Youth and Political Violence: The problem of anomie and the role of youth organisations

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Young people are in the process of building, but for that very reason they are the incomplete. They are unknown quantities fraught with limitless possibilities. Young people bring with them the winds of change and reform, and they are the possessors of an enormous and irrepressible vitality. There is little that can equal the greatness of youth … . We must realise that every young person that lives is to some extent fired by the youthful passions coursing through his veins. If only firm direction and purpose can be given to these passions, then there is absolutely no doubt that the young can learn to contribute to the welfare of society and live lives that are meaningful. (cited in Mtshali; 1988:1)

I am, in this paper, going to attempt to examine the various areas of township youth's lives which have almost completely broken down, particularly the family and the schools. These areas of life are also the sites of violence which form a daily part of African youths' lives. I argue that the traditional authority of the parents and teachers no longer has the legitimacy that it once had and this leaves a huge gap in the lives of youths that desperately needs to be filled. The political activities and experiences of youth are, of course, another major site of violence. In all areas of life, therefore, youth have come to learn that violence is the most effective method of problem-solving. The youth of South Africa are constantly accused of political destabilisation owing to their acts of political violence.

In using the term "political violence", I will make use of Gurr's working definition: "… political violence refers to all collective attacks within a political community against the political regime, its actors – including competing political groups as well as incumbents – or its policies … the explanation is not limited to that of property … . Political violence is in turn subsumed under force, the use or threat of violence by any

party or institution to attain ends within or outside the political order. The definition is not based on a pre-judgement that political violence is undesirable" (1970:4). This paper, in turn, does not judge political violence but insists that this needs to be guided with particular goals in sight and with a basis of reasonable expectations. I am going to narrow this paper down to dealing with the ANC Youth League and draw some conclusions from the work I have been doing with youth in this structure within Diepkloof, Soweto. (Most of the primary data was collected in 1991 and 1992.

In this paper, I am going to make use of Durkheim's concept of "anomie" as a starting point for understanding the normative state of the townships. Most people would probably be shocked by this starting point. Durkheim is not the most popular social theorist, particularly among the left. It is argued that Durkheim is inherently conservative owing to his concern with social stability and cohesion – all of which seem grossly inappropriate to South Africa, a country riddled with conflict and tension.

Frank Pearce in his book *The Radical Durkheim* states that in reading a particular theorist, the text of the theorist and the reader's own concerns become a dialogue. The concerns of the reader affect the manner in which all texts are read and interpreted. In doing so new spaces are opened for both the reader and the theorist. Pearce prefaces his book by stating the following:

Why should we turn to Durkheim's work yet again? First, because, contrary to almost universal consensus amongst sociologists, in Durkheim's texts neither the dominant discourses, nor those present only as partially suppressed fragments can be construed as inherently conservative or positivistic. His oeuvre is complex, multi-faceted, often characterised by a ruthlessly anti-Uptopian logic, and with an extraordinary potential fruitfulness. Then, to put it simply, it is because as a committed socialist and social scientist I believe that whilst Marxism is the most fruitful of all sociological discourses it needs the aid of Durkheim's concepts to rid itself of both its Utopianism and anthropocentrism. (1989: xiv)

For Durkheim, we need to study the "moral rules as they really exist in society, in all their complexity" (Giddens, 1977:.3). In order for people to live a contented existence in society, there needs to be regulative power that is respected. There needs in society to be norms and values that are internalised by individuals in society and enforced by a legitimate authority. The society needs to limit the expectations of the individual in accordance with the resources available in the society. This is not to say that no norms or values exist. Likewise, in the township there is not a moral vacuum, but rather a lack of a normal moral authority particularly in relation to youth. Of course, optimally for Durkheim this should occur in a social order that is just and democratic. For Durkheim, the main problem of modern society is that the moral regulators of the past, eg. a strong kinship network, a forceful church, have not been replaced by any other moral authority. The anomic state of society is such that society

has broken away from moral bonds of traditionalism, but have not yet become subject to new and more appropriate moral regulation.

