through a discussion of three memoirs, written by children of activists: Slovo’s *Every Secret Thing* (1997), Msimang’s *Always Another Home* (2018), and Deborah Levy’s three-part memoir (2013, 2018, and 2021).¹⁵⁶⁴ Literary scholars suggest that memoirs are penned with four possible – to some extent interlinked – objectives: First, to immortalise oneself or a

¹⁵⁵⁸ Slovo, *Every Secret Thing*, 123.

¹⁵⁵⁹ Slovo, *Every Secret Thing*, 124-5.

¹⁵⁶⁰ Nicholas Wolpe, interview.

¹⁵⁶¹ De Sas Kropiwnicki, *Exile*, 255.

¹⁵⁶² Ruth Carneson, interview.

¹⁵⁶³ Maseko, interview.

¹⁵⁶⁴ Slovo, *Every Secret Thing*; Msimang, *Always Another Home*; Deborah Levy, *Things I Don’t Want to Know* (London: Penguin Books, 2013); Levy, *Cost of Living*; Deborah Levy, *Real Estate* (London: Penguin Books, 2021).

parent.¹⁵⁶⁵ Second, to condemn someone, particularly within a relationship. Third, for therapeutic reasons: ‘their memoirs are written to complete the always unfinished business that children have with their parents. They may try to repair, revive, or even enact a relationship with a missing or absent parent’, to get to know someone after death or to process grief and/or trauma by creating a narrative.¹⁵⁶⁶ Fourth, memoirs are written to create a coherent life narrative and constitute an identity, therefore, posing an act of ‘self-invention’.¹⁵⁶⁷

Slovo’s memoir has often been interpreted as public condemnation of her parents. Yet, her memoir (alongside the memoirs and creative works of other activists’ children) may also be understood as a claim to history, through which she articulates and constructs her identity in post-apartheid South Africa.¹⁵⁶⁸ This is particularly relevant to white authors, like Slovo, so Tony Simoes da Silva – building on Sarah Nuttall and Carli Coetzee’s work – suggests, arguing that white writers have attempted to re-define whiteness through life writing after apartheid ended.¹⁵⁶⁹ Slovo’s memoir describes her internal conflicts about her South African identity, especially during her visit to South Africa in 1990, deepened by her father’s unwillingness to share the country (and their joint history) with her: ‘Joe’s life. Joe’s struggle. Joe’s South Africa. But it was a big country with a long history. Was there not room for more than one of us?’¹⁵⁷⁰ Yet, through the act of writing, she constitutes this ‘lack of identity’ as an identity. Previously, mostly appealing to a British market with her novels,

¹⁵⁶⁵ G. Thomas Couser, *Memoir: An Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 187.

¹⁵⁶⁶ Couser, *Memoir*, 180.

¹⁵⁶⁷ Couser, *Memoir*, 169.

¹⁵⁶⁸ Sandwell, “Fantasy States,” 783.

¹⁵⁶⁹ Sarah Nuttall and Cali Coetzee “Introduction,” in *Negotiating the Past: The Making of Memory in South Africa*, ed. Sarah Nuttall and Carli Coetzee (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 6, quoted in Tony Simoes Da Silva, “Under New Management: Whiteness in Post-Apartheid South African Life Writing,” in *Locating Life Stories: Beyond East-West Binaries in (Auto)Biographical Studies*, ed. Maureen Perkins (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 2012), 85-6.

¹⁵⁷⁰ Slovo, *Every Secret Thing*, 238.

Slovo – by framing herself as the product of ‘struggle-parenting’ – negotiates for her ‘ticket for admission to the new nation’ and catapults herself into the core of South African life writing.¹⁵⁷¹

Englund points out that Sisonke Msimang’s *Always Another Country* also represents an act of ‘claiming space’.¹⁵⁷² Born in exile, Msimang ‘returns’ to South Africa for the first time in 1990, declaring: ‘This country is already ours and we know it so we are basking in one of those moments kissed by the gods: it sparkles and shines and so do we.’¹⁵⁷³ Msimang asserts her claim to the country and constructs her identity as part of the new South Africa, but interestingly so, not as the child of the ANC, but as a child of exile. Her father, Mavuso Msimang, was a member of MK, based in Kongwa, Tanzania, in the 1960s, who moved to Zambia, where he met his wife, Ntombi, and they raised their three daughters in the ANC community. Msimang later took a step back from ANC politics and joined the UN in Kenya, before working for the World University Service of Canada in Ethiopia and Canada. Since their ‘return’ to South Africa in 1994, Mavuso Msimang has held several positions within the ANC, including its NEC and as Deputy President of the ANC Veterans’ League (ANCVL). In her memoir, Msimang described her search for home and belonging as the family moved across countries and continents, yet the narrative is remarkably decontextualised from the liberation politics underlying her family’s migration, only discussing the ANC towards the end of her memoir through a critique of post-apartheid politics.¹⁵⁷⁴

¹⁵⁷¹ Simoes Da Silva, “Whiteness in Post-Apartheid South Africa,” 86.

¹⁵⁷² Englund, *South African Autobiography*, 1, 46; Msimang, *Always Another Country*.

¹⁵⁷³ Msimang, *Always Another Country*, 145.

¹⁵⁷⁴ Msimang, *Always Another Country*, 322, 338-41.

Deborah Levy's three-part memoir stands in complete juxtaposition to Slovo's and Msimang's memoirs.¹⁵⁷⁵ Levy was born in 1959 in Johannesburg to Norman, a Treason Trialist, and Philippa Levy. After Norman Levy was detained in 1964, he was sentenced to three years' imprisonment in the Bram Fischer trial. Upon release, he was placed under a banning order, so the family fled to London in 1968, when Deborah was nine years old. While she mentions her childhood, presumably scarring experiences – including watching her father being detained – become seemingly irrelevant amidst questions about her womanhood, her relationships, and her current life. Her narrative is almost completely void of identification with South Africa, the struggle, or her parents' work. She wrote: 'When I arrived in the UK, what I wanted were new memories.'¹⁵⁷⁶ When she is accused as a child by her Egyptian au pair, Farid, of not understanding life as a foreigner, she recounted: 'I liked that Farid had said "your country". Yes, I said to myself, I am English. As English as they come.'¹⁵⁷⁷ She struggled connecting her South African childhood (and her parents' legacy) with her life in England: 'I could not put my South African past and my English present together (...)'¹⁵⁷⁸ In her memoirs, Levy positioned herself as a(n) (English)woman, not South African, and most importantly, she positions herself distinctly away from her parents' struggle.

These memoirs thus constitute acts of writing oneself into South African history (or out of it, in Levy's case). Yet, Slovo's process of claiming and constituting her identity incurs an inherent contradiction, which Msimang and Levy avoid. By writing her memoir, Slovo (as do other writers) constructs her identity as the 'child of anti-apartheid activists',

¹⁵⁷⁵ Levy, *Things I Don't Want to Know*; Levy, *Cost of Living*; Levy, *Real Estate*.

¹⁵⁷⁶ Levy, *Things I Don't Want to Know*, 117-8.

¹⁵⁷⁷ Levy, *Things I Don't Want to Know*, 144.

¹⁵⁷⁸ Levy, *Real Estate*, 47.

while simultaneously attempting to step out of the shadows of her famous parents. Linchfield argues:

Slovo complains incessantly about the inequity of being Ruth and Joe's daughter. But being Ruth and Joe's daughter is her only claim to our interest; without her parents, she has no tale to tell.¹⁵⁷⁹

While this is a harsh assessment of Slovo, who published several successful novels before writing her memoir, Linchfield does underline a major contradiction: many memoirs written by children of activists rely on their relation to their parents to be published and read, while their authors simultaneously claim to carve out their own pathways.

Englund makes a similar point about the memoirs written by Mandela's children and grandchildren.¹⁵⁸⁰ His descendants have been at the centre of public discussions on the legacies of their (grand-)parents, intensified by contentions between Mandela's first and second family, his death in 2013, and disagreements about his burial site.¹⁵⁸¹ Mandla Mandela, grandson of Nelson Mandela (via his first marriage), was the first of the Mandela's descendants to go into formal politics, when he stood as an ANC MP in the 2009 elections, supporting Zuma. An ageing Nelson Mandela was 'twice wheeled out' for this political campaign, despite protests by the second family and the Nelson Mandela Foundation.¹⁵⁸² In 2019, Ndileka Mandela, first-born daughter of Mandela's first-born son, published her memoir *I Am Ndileka: More than my surname*.¹⁵⁸³ In her memoir, so Englund argues, Ndileka picked up on earlier pronouncements by her half-aunt, Zindzi Mandela, who argued in an interview in 2013 that her father had never quite belonged to them, but that they shared

¹⁵⁷⁹ Linchfield, "Why, the Beloved Country."

¹⁵⁸⁰ Englund, *South African Autobiography*, 184.

¹⁵⁸¹ Baffour Ankomah, "The Mandela Many Have Never Seen," *New African* 498 (2010): 17; David James Smith, *Young Mandela* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicholson, 2010), 156-7.

¹⁵⁸² Smith *Young Mandela*, 157.

¹⁵⁸³ Ndileka Mandela, *I am Ndileka: More than my surname* (Johannesburg: Jacana Media, 2019).

him with the rest of the world.¹⁵⁸⁴ Expressing ‘a need to reclaim Mandela’, so Englund argues, Ndileka wrote: ‘Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela was my grandfather, period, not the president of the ANC and not the president of the country’.¹⁵⁸⁵ Englund states: ‘Memoir is thus used not only to document subjective history but also to reclaim the public as private. Paradoxically, memoir itself is a very public form of personal history.’¹⁵⁸⁶ While Ndileka argued that she felt invisible ‘to the broader public as an individual simply because I carry the last name of one of the world’s most beloved icons’, Englund concludes:

Ndileka’s endeavour to tell her own story and make herself visible in her own right and not only as a descendant of Mandela comes to rely on the fact that she is his relative and her story is inevitably interconnected with his.¹⁵⁸⁷

Children’s private lives have been subjected to intense public scrutiny. Following her father’s assassination in 1993, Lindiwe Hani described experiencing no longer being seen as Lindiwe, only as his daughter: ‘It was as though I disappeared, as though they forgot that he was my father, murdered in our driveway, that I had lost my dad.’¹⁵⁸⁸ When in 2001, her older sister, Khwezi, died, her mother was informed of Khwezi’s death by a journalist seeking confirmation.¹⁵⁸⁹ While the autopsy report suggested that she died as the result of an asthma attack in her sleep, Lindiwe expressed doubts about this version of events:

Officially, no traces of drugs were found in her system. I find that hard to believe. I know Khwezi was at the very least smoking Dagga on a daily basis - we were both off our heads the evening of her death; I also know that the drug takes at least three weeks to leave the system. Ultimately, it felt like someone or some people were covering up the actual details surrounding how my sister died. (...) Was it some misguided attempt to protect the ‘Hani legacy’?¹⁵⁹⁰

¹⁵⁸⁴ Englund, *South African Autobiography*, 183; Julia Llewellyn Smith, “Zindzi Mandela interview: the father I knew,” *The Telegraph*, 15 December 2013, https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/nelson-mandela/10513991/Zindzi-Mandela-interview-the-father-I-knew.html?ICID=continue_without_subscribing_reg_first.

¹⁵⁸⁵ Mandela, *I am Ndileka*, 65; Englund, *South African Autobiography*, 181.

¹⁵⁸⁶ Englund, *South African Autobiography*, 184.

¹⁵⁸⁷ Englund, *South African Autobiography*, 178.

¹⁵⁸⁸ Hani, *Hani’s Daughter*, 244.

¹⁵⁸⁹ Hani, *Hani’s Daughter*, 96.

¹⁵⁹⁰ Hani, *Hani’s Daughter*, 99.

As Lindiwe navigated substance abuse and mental health struggles, she struggled with the public pressures of being Chris Hani's daughter. In 2012, Lindiwe suffered a breakdown and sought her mother's help: 'She said nothing, her icy eyes staring through me, but "What about the Hani name, what will people say?"' was written all over her face.'¹⁵⁹¹ Fearing publicity, Lindiwe first entered rehab under a different name. While the Hani family had attempted secrecy, Zola's family decided to openly talk about his brother's struggle with alcoholism, leading to his early death.¹⁵⁹² For Zola, accepting the truth of his substance abuse played a crucial step in his recovery. Similarly, Lindiwe eventually accepted her truth by checking into another rehab under her own name.¹⁵⁹³ In 2017, she published her memoir *Being Chris Hani's Daughter*, reclaiming the personal that had been made public, as her own – albeit through the very public form of a memoir.¹⁵⁹⁴

Children of activists have frequently been accused of abusing their parents' legacy for financial, social, and political gain. Some of these accusations are clearly grounded in reality – Zindzi Mandela was involved in the 2001 R1 million scandal of the ANCWL's involvement in the fraudulent use of loans.¹⁵⁹⁵ In the previous chapters, I argued that accusations of nepotism – emerging since the 1950s and gaining particular force in exile – have shaped how activists' children who pursued political paths, often within their parents' organisations, present themselves: rather than foregrounding their identity as activists' children, they emphasise their experience of growing up within the wider struggle community. Children – often in juxtaposition to the publication of memoirs like Slovo's – distanced themselves from the idea that they benefited from their parents' relation, so Anand

¹⁵⁹¹ Hani, *Hani's Daughter*, 113.

¹⁵⁹² Maseko, interview.

¹⁵⁹³ Hani, *Hani's Daughter*, 113.

¹⁵⁹⁴ Hani, *Hani's Daughter*.

¹⁵⁹⁵ du Preez Bezdrob, *Winnie Mandela*, 265.

argued: 'I do not need the struggle to make a living'.¹⁵⁹⁶ Deenan recounted his discomfort at being told to emphasise his struggle past when he moved to South Africa:

I went to run a Research Institute there and when I got there, a number of South Africans, who I knew, you know, said "(...) You've got to say what your parents did in the struggle (...)" I didn't do because it, you know, that was not correct. It's not right. It's not. I mean, I didn't wanna play that game (...)¹⁵⁹⁷

Children of Activists in the Public Sphere: Political Childhood

Many children have been openly critical of the current state of politics in South Africa, and especially Zuma's presidency.¹⁵⁹⁸ Msimang dates the start to the country's political decline to Mbeki's handling of the HIV/AIDS crisis:

Mbeki is willing to sacrifice the country over his ego. In the end it is this, more than anything else, that makes me lose my religion. As a child I had adored them [Mbeki and other African leaders]. I had soaked in their pride and basked in it and grown strong in it. As a young woman, finally home and trying to be something new and without burdens, I had discovered that they were not simply proud - they were excessively opinionated. I saw that what had felt like dignity in the dark days was actually haughtiness. They reeked of grandeur and it made me nauseous.¹⁵⁹⁹

As core issues, children highlighted Zuma's rape trial in 2006, Nkandlagate (during which Zuma was accused of using public funds to upgrade his homestead, costing taxpayers R246 million), the killings of 34 miners by the South African Police Services (SAPS) during the Marikana massacre in 2012, and corruption cases amongst top leadership (including state capture under Zuma, breaking news in 2016, ultimately ending Zuma's presidency in 2018), as well as load-shedding (regular power cuts).¹⁶⁰⁰ Zola expressed the struggle community's shock at Zuma's rape trial, regardless of whether it had been rape or occurred consensually, as Kuzwayo had been 'his comrade's daughter'.¹⁶⁰¹ Zuma had broken the 'sacred' moral code that had governed exile relations.¹⁶⁰² While Zuma was eventually acquitted of rape, the

¹⁵⁹⁶ Anand Pillay, interview.

¹⁵⁹⁷ Deenan Pillay, interview.

¹⁵⁹⁸ Shapiro, interview; Peta Wolpe, interview; Themba, interview; Tessa Wolpe, interview; Nicholas Wolpe; Merle Ruff, interview; Maseko, interview.

¹⁵⁹⁹ Msimang, *Always Another Country*, 275.

¹⁶⁰⁰ Shapiro, interview; Msimang, *Always Another Country*, 340-1; Maseko, interview.

¹⁶⁰¹ Maseko, interview.