A need, a desire free of all restraints, and all rules, no longer geared to some determinate objective, and through this same connection, limited and contained, can be nothing but a source of constant anguish for the person experiencing. (Durkheim, 1961:40)

A new moral authority needs to be developed to help bring about a new moral order in which the individual's needs will no longer outstrip their means. This moral authority needs to be based on respect and not on fear. This paper does not argue as Durkheim does that the whole of modern society is going through a period of moral deregulation. However, what the paper does argue, is that where "traditional" arenas of authority and moral regulation have broken down (such as the family and the schools), there is a definite need for the construction of a legitimate institution to take over this role. *The lack of such an institution leads to unrealisable goals, inappropriate means and a state of anxiety and frustration.* This paper will argue that in the immediate future and in the longer term, the "new moral institution" with regard to the youth that needs to be strengthened and developed is that of youth organisations together with a more mature and disciplined youth leadership. A new "moral power is required whose superiority cries out 'you must go no further'" (Durkheim, cited in Giddens, 1977:177).

Of course, this is not to argue, as might seem implicit in Durkheim's writing, that the individual in society must simply adhere to the status quo regardless of the inequalities that exist. Durkheim himself is vehemently opposed to any form of inequality based on one group of people imposing their power on another. For Durkheim, any inequality in society should be based on natural (ie. biological/inherent) inequality. He goes as far as to say that inherited wealth should be redistributed or auctioned off so that all people in society start off on an equal footing. Of course, in South Africa it is the structural inequality of an apartheid, capitalist state that is at the root of political violence. *Nonetheless, the aspirations, anger and expectations of the youth need to be guided by some form of legitimate authority.* This authority needs to be able to mediate between means and ends, as well as mediate between the needs of society and the needs of the individual.

One way to substantially alleviate the manifest "problems of youth" is the organising of youth into youth structures that are legitimate to youth and which have a strong, experienced and informed leadership. Such organisations of the youth have in the past, particularly in the 1980s, formed the base of developing shared norms, values, expectations and aspirations. They have also guided the behaviour of youth through disciplined and respected leadership. In the 1990s with similar material conditions facing the youth, worsened to some extent by the uncertainty and destabilisation of a transitional phase, these organisational structures are urgently needed. Unfortunately, at this time when they are needed, they appear to be in a less coherent state than in the 1980s. At this point in our history when understandably frustration, and simultaneously, expectations are running high, anger needs to be expressed and channelled in the most productive and directed manner possible.

Political violence particularly, needs to be disciplined, ordered and clearly related to the goals that are to be achieved.

(The debate as to whether violence is acceptable or not will not be dealt with here). Moreover, alternatives to violence need to be developed – but these will only be adhered to if the moral boundaries developed are subject to the monitoring of a legitimate authority. Moral norms and values need, for Durkheim, not only to be constraining and obligatory, but also attractive to those who adhere to them.

Of course, the key concerns facing youth are unemployment; the crisis in education; family breakdown, teenage pregnancy, and the general disillusionment owing to most youth's socio-economic conditions. Ramphele states in describing the state of black communities that there is "low performance in all spheres of life including school and skills training. High crime rate and endemic violence at all levels of social interaction: family, interpersonal, neighbourhood, and wider community" (1991:34). Similarly, Sitas states of the comrades that "existence as a comrade is [also] punctuated by poverty and a total lack of resources" (1991:7).

However, these "concerns" (and the youth in the township through their own painful experiences are aware of this) are not going to change significantly for some time, even with a change of government and constitution. *The genuine frustration, anger and disillusionment of youth cannot be left to fester and develop its own disorganised methods of problem-solving.* South Africa's history bears testimony that this leads to gang involvement and consequent acts of criminality (Glaser; La Hause; Bonner).