¹⁶⁰² Maseko, interview.

trial remained deeply controversial. This was fuelled by his sexually aggressive rhetoric (he and his supporters frequently sang the MK struggle song *Umshini Wami* ('Bring me my machine gun') outside court, the harassment of and open threats directed at Kuzwayo by his supporters (who burned down her house and threatened to 'burn the bitch'), and Zuma's claim that taking a shower after unprotected intercourse with Kuzwayo, who was HIV-positive, would reduce his risk of infection.¹⁶⁰³

Interviewees connected their personal experiences with this political decline, so Tessa recounted:

Now, I've got huge anger towards the ANC, especially now, because of what's happening in this country (...). So, all those people who fought against apartheid, who sacrificed their lives, who... who did so much and destroyed many children's lives (...).¹⁶⁰⁴

Msimang opens this chapter by confronting the disillusionment of recognising that the sacrifices she and other children had made in the struggle against apartheid yielded a South Africa that is politically free yet deeply unjust.¹⁶⁰⁵ For these children – and in light of their sacrifice – the political outcome of South Africa has remained deeply personal.

De Sas Kropiwnicki argues that the filial connections established between children and other activists, especially as part of the exiled ANC 'family', made it more difficult for this second generation to grapple with the post-apartheid corruption and political malpractice of their 'aunties' and 'uncles'.¹⁶⁰⁶ Despite these issues, de Sas Kropiwnicki suggests that many of her interviewees still held on to the ANC:

For many returnees the ANC still embodies the principles of the national democratic revolution, despite the corruption of a few individuals: the "aberrations of a few individuals do not detract from the whole".¹⁶⁰⁷

¹⁶⁰³ Hassim, "Democracy's Shadows," 59.

¹⁶⁰⁴ Tessa Wolpe, interview.

¹⁶⁰⁵ Msimang, *Always Another Country*, 16.

¹⁶⁰⁶ De Sas Kropiwnicki, *Exile*, 269-70.

¹⁶⁰⁷ De Sas Kropiwnicki, *Exile*, 269.

In contrast, most of my interviewees had already severed ties with the ANC by the time I conducted my fieldwork in 2023. This possibly indicates children's further political dissociation since de Sas Kropiwnicki's 2017 study.

As children had experienced the ANC as a political family, children also used familial language to express their political dissociation. Zola described it as a 'divorce':

(...) it's like a marriage, that's over. It's over, you know? And like all marriages, when you go through the divorce, it's painful, a painful process. You carry the traumas of a divorce for rest of their life. I'll carry them, but I've made peace with the divorce. (...) I think that's the only thing I'd like to add is that I'll never vote for the ANC. It is not the ANC that I fought for. It is not the ANC that we struggled for.¹⁶⁰⁸

Msimang used the metaphor of genetics and blood to express the ending of her relationship with the ANC:

While I am vocal at home about my disgust for the ANC, I have not yet nailed my colours to the mast. The ANC is not just a party, it is home. I have not attended a meeting for years, and I stopped paying my monthly dues a long time ago, but still, I consider the ANC to be in my blood. My great-granduncles Richard and Selby were founding members. My father was in MK. I was born in exile. I am ANC through and through. This is the story I have told myself about my obligation and commitment to the party. But as its politics worsens, I begin to understand that I must stop this language. The ANC is not in my blood, it is in my memory. There is no genetic code that makes me more or less ANC than others. (...) Yet in the aftermath of Marikana, as my revulsion towards the ANC grows, I begin to see that stepping away from the 'child of' language is allowing me to accept the truth. I am a grown woman and I am not beholden to the ANC.¹⁶⁰⁹

As discussed in Chapters 6 and 7, children who had grown up in strong exile communities in the 1970s and 1980s perceived themselves as 'contributors' – as Sechaba put it – to the post-apartheid nation.¹⁶¹⁰ Although some of them have entered South African politics (in addition to Mbeki, Pallo, and the Pahad brothers, who have previously been mentioned, Lindiwe Sisulu and Ghaleb Cachalia are also noteworthy political figures), many children

¹⁶⁰⁸ Maseko, interview.

¹⁶⁰⁹ Msimang, *Always Another Country*, 340-1.

¹⁶¹⁰ Mogale, Kgositsile, interview.

expressed a strong sense of exclusion from politics.¹⁶¹¹ Sechaba and Nkuli expressed their disappointment that their generation – the youth – had not been recruited into politics.¹⁶¹² After Themba’s brother – an MK soldier – died in Angola in the late 1980s, she became determined to ‘live his convictions’, yet she has felt unable to do so since ‘returning’.¹⁶¹³

Children have leveraged their identity as activists’ children – their political childhood – to assert political authority, much like the symbolic power of ‘political widowhood’ or ‘political orphanhood’¹⁶¹⁴ They do so in two key ways: first, they present themselves as carriers of their parents’ legacy. Second, they invoke their political childhood by invoking their childhood proximity to the struggle’s leadership.¹⁶¹⁵ This is exemplified by the 2016 ‘Letter from Masupatsela a Walter Sisulu to the ANC NEC’, in which 42 children of exile, including a number of children interviewed for this study, criticised the ANC and Zuma’s response to the Constitutional Court judgment in March 2016, which had ordered Zuma to repay the money he used to upgrade Nkandla.¹⁶¹⁶ The open letter states:

Amongst our learnings at the hands of the movement was the slogan of our pioneer movement; “Masupatsela a Walter Sisulu: Always prepared to defend our people, our country and our organisation”. It is in this spirit that we have now chosen to reconvene and engage with our leadership. We write to you to express, on record, our deep concern regarding what we perceive to be a continuing movement away from the principles which underpin our movement's Constitutional Guidelines (...).¹⁶¹⁷

De Sas Kropiwnicki argues that the ‘Letter from Masupatsela a Walter Sisulu to the ANC NEC’ – and the sense of obligation to the ANC family and liberated South Africa that

¹⁶¹¹ Mogale, Kgositsile, interview; Masemola-Jones. It is possible that I lacked access to those children who have become politically involved, hence, only meeting those who have felt excluded. Furthermore, a sense of exclusion likely acted as a strong catalyst for interviewees’ willingness to be interviewed.

¹⁶¹² Mogale, Kgositsile, interview.

¹⁶¹³ Themba, interview.

¹⁶¹⁴ Mamphela Ramphele, “Political Widowhood in South Africa: The Embodiment of Ambiguity,” *Daedalus* 125, no. 1 (1996):101, 104.

¹⁶¹⁵ See for example Mabuza, *Conversations with Tambo*.

¹⁶¹⁶ Polity, “Letter from Masupatsela a Walter Sisulu to the ANC NEC,” *Polity.org.za*, 8 April 2016, <https://www.polity.org.za/article/letter-from-masupatsela-a-walter-sisulu-to-the-anc-nec-2016-04-08>.

¹⁶¹⁷ Polity, “Letter from Masupatsela.”

children experience – can be seen as evidence for the development of an ‘actualised generation’, as Mannheim terms it.¹⁶¹⁸ She writes:

The authors of this letter cogently argue that the signatories have a particular moral authority and a legitimate right to challenge the ANC, because of their experiences as children in exile. (...) Although each individual in this study has a unique biography and subjectivity composed of multiple, intersecting identities, which they draw upon selectively, the signatories of this particular letter claim to share a common political and moral consciousness.¹⁶¹⁹

While I agree with her that children of activists have utilised their ‘political childhood’ to claim political and moral authority to make statements such as in the above-mentioned letter, I question whether they form an ‘actualised generation’, also because the experiences of children of activists varied so widely over time and location. I, furthermore, question the existence of this ‘actualised generation’ in light of the pushback the letter received and the lack of change it effected. The ANCYL in KwaZulu-Natal – Zuma’s stronghold – expressed this pushback by swiftly rebuking the letter: its provincial secretary, Thanduxolo Sabelo, addressed a special executive provincial committee meeting at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, stating that ‘[j]ust because your father was Walter Sisulu, it does not mean you can speak on behalf of Walter Sisulu...No one forced Walter Sisulu to serve this organisation when he was still alive.’¹⁶²⁰ Furthermore, while Zuma faced widespread criticism and calls for his resignation, he held on to the presidency for two more years.¹⁶²¹ The inefficiency of the *Masupatsela* as a political pressure group also stands in contrast to the dominant role that SWAPO’s ‘struggle kids’ have taken in Namibian politics.¹⁶²²

¹⁶¹⁸ De Sas Kropiwnicki, *Exile*, 268.

¹⁶¹⁹ De Sas Kropiwnicki, *Exile*, 275-6.

¹⁶²⁰ News 24, “ANC owes no one – KZN Youth League tells children of exiled stalwarts,” *News24*, 9 April 2016, <https://www.news24.com/anc-owes-no-one-kzn-youth-league-tells-children-of-exiled-stalwarts-20160409>.