The Background to Township Youth

In writing this paper and in stating the above, it is necessary to first understand who these youth are about which I speak. It is not a new point to state that the youth in South Africa are not a homogenous grouping. "… the tendency to refer only to young urban males must be avoided, and the particular problems of women and youth in rural areas must be recognised" (Report on Marginalised Youth Conference, Alpha Training Centre, Broederstroom, 7-9 June 1991). More importantly, as Sitas states, writing of the comrades (with whom I will largely concern myself),

they are young (below 35): yes, most of them come from embattled working class homesteads and households; yes, *most of their cultural codes emerge outside households and kinship relations*; yes, many are unemployed. But, among the phenomenon called comrades we will find full wage earners, informal sector vendors, university graduates, political activists, schoolchildren, shop stewards, petty criminals and lumpenproletarians. (1991:6)

To take this heterogeneity further, I would like to add that the home backgrounds from which youth emerge are vast. Many of the youth which we see in township youth

organisations are from the most terrible and humiliating conditions of squalor where some whom I have met live not with their parents, but with siblings. In one case two sisters live together in a squatter shelter – both are still at school. Others come from matchbox homes and yet others from homes which are relatively lower middle class. Very few are from so-called "middle class" homes. Amongst the youth with whom I have had contact, there appears to be a unity across so-called class divisions and a general acceptance of one another's living conditions. The majority of youth involved in the youth organisation on which my research has been based are either unemployed or school-going youth from families who could dubiously be called working class or from the squatter camps themselves. The lives of these youth are bounded by material deprivation and little chance of upward mobility.

The tensions in these youth's families have generally led to family disintegration and in most cases to separation between the parents of the family. In fact, it seems that in many cases in terms of urban households, it is not easy to speak about coherent family structures. Brigalia Bam, in the preface to Gill Straker's *Faces in the Revolution* (based on interviews and therapeutic work with youth from Leandra township) states that "most of the young interviewed have no stable family unit, many come from single family homes or homes with no parents at all. They had been left with relatives and neighbours, deprived of opportunities for decent schooling and drenched in a culture of violence with no positive role models" (1992:xi).

Geber and Newman in *Soweto's Children* write that "the main complaints (of youth respondents in Soweto) were to do with the relationship between parents and children during the time they spend together – the dictatorial attitudes of the father, the lack of acceptance of the young person as someone with opinions and feelings, the absence of discussion and consultation" (1980:56). They continue by stating that "the rejection of authority and a lack of respect for adults, both parents and teachers, was seen as a consequence of absent and insensitive parenting. It affects the child's adjustment to school, his willingness to take on the appropriate responsibilities, to follow instruction and to respond to guidance. It also makes the peer group a very powerful controlling and socialising force" (1980, P.57).

For Mokwena, "the failure and inability of families to minister to the material and emotional needs of youths partly also explains the ease with which youth easily slide into a life of the streets. It is here that many receive their orientation into a life of violence and crime" (1991:17). It is my hypothesis that in understanding youth culture, the primary variable that needs to be examined is the role and nature of family structures and the "gap" this leaves in youth's lives that needs to be filled.

Only sometimes I tell my problems to my parents. If I have a problem of money, I don't tell them. They may send me away if I tell them problems … . They would send me to stay with my uncle or other relatives. Like December time I will go there. I don't want to move from Soweto. Soweto is my township that I know where my friends are. (respondent 4)

There are also high incidences of family violence both toward the mothers of families as well as toward the children of these families. My work with youth in Diepkloof has shown that this has two possible effects on the consciousness of youth. Either youth

are distressed and appalled by this domestic violence, if not against their own person, at least against their mothers whom they feel do not deserve to be "punished". This of course can lead to further disrespect for their fathers whom they see as "bullies" and often towards their mothers whom they resent for their powerlessness in their relationship.

You know when it comes to the question of my father, I hate my father. I hate my father just like I hate the policeman, ja. I've many scratches in me, many, many. Here my father hit me with a broken jug. My father was beating my mother. I say no, no, no, now that is enough now. Beating my mother like this now I'm too small, but what you are doing is wrong. You coming from outside, you are drinking a liquor … I say to my father he is taking a chance. He come to me with a knife. I take an electric iron and put it here to his face. Till today, I didn't see my father. (respondent 10)

On the other hand, this can lead to an acceptance of violence within the family and moreover a justification of this as part and parcel of "African tradition". "In a recent study on the attitudes of ordinary black children to discipline, it was found that they favoured harsh discipline for what seemed to be fairly minor infringements even within their family circles … . Strict discipline was perceived as an indication of concern" (Setiloane cited in Straker, 1992:53). The consequence of this is that these youth feel that in their own families, violence will be used as a form of discipline both for their wives and their own children in the future. (The high occurrence of this second response is frightening).