¹⁶²¹ He did pay back R7.8 million for the non-security upgrades using a home loan, although Nkandla should not have been eligible to be mortgaged, sold, or bought, as it is on traditional land, see Reuters, “South Africa’s Zuma used home loan to repay Nkandla costs – presidency,” *Reuters*, 12 September 2016, <https://www.reuters.com/article/world/south-africa-s-zuma-used-home-loan-to-repay-nkandla-costs-presidency-idUSKCN1111D2/>.

¹⁶²² Williams, “SWAPO’s Struggle Children,” 608. See for example The Namibian, “‘Struggle kids’ want veterans’ benefits,” *The Namibian*, 24 November 2016, <https://www.namibian.com.na/struggle-kids-want-veterans-benefits/>.

In Chapter 5, I described how exiled children positioned Lusaka and Maputo, as non-racial, despite there being evidence of racial tensions at their parents' level. To explain this dissonance, I draw on Sandwell's concept of 'fantasy states'.¹⁶²³ In her analysis of four memoirs written by female activists describing Congress politics and its social life in the 1950s, Sandwell argues that 'these accounts, replete with scenes of pleasure and danger, articulate a fantasy of a postapartheid nation', making these authors theorists of nationalism.¹⁶²⁴ I argue that children's recollections of these places as non-racial are also an expression of the post-apartheid disillusion about the role of race in South Africa. Almost thirty years after apartheid, it is clear to children that 'the South Africa that we wanted' had not come to fruition.¹⁶²⁵ Stephanie and Maureen both evoked 'affectionate scenes' of intimacy to express their sense of betrayal, emphasising its deeply personal character: while Maureen recalled serving tea as a child to leaders who now acted so differently, Stephanie recounted the slow realisation that the post-apartheid ANC was not the same organisation she had grown up with.¹⁶²⁶ Having known these leaders since childhood – even learning politics from Zuma – she had believed that they would never sell out. By evoking 'affectionate scenes' – as Stephanie and Maureen did – and romanticised ideas of exile communities, children of activists partake in this imagining of a 'fantasy state'.¹⁶²⁷ The experience of Lusaka and Maputo as non-racial is here juxtaposed to the 'real' South Africa.

¹⁶²³ Sandwell, "Fantasy States," 765.

¹⁶²⁴ Sandwell, "Fantasy States," 766.

¹⁶²⁵ Langa-Royds, interview.

¹⁶²⁶ Stephanie, interview; McNabb, interview.

¹⁶²⁷ Sandwell, "Fantasy States," 765, 773.

Excluded from formal politics, children of activists have sought other channels to contribute, including ‘as social commentators, journalists, academics, writers, poets and artists’, in the civil service or social care.¹⁶²⁸ De Sas Kropiwnicki suggests that:

disappointment has not fuelled passivity among the second-generation exiles in my study, many of whom have embraced agentic roles in their communities, precisely because of the manner in which their childhoods were constructed in exile, with emphasis placed on obligations and responsibilities towards their parents, the liberation movement, and the nation.¹⁶²⁹

Kuben positioned his work as a civil servant (most recently as Deputy Governor of the South African Reserve Bank) ‘as a logical extension of being an activist.’¹⁶³⁰ Letebele described her intentions to contribute societally by mentoring interns and bringing people along with her at work as she established a successful career in corporate communications.¹⁶³¹ Others explained how they lived out their sense of justice and convictions in their personal interactions and home life.¹⁶³² Nicholas stated: ‘And I suppose I’ll always just be somebody who preaches fairness. And, yeah, that’s kind of how I would like to live my life.’¹⁶³³ De Sas Kropiwnicki argues that children created change also by trying to be better parents to their children, prioritising their family over politics or work demands.¹⁶³⁴ My interviewees echoed this, although they also felt that they had overprotected their children.¹⁶³⁵ Others feared that they had passed a sense of dislocation on to their own children, including by not speaking an African language.¹⁶³⁶ Stephanie and Sam expressed concern about raising children outside the politically charged environments of their own youth: Stephanie wrestled

¹⁶²⁸ De Sas Kropiwnicki, *Exile*, 272-3.

¹⁶²⁹ De Sas Kropiwnicki, “Meeting of Myths and Realities,” 80.

¹⁶³⁰ Kuben Naidoo, interview.

¹⁶³¹ Masemola-Jones, interview.

¹⁶³² Lubner, interview; Themba, interview; Mabizela-Mabaso, interview.

¹⁶³³ Nicholas Claude, interview.

¹⁶³⁴ De Sas Kropiwnicki, *Exile*, 273.

¹⁶³⁵ Shapiro, interview; Peta Wolpe, interview; Themba, interview; Brown, interview; Mogale, Kgositsile, interview; Nicholas Wolpe, interview.

¹⁶³⁶ Ngcobo, interview; Masemola-Jones, interview.

with raising her daughter in a still deeply racist South Africa, and Sam lamented the absence of similar movements in the UK for his daughter to engage with.¹⁶³⁷

Private Reckoning

While the previous section has clearly indicated the influence of public events and processes on children's recollections and reckoning, the following section focuses on more private processes, emphasising the impact of time, their parents' ageing, and their own ageing on their relationship with their parents and the struggle.

Children directly tackled the impact of their childhood in conversations with their parents. In the late 1980s, Patrick Bernstein wrote a letter to his parents, finding it easier to engage via letter:

It is simply this. Whatever psychological damage may have been done to Toni, Frances, Keith and I, this must be weighed against the benefits. By personal example, the high moral standards and adherence to principles – even in the face of severe adversity – are lessons which can never be taught by instruction. The sense of pride I get when thinking or talking about what the two of you sacrificed and endured, has strengthened my own self image and contributed significantly to my career development.¹⁶³⁸

In addition, he also reflected on 'a tremendous sense of guilt' for how 'my behaviour hindered rather than supported the things you were doing. For this, I apologise; but I knew no other way.'¹⁶³⁹ But while for some children of activists, the post-apartheid period enabled more open and frank discussions with their parents, other children emphasised the continuity of their parents' secretive behaviour. Nhlanhla only discovered that his mother had been a member of an underground cell at her 60th birthday celebrations.¹⁶⁴⁰ Busisiwe found out about her father's involvement in writing the South African constitution at his funeral in

¹⁶³⁷ Stephanie, interview; Gurney, interview.

¹⁶³⁸ Letter from Patrick to Hilda and Rusty, 3 March 1988, D3.3, A3299 Bernstein Papers, Historical Papers, Wits.

¹⁶³⁹ Letter from Patrick to Hilda and Rusty, 3 March 1988, A3299 Bernstein Papers.

¹⁶⁴⁰ Mabaso, interview.

2018.¹⁶⁴¹ She supposed that even after 1994, ‘old habits die hard’.¹⁶⁴² During rehab, Zola wrote a letter to his parents, reckoning with his childhood, but his family was never able to discuss the contents of the letter.¹⁶⁴³ His family’s reluctance to discuss this letter can perhaps also be viewed as a continuation of this pattern of secrecy and the suppression of children’s needs that was established during apartheid (as discussed in Chapter 5). Gillian Slovo wrote:

The secrets that had dogged my childhood were no longer dangerous. Here was my chance to uncover them. But, before I could, I found myself having to struggle with my own internal prohibitions. I had spent so much of my life knowing I shouldn’t ask that I now found it difficult to break the taboo. That external need for secrecy had become my own internal censorship.¹⁶⁴⁴

By outlining her own difficulties in breaking the taboos of her childhood, she shows that not just parents but also children struggled to break these patterns.

As activists became older, their ageing shaped their relationship with their children. Letebele’s father moved in with her and her children when he was in his eighties, living with them for over a decade before his death, supporting Letebele with childcare while she frequently travelled for work.¹⁶⁴⁵ Through this shared time, Letebele (and her children) were able to shape their relationship anew. Sonya’s mother suffered from Alzheimer’s, which changed her character – whereas previously Sonya had experienced her as a stern mother who chastised her for being ‘frivolous’, she now ‘became a sweet person’: ‘It was a nice way to remember her’.¹⁶⁴⁶

Children’s own development also impacted their perspectives – David and Nad suggested that having their own children and the reflections this offered on parenthood

¹⁶⁴¹ Chaane, interview.

¹⁶⁴² Chaane, interview.

¹⁶⁴³ Maseko, interview.

¹⁶⁴⁴ Slovo, “Truth and Reconciliation,” 14.

¹⁶⁴⁵ Masemola-Jones, interview.

¹⁶⁴⁶ Lubner, interview.

drastically shifted their mindsets.¹⁶⁴⁷ Gerontologist Robert Butler, furthermore, suggests that people past their 60s often go through a ‘life review’, which also makes them more open to being interviewed.¹⁶⁴⁸ Zoya believed that she participated in this study due to her mother’s recent death.¹⁶⁴⁹ John Carneson started his memoir upon retiring.¹⁶⁵⁰ Linda, discussing Slovo’s memoir, also reflected on the passing of time in impacting her narrative about her parents. While an earlier memoir would have provided a ‘harsher’ perspective, she reflected:

I have a much warmer, softer, more understanding [now] and I don’t wish she would have done any differently and I don’t wish I had other parents, or that she was any different, because I am what I am because of that and whatever it was she was good or bad, you know, and I am quite comfortably in my skin (...)¹⁶⁵¹

As children aged, gained new perspectives through their own children, or reflected on life in retirement, their perspectives on their parents often softened, casting their childhood in new light.

Children sought out comfort and understanding in the productions created by other children of activists – Israel argues that Slovo’s movie ‘A World Apart’ helped children express their anger after they had previously felt invisible: ‘Shawn Slovo’s film used the device of fiction to cut through a tendency for South Africans in exile to avoid discussing their personal problems.’¹⁶⁵² This was also experienced by some of my interviewees, so

Merle recounted:

I remember Shawn Slovo’s movie, because that was the very first narrative that I ever got in touch with and actually it was when I was in Boston, so it was in about ‘89. And I just saw this movie and I thought “There is my life”. I’m watching, I’m watching myself. It was the most bizarre thing. I was observing, but I was one of the actors. I was there.¹⁶⁵³

¹⁶⁴⁷ Brown, interview; Nad Pillay, interview.

¹⁶⁴⁸ Ritchie, “Introduction,” 13.

¹⁶⁴⁹ Zoya Joseph, interview.

¹⁶⁵⁰ Carneson, *John and Ntombi*, 1.

¹⁶⁵¹ Shapiro, interview.

¹⁶⁵² Israel, “Living with ‘A World Apart’.”

¹⁶⁵³ Ruff, interview.

Merle has since sought out similar productions, such as Reviva Schermbrucker's 'Lucky Fisch' (2003) and Denis Hirson's 'My Thirty Minute Bar Mitzvah' (2022): 'I can't get enough of that material'.¹⁶⁵⁴ Some children also experienced Slovo's memoir in this way, although many others expressed extensive criticism of her book. It appears that especially those children who had struggled to make friends with other children of activists – a product of political and geographical factors (see Chapter 5) – have sought out these narratives of neglect, which serve to validate their own experiences.

Through therapy and personal research, children were able to revisit their childhoods and connect their experiences to developing scholarship on trauma. Peta underwent years of therapy to understand the psychological consequences of her childhood: '(...) we as the children of activists who were uprooted also survived another kind of trauma that I think in those days wasn't recognised as it is today.'¹⁶⁵⁵ Following his diagnosis with brain tumour, Nicholas experienced a moment of reflection.¹⁶⁵⁶ The severity of his illness forced him to engage with research on mother and child separation, neuroscience, and intergenerational trauma. He read Bessel van der Kolk's 'The Body Keeps the Score', a popular book on trauma, allowing him to gain a better understanding of the psychological and even physical consequences of his childhood trauma.¹⁶⁵⁷

Through these processes and over time, many children expressed a sense of having come to terms with their relationship to their parents. Andrew testified:

(...) every family has its own complex relations, but I can only speak for me personally. I personally feel I have no hang ups. About our life, what it's been the

¹⁶⁵⁴ Ruff, interview.

¹⁶⁵⁵ Peta Wolpe, interview.

¹⁶⁵⁶ Nicholas Wolpe, interview.

¹⁶⁵⁷ Bessel van der Kolk, *The Body Keeps the Score: brain, mind, and body in the healing of trauma* (New York: Penguin Books, 2015). Nicholas passed away in August 2024 after a two-year battle with brain tumour, about 1.5 years after participating in this study.

dynamics of it according to South African history and how that's affected our family. In many ways, I'll tell you straight, I'm kind of very happy, excited, and proud to have had parents and siblings as I have. Proud of my family and the role they've played in the South African struggle. There's sides of that, that have been difficult, difficult in family relationships that have caused all sorts of anxieties. But this is life and, and I've reconciled with that. Long ago.¹⁶⁵⁸

Nadine stated:

(...) I just think that we had an amazing upbringing. We, we just had all of these really incredible, intelligent humanitarian people around us. And that, that gave us a sense of, you know, our, our place in this world. And this sort of sense of wanting to really object to any injustice... that it was our duty to do so. So, I just feel very lucky about our backgrounds, our parents and the space that they gave us in this world, really.¹⁶⁵⁹

Nicholas, instead, indicated the dilemma that he faced, where he felt that it was right for his father to become politically active, but unfair of him for getting his children involved: 'All I see is, why did he have to get involved, or why did he have to have me?'¹⁶⁶⁰ Sonya faced a similar dilemma, she stated: '(...) I'm so proud of my parents. I just wish they'd been somebody else's parents.'¹⁶⁶¹

Over time, exile friendships and networks shifted. Particularly Lusaka children (and to some extent also children from other frontline states) continue to operate within their exile networks. Other children reflected on these interactions waning over time. Phola was still in touch with some exile friends due to their 'recognition of a shared history', although not as much as she liked to.¹⁶⁶² Busisiwe was also still connected to other children, although in her 2012 contribution to 'Prodigal Daughters', she reflected that her 'felt understanding of belonging to an extended family of loving, principled people' turned out to be a 'transitory'

¹⁶⁵⁸ Andrew Kasrils, interview.

¹⁶⁵⁹ Nannan, interview.

¹⁶⁶⁰ Nicholas Wolpe, interview (Bernstein).

¹⁶⁶¹ Lubner, interview.

¹⁶⁶² Mabizela-Mabaso, interview.

feeling upon ‘return’.¹⁶⁶³ While Reva is still somewhat connected to other Londoner exile children, she also reflected:

Now that community is sort of breaking down a bit because, you know, 30 years into democracy, there’s no more struggle. So, people who you would die for, you know, literally give up your life for that maybe you’re not so friendly with them anymore but you didn’t ever have to really like anybody. You were comrades, political, you know, you had political discipline and you did things that doesn’t necessarily [mean] you both like opera or, I don’t know, the same music or the same playing chess.¹⁶⁶⁴

As political circumstances changed, their bonds weakened. For Lynn, the political issues of the last thirty years led to a sense of distrust amongst former comrades.¹⁶⁶⁵

Despite now having lived in South Africa for decades, many children have continued to experience South Africa as ‘the real exile’, so Busisiwe recounted:

(...) I felt at home in Zambia, I felt at home in London...I don’t think I’ve ever quite... I felt sort of at home in South Africa, not entirely because I realise I don’t think the same as other people.¹⁶⁶⁶

Kethiwe described her failure to fit into South Africa:

(...) sometimes I wake up and think, if only I’d been born in KZN [KwaZulu Natal, where her parents were from], and could speak Zulu, and could be a real part of South Africa, because I’m really not in other people’s sense a South African. They still think I’m an English girl. And I’m so desperate...desperate to be South African and to be integrated into this country, but I would never be...¹⁶⁶⁷

Their sense of dislocation has been accentuated by the political developments of the last thirty years. In the current political climate, many children prefer to identify with a sense of cosmopolitanism and the ANC pre-1990 in an attempt to split the current ANC from that of their childhood.¹⁶⁶⁸ The extracts from two interviews with Phola – one from 1991 and one from 2023 – are perhaps most illuminating. In the 1991 interview, she stated that she had

¹⁶⁶³ Chaane, *Prodigal Daughters*, 48.

¹⁶⁶⁴ Reva, interview.

¹⁶⁶⁵ Carneson-McGregor, interview.

¹⁶⁶⁶ Chaane, interview; De Sas Kropiwnicki, *Exile*, 212.

¹⁶⁶⁷ Ngcobo, interview.