Straight, if I'm speaking straight talk, my granny she was not doing me anything, but she usually sometimes hit me, but she don't want me to be hit, ja. But my uncle if he think I done something wrong, he want to hit me. You see I can say what, maybe sometimes I did something wrong. He didn't want to ask me why you did this and this. They, if they think this thing is wrong for them then they hit me and sometimes maybe I doing maybe something silly. Why. Maybe I go to shop and I call things. I say give me this and this, then they put it in front of me, I take it and run away from them. Why you so hungry. Maybe we haven't got enough money to buy for me anything which I would like. Like any child maybe want to have a good care. Then it's there they used to punish me. But my uncles are the ones who were hitting me and rough and roughly, ja. They were breaking me, they

were hitting me that time, ja. But, he do it because he love me too much. (respondent 8)

My parents to discipline me they beat me. When I was small I was not having any knowledge, but then up to now, I could see maybe they were putting in the right channel of the child … . If I have children I will beat them. I will talk to my child and if he or she never understand, then I will use the language which maybe he or she will better understand. (respondent 7)

Children, and youth specifically, owing to the breakdown of the family unit, then look outward of the family for support structures and places in which they can develop an identity which is recognised. What is of great significance to this paper is the finding of Straker that among the youth with which she was working, that "… with particular regard to the issue of adult authority, one found a distinction in their thinking about the relationship between parents and children in the political arena, as opposed to the field of social relationships. Differences in opinion between parents and children were seen to be sharpest in the political sphere" (1992:136). "The Sharpeville massacre of 1963 marked the end of an era in black politics in which young people were beholden to adult leadership … . Children lost respect for their frightened parents who offered them no protection against police harassment and other problems of poverty" (Mamphele, *Tribute*, September 1991:34).

For many township youth, organisation and the comrades which constitute them become the new family of township youth. For Sitas "there is among comrades a new social solidarity and a new gender division … . There are real communities of caring and sharing" (1991:6). This "economy of affection" as Ramphele calls it, needs to be seriously taken into account when examining the role of organisation in the lives of youth.

At the present moment my comrades are the important people in my life. I know them from the beginning of my involvement – I used to go with them, sleep with them in hiding, even share personal problems. At the present moment we are still very close. (respondent 1)

The importance of the peer group leads Straker to conclude regarding the process of reintegration of youth into the community that "… normalising the symptoms and mobilising peer support, rather than attempting catharsis is the treatment of choice…" (1992:141).

Although the family is probably a key institution to investigate in an attempt to understand youth's consciousness and their subsequent behaviour, township life is an encompassing context which bounds the life of all its residents. For Geber and Newmann, Soweto is characterised by three factors for youth in this township: poverty, violence and uneventfulness. This is clearly reiterated in a book compiled by

Oswald Mtshali, Give us a Break, made up of diaries of youth in Soweto. In each and every life story one cannot escape the fact that violence in various forms is a part of everyday life. Of course the violence of the SAP and SADF are frequently mentioned, but what is even more common is the violence on the streets and in the family life of township residents.

I left home at 6.30am and arrived at school at 7.30am. I saw, on my way, a boy and his mother fighting for not going to school. His mother said, Sipho go to school, otherwise I am going to call the teachers to fetch you. Sipho said, When you call them I'm going to stab you in the mouth, because you are talking nonsense, leave me alone.

I was surprised when seeing some young girls walking down the street with their boyfriends. Then I asked myself questions. At last I heard a scream of a girl. Then I said to myself, surely it must be one of those small girls, they are trying to rape her.

Left school – went home – while I was talking saw taxi drivers – they fought one another – they broke windows – the other was dead – they called the ambulance. *It was a disgrace for big fathers* – because they fought just for money – luckily my friend's neighbour was alive.

These few examples show not only the prevalence of violence and its everydayness, but also the disturbing nature of these events for youth who observe and are part of them. Even more importantly *it makes evident the problem of role models in the townships and what seems to be the militarised nature of problem-solving that youth are exposed to.* How do youth learn to deal with women who don't submit to their sexual wiles; what is the best way of showing a parent that they have no "legitimate" authority over them; how do youth gain possession of money or goods they do not have but which are necessary for their survival?

Of course the streets and family socialisation give some inroad to understanding how the consciousness of youth is formed. However, even this is not adequate. The violence in the schools directed by teachers and principals against already struggling students as well as that of the security forces in the schools through the 1980s and even in the 1990s is another vitally important aspect of the life of youth that needs to be explored. Schooling, as Hyslop has documented, is the arena of common experience for youth and for him is primary in understanding "youth culture". However, the violence and inadequacy of black schooling has been well documented by Hyslop, Bundy, Molteno and others and will not be taken up in any detail in this paper. Perhaps it will suffice to quote one of the youth of Diepkloof I interviewed. I asked him what the thing he remembered most clearly about his school days was. This is his response:

At school there's a lot of problems … . We became slaves for our teachers. We knew that we would be punished for small things. Our hearts began to feel that we didn't want to go to school. They didn't want to know what were our problems at primary school. They were thrashing us like nobody business. Then at secondary school there's this thing of SRC. They explained to us that there are people who would stand for us … . Then at school our teachers were teaching us not well. If its a period of geography, we would dodge periods. The teachers would not treat us like someone who has children. If you come to school maybe you are hungry, you get bored and you can't learn. You start to sleep after fifteen minutes. The teacher don't come and ask what's the problem and why you are sleeping. They just apply punishment. You are a silly child. They don't try to get good information. They don't care how you are going to write or carry your books and how we are going to eat. Some of the teachers used to be sell-outs. The police then start to harass us. We didn't know we shouldn't just talk and talk. Police can take useless information. This is when we begin to hate our teachers … . This is when we started to hit teachers. Teachers deserve to die for this. (respondent 13)

The security police used to recruit from the students, even the principal. So the problem at our school was that the principal had a good relationship with the security branch, because every day the security branch came to our places and they used to tell our parents what we did at school today, what we were wearing, those sort of things. We used to explain in our meetings that the principal was giving us problems, because during 1988 the police came and chased us out of school. We stayed out of school for a week, but we tried to fight back by calling other structures. We called on our principal to explain what was going on. He failed to explain and we agreed that we must go back to school, because we wanted to learn … . The principal of Bopa Senatla was chased out in 1989 or 1990, I think. The pupils

chased him out because they said he was giving them problems. He wanted to avoid being killed by the students – it was better for him to leave that school. (respondent 1)

The schools in the townships, far from being centres of learning, are sites of violence and conflict. For Peter Mokaba of the ANC Youth League, "the education crisis has contributed to the breakdown of community life and the distortion of our people's value system" (*Tribute*, September 1991:86). The authority structures in the schools are mistrusted at best and, at worst, are the targets of the students' anger towards a grossly inadequate education system. It is highly unlikely that in the near future, students will take moral direction from teachers or principals, certainly not around issues concerning political activity and ways of channeling anger and frustration. If anything, teachers may continue to be the targets of much hostility towards authority and anything in any way associated with the apartheid state. This is not to deny that the students themselves are concerned with their education or that there are teachers in the schools that have been deemed "progressive" usually owing to their allegiance of one or another organisation.