¹⁶⁶⁸ In Chapter 3, I briefly discussed exiled children’s turn towards a cosmopolitan identity while apartheid was still ongoing.

always been able to identify herself as South African.¹⁶⁶⁹ In the 2023 interview, she, instead, chose to emphasise her multicultural background:

I see myself as a mixed... a person of mixed heritage. There is a part of me that is predominantly Mozambican because that was my most favourite place to live as a child, there's the me that was born in Swaziland, there is the me that feels that I came of age in the United States as a young student at university, and then there's the adult me that has made a family in South Africa, so I see myself as having mixed heritage.¹⁶⁷⁰

Similarly, Ntombi argued:

I was always South Africa, always South African. (...) you know, I often, when people say to me, what do you think you are, I always say 'I'm a citizen of the world' (...).¹⁶⁷¹

The change in tense suggests that while she used to feel distinctly South African in exile, she now identifies with an internationalised idea. Other children echoed this cosmopolitan, international identification – Busisiwe described herself as a 'citizen of the world'.¹⁶⁷² Nad framed his lack of belonging positively, seeing it as the reason for his ability to fit in anywhere.¹⁶⁷³ De Sas Kropiwnicki argues that children were 'accepting and embracing the experience of exile – and the state of liminality it invokes' by positioning themselves as children of the world.¹⁶⁷⁴ As the exiled South African poet Breyten Breytenbach wrote: 'Henceforth you are at home nowhere, and by that token everywhere.'¹⁶⁷⁵

Children's experience of political deterioration and rising crime rates has also impacted the desire of some children to leave South Africa again. Shaping her decision to emigrate, Msimang wrote: 'I am out of step; more exile than I thought.'¹⁶⁷⁶ In 2014, she and

¹⁶⁶⁹ Phola Mabizela, interview (SAHA).

¹⁶⁷⁰ Mabizela-Mabaso, interview.

¹⁶⁷¹ Langa-Royds, interview.

¹⁶⁷² Chaane, interview.

¹⁶⁷³ Nad Pillay, interview.

¹⁶⁷⁴ De Sas Kropiwnicki, *Exile*, 254.

¹⁶⁷⁵ Breyten Breytenbach, *The Memory of Birds in Times of Revolution* (Cape Town: Human & Rousseau, 1996), 42.

¹⁶⁷⁶ Msimang, *Always Another Country*, 322.

her family moved first to Mozambique, before relocating to Australia.¹⁶⁷⁷ Nicholas, Tessa, and Linda all also voiced an interest in leaving the country – for Nicholas, this was propelled by concerns for his family, but also ‘for selfish reasons, for emotional reasons, for personal reasons, for the anguish I feel inside of me, for the betrayal I feel’.¹⁶⁷⁸ Meanwhile, Stephanie argued that she felt incapable of leaving the country despite its political issues, expressing her desire to continue fighting for South Africa.¹⁶⁷⁹

Conclusion

This chapter shows how the transitional period and the post-apartheid period – marked by political upheavals, institutional reckonings, and personal changes – have shaped how activists’ children remember their childhood in the struggle, and position themselves in South African history and the post-apartheid state. In doing so, this chapter underscores a memory and oral history approach that calls for a ‘double-take approach’: looking at both the ‘past (history) and the past in the present (memory)’.¹⁶⁸⁰

In contrast to existing scholarship, which has focused on returnees, I showed that a substantial number of my interviewees did not ‘return’ to South Africa or delayed their ‘return’. Many of the individuals I interviewed, some of whom were born as early as 1943, had built up their lives in exile, established careers, professional networks, as well as families, and were reluctant to abandon these to ‘return’ to South Africa, wary of imposing the same sense of dislocation on their own children.

¹⁶⁷⁷ Msimang, *Always Another Country*, 353.

¹⁶⁷⁸ Nicholas Wolpe, interview. It is worth noting that I interviewed Nicholas after he was accused of misuse of funds at Liliesleaf (following his public criticism of the state’s lack of support for the heritage and arts sector during the Covid-19 pandemic), causing Liliesleaf to shut down permanently.

¹⁶⁷⁹ Stephanie, interview.

¹⁶⁸⁰ Thomson, “Memory,” 91.

The sudden possibility of ‘return’ – along with children’s fraught experiences upon ‘return’ and their disillusionment with South Africa’s political trajectory – shook children’s sense of identification with South Africa. In response, children have turned towards cosmopolitan, internationalised identities.

What this chapter highlighted is that for children of activists, the formal end to apartheid was not simply an endpoint, but the beginning of a complex process of reckoning with the meaning of their childhood. By foregrounding this interplay between past and present, this chapter has shown how children’s narratives can illuminate the enduring personal and political consequences of liberation. Additionally, this chapter has underscored a central argument of this thesis: for the children of activists, the entanglement of the personal and the political endures, shaping not only how they remember the past but how they navigate the present South Africa – both in the public and the private sphere.

By interrogating how children have publicly positioned themselves as children of activists, I have shown how children have sought justice for their parents, acknowledgement for their parents’ legacy, critiqued political developments, publicly reckoned with their parents’ actions, and laid claims to the post-apartheid nation. These acts emphasise the difficult balance that children strike as they straddle the public and the personal. Through memoirs, plays, and films, children have sought to reclaim the political and the public as personal. Yet, by using public forums for this process, children incur an inherent contradiction: they reclaim the public as personal, but it is precisely their personal connection to their parents that grants them public visibility and, in turn, subjects them to public scrutiny.

Their experiences – and the critical reception of their narratives – raise questions about the extent to which activists’ children are allowed to claim ownership over their own histories and their parents’ legacies. This tension is evident in their exclusion from parental foundations, in the public backlash to Slovo’s memoir, and in the rebukes faced by those who opposed amnesty for their parents’ killers. Such responses reveal how these children’s narratives diverged from dominant imaginings of the post-apartheid nation and for that reason, were subsequently marginalised in public discourse. For historians, this chapter thus underscores the importance of situating all narratives within the political and cultural contexts that shaped their production and reception. As the ANC’s historical and moral authority has eroded amid ongoing mismanagement, scandal, and corruption, new spaces are emerging in which these alternative narratives can be articulated and heard, and histories, both private and public, can be reshaped.

Lastly, as long as children’s claim to the public rests on their relationship to their parents – rather than on their own achievements – whether in memoirs or when invoking their ‘political childhood’ to critique current developments, they are conceptually not allowed to grow up: they remain children even in adulthood.

Chapter 9: Conclusion

At the heart of this thesis stands an oral history project with 45 children of activists, born between 1943 and 1976. Their parents were politically active in the PAC, the Black Sash, and the BCM, but primarily the ANC/Congress Alliance. This thesis has sought to illuminate the ways in which these children experienced and interpreted their parents' political commitments, and how those experiences shaped their own, often diverging, political trajectories. By interviewing individuals born over three decades, in South Africa and in exile, this thesis has traced the patterns of repression, community, politicisation, and support that shaped these children's lives over time and place.

The use of oral history interviews and memoirs made it possible not only to examine children's lived experiences, but also to interrogate how memory itself has been reshaped by time, political development, and personal reflection, and to explore children's current positioning in South Africa's public sphere.

Significance of Research

At the beginning, I argued that the children of anti-apartheid activists have long remained hidden in plain sight. Despite the numerous available primary sources, they have been largely absent from academic scholarship. This absence is not coincidental. In post-apartheid South Africa, academic engagement with children's experiences risks becoming entangled with thorny debates about nepotism, memory, and nation-building. As early as 1997, Israel noted:

What has happened to the second generation is one of the loose ends of exile that has never been properly studied. It has been a politically inconvenient and distinctly unexotic issue. I believe that it is now appropriate to look beyond the political needs

of liberation movements and investigate the human cost to their members of engaging in a national liberation struggle.¹⁶⁸¹

Nearly three decades later, Israel's observation remains strikingly relevant. The complexity of South Africa's heroes continues to evoke public discomfort: while their political achievements are (and should be) celebrated, the human cost of activism – borne not only by activists themselves but also by their children – remains underacknowledged. Recognising the nuances in activists' legacies does not diminish their contribution to democracy; rather, it acknowledges them as fully human, with contradictions and vulnerabilities that shaped their families as much as the nation.

Recent years have seen a slow shift, with increasing cultural productions beginning to place activists' children more firmly within the mainstream narrative. As argued in Chapter 8, this shift coincides with children's growing dissatisfaction with the ANC in the wake of mismanagement and scandals, leaving them increasingly willing to publicly disentangle themselves from the ANC. Meanwhile, the party's loss of its monopoly over the historical narrative has opened space for these children's voices.

In addressing this long-standing academic omission, the significance of this research is threefold. Firstly, it expands the growing body of 'personal histories' of the South African liberation struggle by foregrounding the perspectives of activists' children. Whereas much of the existing scholarship has concentrated on the ANC in exile after 1976, this study brings attention to children born in earlier decades and to those who remained in South Africa. In doing so, it demonstrates how shifting activist landscapes shaped children's experiences of repression, community, support, and politicisation.

¹⁶⁸¹ Israel, "Living with 'A World Apart'."

Secondly, this thesis complements and extends the work of scholars such as Madeleine Fullard, Fran Buntman, and Paul Gready, who have documented activists' experiences of repression, detention, and imprisonment.¹⁶⁸² Throughout this thesis, I have shown that such narratives often obscure children's experiences, relegating them to the margins. By placing children at the heart of the story, my work reveals how political violence reverberated through families.

Finally, by examining how political values were passed down across generations and exposing the personal costs of anti-apartheid activism, this work highlights the lives of activists' children as an enduring but neglected legacy of apartheid, inadequately addressed by the TRC and other processes of reckoning. While scholars have long emphasised apartheid's role in fracturing South African family life, the families of activists stand as a particularly searing example of this legacy.

Key Argument

The radically shifting political landscape in South Africa and in exile from the late 1940s to the 1990s underpinned children's diverging experiences. When (and at what age) children encountered their parents' activism – and the associated repression – played a decisive role in shaping their experiences and, so this thesis argues, their political trajectories. The shifting political context determined the forms of violence they endured at the hands of apartheid agents, the roles and responsibilities children assumed, the type of community and support available, and their opportunities for politicisation.

¹⁶⁸² Fullard, "State repression"; Buntman, *Robben Island*; Gready, *Writing as Resistance*.

Psychological research highlights not only the importance of children understanding the persecution that they faced, but also the role of community and ideology in helping children cope with adversity. Understanding how children were politicised, and the ways they were integrated – or excluded – from their parents’ movements, is therefore crucial. Those who experienced high levels of secrecy under repression and had only limited contact with their parents’ communities – offering few opportunities for political participation – were more likely to experience psychological strain. Chapters 3 and 4 examined children’s encounters with apartheid repression in South Africa and in exile, while Chapters 5 and 6 explored the processes of politicisation, through which children gained an understanding of their own place in the struggle, learning an ‘emotional formation’.¹⁶⁸³ Chapter 7 analysed the opportunities available to children for engaging in activism, demonstrating how exclusion from their parents’ movement and fraught relationships with parents prompted children to find new avenues for participation in other socio-political movements, or seek safety in non-political spaces. Chapter 8 focused on the post-1990 period, tracing children’s ‘return’ (or lack thereof) to South Africa, as well as exploring how children have positioned themselves in South African society today.

To demonstrate my argument, I traced children’s experiences from the late 1940s to the 1990s. Children who had spent their formative years in the late 1940s and early 1950s experienced a more overt political climate, in which children were readily exposed to their parents’ activism and their highly social, often mixed-raced political communities, which offered support, socialisation, and politicisation, despite some levels of state repression. Children also engaged with political children’s groups and alternative sites of struggle

¹⁶⁸³ Vallgård et al., “Emotions and the Global Politics of Childhood,” 20.

education – these not only posed a politicising influence but also enabled children to interact with each other.

As the political situation deteriorated following the Treason Trial of 1956, older children became activists themselves, joining their parents' political organisations. For those born in the late 1940s and 1950s, their formative years were marked by this escalating repression: they witnessed their parents being persecuted, banned, detained, and imprisoned, while they themselves became targets of the state's physical and psychological warfare. Due to increasing secrecy, these younger children were largely cut off from politicisation processes. As organisations moved underground and children-specific groups disbanded, children no longer participated by default in political activities, nor were they exposed to other activists to the same extent. Deprived of information, younger children experienced their parents' absence as abandonment. Older children assumed increasing responsibilities at home, caring for younger siblings and managing the household, while supporting parents in prison or detention. By the 1960s, thousands of activists had left South Africa for exile, increasing the sense of isolation amongst remaining children. As these children became older, some became involved in the university movement in the late 1960s and early 1970s, but many children, scarred by their childhood experiences and unable to enter their parents' movements, sought stability and safety outside of politics.

In exile, the ANC established a 'state-in-exile' with children-specific provisions and institutions, including an educational policy designed to cultivate the next generation of freedom fighters and contributors to the post-apartheid nation.¹⁶⁸⁴ However, these institutions were only established following the 1976 Soweto Uprising; those who

¹⁶⁸⁴ Lodge, "State of Exile," 27.

experienced childhood in exile prior to 1976 did not benefit from these institutions, instead relying on their parents' communities and informal support networks.

Alongside time, I argued that location played a critical role in shaping children's experiences. The geopolitical context of their exile location shaped not only their integration in and interactions with their host state, but also the extent to which they were still exposed to Pretoria's threat. Comparing Lusaka, London, Maputo, and Mazimbu furthermore highlights the differences in children's exposure to processes of politicisation. While children in the frontline states faced higher risks from apartheid agents, they also benefited from stronger, family-like political communities, children-specific groups (after 1976), frequent interactions with other activists, and a strong sense of identification with the liberation movement and South Africa. As children grew up, they contributed to the struggle by joining MK or taking up ANC scholarships for further education.

In contrast, children in London – and the broader UK – faced high levels of racism and xenophobia. Political communities were fragmented along racial, ethnic, and political lines. London's size contributed to children's isolation and weaker integration into their parents' political movements, complicating their identification with South Africa and their adherence to this 'emotional formation'. Amidst these difficulties, the Woodcraft Folk offered children the chance for belonging and support; meanwhile South Africa-specific youth groups struggled to take root. Alternative socio-political movements in the UK provided avenues for children to enact their 'disposition for activism' when they felt excluded from their parents' networks.

In South Africa, the eruption of the Soweto Uprising and the student protests and township revolts of the 1980s marked a resurgence in activism. While repression – including the assassination of activists and the detentions of thousands of children – reached new heights, children of activists were once more exposed to their parents’ political activities. Emerging youth groups provided avenues for politicisation and structural opportunities for children to participate as activists.

The impact of race on these children’s lives, both in the highly racialised South African society, but also in exile, cannot be overstated. In South Africa, children of colour faced more persistent and violent persecution by apartheid agents; even very young children were physically harassed to intimidate their parents or extract information. Their families also bore significant economic strain, often having foregone stable employment for the sake of activism. Trials, bans, and harassment made steady work nearly impossible, and activists of colour were frequently banished to remote areas with limited access to income-making opportunities. By contrast, white families often relied on domestic workers, who provided emotional support and care, a resource less accessible to families of colour. Race also shaped children’s routes into exile: black families were less likely to emigrate to the UK or other Western countries due to financial constraints, limited networks, and immigration barriers. In the frontline states, they were exposed to greater physical risks. At the same time, children of colour were less likely to be socially excluded from their communities, which provided critical practical and moral support, whereas white children faced ostracism from peers and even extended family.

This research demonstrated that children of activists were not a homogenous group, but that their experiences of repression, community, support, and politicisation varied

markedly across time and place, complicating the notion of a singular ‘child of activist’ experience. In addition to this core argument, I want to reflect on three overarching themes that have run across all chapters: children’s engagement with politics, the entanglement of the personal and the political, and the construction of childhood as a social category.

Children’s Engagement with Political Activity

While many anti-apartheid activists’ autobiographical writings have often created a divide between their political work and their home lives, their children’s testimonies centre the home as the primary arena of repression. In doing so, their recollections disrupt the public-private dichotomy that continues to dominate political history.¹⁶⁸⁵ At home, children encountered surveillance, raids, the constant harassment of the SB, and the visible strain on their parents’ mental health. As a consequence, children experienced a constant sense of insecurity with detrimental impacts on children’s long term psychological adjustments. Crucially, this insecurity did not end with exile; it followed them across borders and continued to shape children’s fears and imagination.

The home was also a key arena for children’s politicisation. In Chapter 5, I argued that children were politicised through five interconnected processes, including 1. direct interactions with their parents, 2. through exposure to apartheid’s violence, 3. through ‘participation by default’, 4. in peripheral spaces, and 5. through children-specific groups or alternative sites of education.¹⁶⁸⁶ I argued that these processes occurred primarily in the two overlapping spaces of the home and the community. At home, children interacted directly with their parents and their political ideologies through lively discussions and literature

¹⁶⁸⁵ The more recent exceptions to this pattern in autobiographical writings were discussed in the *Literature Review*.