What can be clearly seen from what has already been stated is that the main areas of life of the youth have been extreme sites of violence. Moreover, there is a clear undermining of authority both in the family and in the schools. What is learned is that in these institutions, violence is a mechanism of problem-solving and at the same time these institutions cannot, in the eyes of the youth, be relied upon for stability and security. For Straker, among youth who have participated in political struggle "there was a feeling that they had forfeited many of the privileges of childhood to participate in the struggle. They could not now be expected simply to go back to accepting old hierarchies, whether in the family, the school or the broader political arena … . The very notion that they needed to be brought under control evoked anger in many of those interviewed"(1992:134). Ramphele takes an even more damning approach in stating that "once the children were thrust 'onto the frontline', it became difficult to sustain traditional social relations between adults and children with serious implications for family life. Children had become used to power and control, and refused to yield to the authority of adults – their parents and teachers whom they despised. Conflict became inevitable" (*Tribute*, September 1991:36).

The other key arena of experience for township youth (particularly in the 1980s) is that of township resistance politics. While many youth may not have been structurally involved in political organisations, they were no doubt involved in the resistance campaigns and activities of the eighties. "The truth is that the period was one of mass resistance in South Africa's black townships. Certainly among the youth it was the majority who participated in the eruptions. The youngsters who did not participate in these popular uprisings were the exception rather than the rule" (Straker, 1992:19). Johnson in the book *No Turning Back* takes a look at the history of youth resistance in extra-parliamentary politics. Johnson states that since the 1940s the youth have injected "a note of impatience and confrontation…" (p.97). He notes, however, that the form and content of youth resistance has been different through the decades. He states that one can isolate six factors that encourage radicalism in the youth. These include:

- Generational conflict
- Extreme poverty and little chance of eventual employment

- Few economic constraints
- Demographic factors
- Black education

These attributed factors do not differ substantially from those of Kane-Berman, Hyslop and Bundy. However, Johnson does examine very closely how the different organisational involvement of youth substantially affected strategies of resistance and struggle. He states that it was with the increasing popularisation of the ANC from the late 1970s with its escalation of armed struggle and associated mass action that the youth "revelled". COSAS, the first organisation since the sixties to popularise the congress movement, spearheaded the youth to developing much higher political consciousness than ever before. For Johnson, from the second half of 1984, "a deep-seated spirit of militancy" had seeped down to much younger children. This was expedited by the conditions of "civil war" which enveloped many townships (p.113). The youth through the 1980s became increasingly more militant due to their experiences of violent clashes with the security forces, vigilante groupings as well as political groupings. The youth, he states, then developed a frightening belief upon which they acted i.e. they were going to die and did not care –they became what Johnson calls "battle-hardened soldiers". However, growing anger amongst youth as well as the detention of experienced leaders lead to indiscipline and youth components who were more difficult to guide. (This I believe to be a disturbing feature of youth political organisations in the 1990s).

It is not a new, nor a debatable point that the youth have been at the forefront of struggles since the late 1970s, but especially since the mid-1980s. With the call for "people's war" and the development of "structures of people's power", youth have created barricades, destroyed the homes of councillors and councillors themselves, necklaced, run (with much community controversy) so-called "people's courts" and "manufactured" arms to fight the security forces. They have also suffered the consequences – they have been maimed, tortured, detained, killed, been forced into hiding and exile. In the process they have been faced head-on by the violence and horrors of a country which could be described as one in a state of civil war. These experiences, of course, have not left the youth unscarred.

War and insurrection became the slogans of the day. Nicaragua, Cuba and Mozambique, no matter how inappropriately came to be models of armed strategies for liberation. Youth were organised into the youth congresses in large numbers under the slogan "Freedom or death: Victory is certain". It becomes obvious that this slogan and the consequent strategies and tactics of the youth congresses were able to rally the youth because it made sense of their experiences and "common sense" level of ideology. But of course, as is the case generally with mass organisations, elements of the youth were not active and disciplined members of the youth congresses. Many of the township youth, while giving tacit support for the organisation and being involved in their campaigns and activities, were in fact not members of these organisations. This no doubt created, and continues to create, havoc when trying to understand the youth as a "homogenous sector". Sitas is hence correct when he describes the youth congresses as follows:

Perhaps the best image is one of an unusual octopus with a head and tentacles growing out and outwards; as the

tentacles grow too long, a new head grows on them and it in turn grows new tentacles. It is a process of growth with core groups of activists in the townships spreading from area to area and in that spread, new nuclei grow on and on. Calls are responded to from the "head" over campaigns and issues are responded to. But within each "tentacle" unique conditions arising from local socio-economic conditions shape growth and the way this "octopus" grips onto the environment. As leading key activists get removed, detained, killed, "headless" tentacles grow independently of one another. (1991:6)

What we have in the township is one "institution" which has legitimacy for youth and the potential of being a moral authority, but like any mass organisation, is unable to have control over all its members and supporters.