¹⁶⁸⁶ Rodgers, *Children in Social Movements*, 1-2.

(process 1). Here, children were also exposed to the state's violence (process 2). At home, children furthermore witnessed their parents' (secretive) meetings, social interactions with other activists, assisted their parents by folding leaflets or making banners, and witnessed their parents' lived ideologies (processes 3 and 4).

Children's experiences of their parents' activities at home – in the peripheral spaces – and as they interacted with other activists also highlights some of the methods through which children gathered information in an increasingly more secretive environment. Rather than actively knowing about their parents' activities and motivations, children sensed what was happening, reading into their parents' anxious faces, overhearing snippets of information, or picking up on other clues. In Chapter 5, I argued that children's engagement with their parents' activism is similar to how children of holocaust survivors and other atrocities sensed information in the absence of actual experiences, as discussed in transgenerational trauma studies.

This thesis also highlights how children engaged with politics through emotions. Chapter 6 focused on the narratives of sacrifice and the political family, arguing that these formed an 'emotional formation'.¹⁶⁸⁷ This 'emotional formation' prioritised the political over the personal and replaced the immediate family with the political family, positioning children as a necessary sacrifice in the struggle for South Africa's future. Through this 'emotional formation', children did not just learn about their parents' political line but also how to feel about their own place within the struggle. Children who were less integrated into their parents' movement as a consequence of the changing political context struggled to

¹⁶⁸⁷ Vallgård et al., "Emotions and the Global Politics of Childhood," 20.

learn this ‘emotional formation’ and challenged its underlying ideas, leaving children feeling bewildered and isolated.

While the home and parents played a key role, this thesis has also highlighted the influence of other activists in politicising – and even recruiting – children. This reflects existing research in political science and sociology that centres the role of direct parent to child transference of political ideas, while also highlighting the importance of other politicising agents.

The Political Is Personal

For the children of activists, the political was inseparable from the personal – not only because the state’s repression reached into their homes, but also because their often-fraught relationships with their parents profoundly shaped their own political trajectories. Throughout the thesis, I have shown how individual family dynamics – including the level of information parents shared, their approach to the idea of the ‘political family’ and the concept of exile, the weight of parents’ own trauma, and their efforts to recreate a ‘normal’ family life – could mitigate or amplify children’s circumstances.

Chapter 8 revealed how the political remained personal even after the end of apartheid, as children’s narratives became caught up in memory culture. For many children of activists, it was also extremely painful and disillusioning to see the moral decline of their ‘political family’ as former activists turned politicians became implicated in corruption, scandals, and crime. Their personal memories of the struggle and identifications with South Africa are shaped not just by their personal, but also political developments.

Constructions of Childhood

Lastly, this thesis has critically engaged with the conceptual construction of childhood, thereby contributing to the history of childhood in South Africa – a field that has largely focused on youth participation in the Soweto Uprising and the township revolts of the 1980s. This study extends that conversation in three key ways.

Firstly, it foregrounds the roles that children assumed as a direct consequence of their parents' political activity. In the absence of parents, older children took on caregiving responsibilities for siblings, supported families financially, and took on domestic and emotional labour (sometimes aided by domestic workers in wealthier households). They delivered food and laundry to imprisoned parents, wrote letters, and, if old enough, visited them. When their parents were banned or otherwise restricted, children spoke on their behalf, disseminated their political messages, and negotiated with the government, the media, and the public for leniency or publicity. The pressures these responsibilities placed on children, as well as the persecution they experienced at the hand of apartheid agents, caused children to feel that they had grown up faster than others their age. Ruth makes the social construction of childhood as a period of safety and few responsibilities clear, when she wrote:

I tell myself that my childhood was extreme, it was not normal, but over the years I have taken my pain for granted and hold onto it as part of my identity. But *what if* I had been secure and rooted and confident? (...) *What if my childhood had not been stolen from me?*¹⁶⁸⁸ [italics in original]

This sense of premature ageing also resonated with experiences voiced by children of colour – Lungi Sisulu, for example, stated that he 'had to give up [his] childhood' (see Chapter 5). Yet, it is also essential to note that regardless of whether their parents were

¹⁶⁸⁸ Carneson, *Girl on the Edge*, Chapter 45.

politically active or not, many children of colour never experienced this safe, carefree childhood within the apartheid system.¹⁶⁸⁹

Secondly, I interrogated the label ‘child of activists’ and asked who is seen – and remembered – as such. I argued that children who became activists themselves are rarely remembered as ‘children of’; indeed, many have consciously shed the label to avoid accusations of nepotism. In contrast, those who did not pursue political activism and have written memoirs or published other cultural productions on their experiences since remain defined by this relational identity, perceived as children even into adulthood.

Thirdly, in post-apartheid South Africa, children have used this relational label to critique the political establishment. Chapter 8 suggested that children evoke(d) a ‘political childhood’, similar to the concept of ‘political widowhood’, by presenting themselves as the carriers of their parents’ political legacy and by claiming proximity to the country’s most celebrated leaders. Through their political narratives, children not only critique the current state of affairs, but also theorise the post-apartheid nation that did not come to be.

Research Limitations and Avenues of Future Research

The demographic profile of my interviewees reflected an overrepresentation of white and Indian South Africans, and an underrepresentation of black and Coloured South Africans. While I sought to mitigate this imbalance through the use of previously recorded interviews, and by critically examining both the impact of race on children’s experiences and the reasons underlying this bias, the thesis – constrained by time restrictions – would nonetheless have been strengthened by further research on the experiences of black and Coloured children.

¹⁶⁸⁹ Bills, “Lungi Sisulu.”

In addition, although this thesis gave some attention to the children of PAC, NEUM, LP Black Sash, and BCM activists, much of my research on the movement's ideological treatment of children is based on the ANC's institutions and political thought. Further research into how other liberation movements, particularly the PAC and BCM, conceptualised children and childhood is needed.

During fieldwork in South Africa in 2023, access to the IDAF Welfare files at the Mayibuye Archives (UWC) was restricted. Similarly, I was unable to consult the Cowley Papers at UCT due to the 2021 Jagger Library fire; while the papers survived, severe water damage necessitated conservation work. These archival constraints prevented in-depth research into the institutional and formalised support available to children in South Africa and exile, creating opportunity for future research should circumstances change.

While I consulted activists' memoirs and accessed some previously recorded oral histories, I did not conduct interviews with activists – children's parents – themselves, choosing to focus on children's perspectives. There is limited scholarly work on political parenting from an individual perspective, rather than the institutional perspective that I discussed in the *Literature Review*, opening up the possibility for further research. Researchers rely on a small number of recently published memoirs, predominantly authored by women, to understand activists' individual approach to children.

Equally, future research could explore the experiences of activists' grandchildren to understand how values, political ideas, and even trauma were transmitted to the subsequent generation. While this thesis briefly touched on grandchildren in Chapter 8, further research

would provide a more systematic understanding. Emerging sources, such as Ndileka Mandela's previously mentioned memoir and Otua Sobukwe's recollections in Pogrund's recent work on her grandfather, Robert Sobukwe, indicate that a growing body of material already exists to support such studies.¹⁶⁹⁰

Lastly, while I have alluded to the differing expectations placed on female and male activists throughout this thesis, further research would also enable the opportunity to use a children-centric approach to gain a more nuanced understanding of activists themselves. By experiencing their parents' activism through a social lens, children's recollections illuminate the everyday dimensions of the struggle that have remained mostly invisible in historical accounts. Children's perspective could furthermore challenge gendered conceptions of activism: in light of women usually acting as the primary caregiver, children were exposed more frequently to their mothers' political work, while fathers' political work tended to remain more elusive. In this way, a child-centred approach not only deepens our understanding of the social fabric of the liberation movement but also offers a fresh perspective on the growing body of research into women's contributions to the anti-apartheid struggle.

¹⁶⁹⁰ Mandela, *I am Ndileka*; Otua Sobukwe, "Sharing my grandfather 's pains and hopes," in *Robert Mangaliso Sobukwe – new reflections*, ed. Benjamin Pogrund (Johannesburg: Jonathan Ball Publishers, 2019): 243-253.

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