South Africa in the 1980s has been described by various social theorists as a highly militarised society. By this what is meant is that there is in the society a concentration "on the mobilisation of resources for war" (Cock and Nathan (eds), 1989:4). This militarisation for Cock was evidenced on the political, economic and ideological levels of South African society. However, since the latter part of 1989, especially with the withdrawal of the SADF troops from other Southern African states and the fall of P W Botha's securocrat government, it was speculated that there would likely be a decrease in the militarisation in our society. If we use Cock's indicators and definition of militarisation, this would largely be the case. Why, however, if the militarisation of South African society has been said to have decreased are we witnessing the current intense and shocking violence? There appears to have been a preoccupation in the past with the militarisation of white society in relation to a military institution, e.g. the SADF. As soon as we begin to restrict an ideology of militarism to the military as an institution, we fall short of understanding that for all communities in South Africa, violence has become the answer to resolving conflict on any level.

The ideology of militarism has not only broadly engulfed all communities in our society, but also various social strata. It has become an accepted way of life not only for men and women, but for adults and children alike. We should hence be wary of instantaneously pointing fingers at black male youth. In the 1990 violence, we witnessed both women and children tacitly supporting and watching brutal necklacings taking place. We have also witnessed white women, both old and young, learning how to efficiently use a gun preparing for a war against the "kaffirs" in order to create and defend a white "Boerestaat".

Of course black youth in South Africa have the greatest propensity to be involved in acts of violence. This is expected owing to their various experiences referred to above, their "transitory" position in society, their sense of themselves as moral guardians of the community and of course the prospect of a future of joblessness with a poor educational background. Having said all of the above, it is my contention that youth in the townships do NOT want to be involved in acts of violence, but will react to

perceived political and social injustice with the methods they know to be most effective – political violence in its variety of forms.

From the interviews and discussions with youth in Diepkloof, two things have become very clear to me. Firstly, the main hope of these youth is for peace in South Africa, so that there will be no need to take up arms nor to die for their country and fellow community members. Secondly, the youth exist in a state of fear. They fear not only for their own lives, but also having to fight an enemy – however this may be defined at any given moment in time. The youth themselves do not perceive youth generally, nor the black community to be a "violent" one.

Peace will be there in our country. Most people in the country want peace. Even our liberation movement love peace – that is why they are trying to resolve the crisis within the country in a peaceful manner. Therefore, I have hope that we will get peace, but I don't know when. (respondent 3)

Ay, I don't think youth is like to be involved in violence, because of if you see a bus of Inkatha those who are doing violence, those people are fathers. They've got children and what, what, and then so as we are a Youth League we just try to help our parents to stop this violence. (respondent 8)

When asking them whether they perceive South Africa to be a violent society, they state that the society is not a violent one, it is the state that is violent. Whether one agrees with this common response and sees it as "true" or not, the important thing remains that this is the perception of the youth themselves and will shape their behaviour. The question that needs to be asked, however, is how do these desires for peace and security become nurtured in a society as structurally and directly violent as our own and where violence certainly is seen to be the solution to all conflict?

Vuyani Mabaxa – A Case Study

I would at this point like to relay two stories from Diepkloof which may illustrate the above undoubtedly "contentious" points and give some insight into the life of township youth presently (at a time of so-called negotiations). In an informal discussion with one youth (let's call him Jabu) with whom I have been working, he stated that he feared death and violence and that he would run away if he saw Inkatha approaching him rather than fight them – quite an admission for a black male youth in the militant youth league.

A week later in late October, the chairperson, Bapo, of the zone of Jabu's branch of the youth league was found dead in his grandfather's toilet. That night the youth of Diepkloof went on a "mission" to kill the councillor in the area. They were furious that their comrade had been killed and felt that they would not be the only people to suffer

and lose their people. The state too must suffer. Jabu was one of the people who went to kill the councillor that night. What needs to be inferred from this story is that the violence of youth is more than often reactive and secondly, the role of the masses or the "mob" needs to be accounted for. It should also be pointed out that this reaction was not a planned or organised one. In fact the youth league branch in the area had had a meeting the day of the murder and had decided that nothing could be done. All that the organisation resolved to do was to organise the funeral of the comrade and to heed their own safety and as far as possible investigate the murder of their comrade.

A short article on the death of Bapo was written in *The Star* the following day and the publicity officer of the broader Diepkloof branch, Vuyani Mabaxa, made a statement to the press. He stated that Bopa had been murdered (the police claimed he had committed suicide) and that he had been a committed and respected activist in the area. Bopa's death came as a shock and trauma to the youth in the area. Youth began to question who would be next.

On going to visit Vuyani the following week, he expressed his deep sadness at the death of someone he cared for and respected. He also stated that he would never carry a gun with him as it could lead to trouble and that he would rather be killed than kill a gang member, a policeman or someone from Inkatha. As a leadership person in organisation, he also felt it would be inappropriate for him to carry a weapon. He also stated that he really wished organised youth would not carry guns as this could only lead to problems. Exactly a week later (October 13), I phoned Vuyani to ask him a question regarding the safety of visiting the township. His brother answered the phone and told me he had bad news for me. Vuyani had been shot that morning and was dead.

There was little doubt that the township would be on fire following the death of Vuyani – probably the most respected youth leader in the township. On October 15 *The Star* reported that

in Diepkloof, pupils at two local schools barricaded streets and set two cars and a lorry on fire after ransacking a house in the area. Pupils hijacked cars as they marched on the house of slain ANC Youth League leader Vuyani Mabaxa. They were protesting against his death.

In the same week the *Weekly Mail* reported that:

Classrooms stood empty as pupils in Soweto's Diepkloof township took to the streets this week to protest the death of African National Congress Leader, Vuyani Mabaxa … . On Monday morning the confrontation took a serious turn when a shot fired into the bedroom of Eslinah Mabaxa, Vuyani's mother, missed her by centimetres … . This incident triggered off a four-day conflict between pupils and police. At two schools pupils barricaded streets and set two cars

alight after ransacking a house in the area … . Bopa Senatla High School pupils burnt down a house in the area after mistaking it for a policeman's home … the daughter of former Diepkloof mayor Jacob Mathala was badly burned on Wednesday when a group of pupils set fire to her house while she was asleep. (October 18 – October 24:5)

Youth had every reason to be angry and to feel that they cannot sit around watching their friends and comrades die. Again the question "who will be next?" was asked. Questions around self-defence were high on the agenda. What are more appropriate questions and what do the youth do when confronted by the daily horrors of their township existence.

At the funeral of Vuyani Mabaxa, a pamphlet was distributed by the Diepkloof Defence Unit of which Vuyani was said to the second-in-command. The pamphlet goes as follows:

A challenge has been posed to the people, in particular to the underground:

- The Peace Accord has been signed;
- We have adhered to it.
- The police have not adhered to it. The killings in Thokoza, and the death of Mpinga, are typical examples of this.

We want to indicate that we in this defence unit accept the challenge. We vow to meet the police – and to avenge Mpinga's death on the battlefield…

As a struggling people with few resources of our own, it is imperative that we organise ourselves into structures or cells with varying tasks, all aimed at achieving one objective.
Since we do not, or cannot, produce any military hardware of our own inside the country, it becomes imperative that we develop ways of acquiring weapons within the country:

- We must disarm the police;
- We must get in contact with organised units of the people's army (MK).

Of course this sounds chilling and reminds us of the type of illegal pamphlets we used to read in the mid/late 1980s calling for People's War against the "fascist regime". There are, however, many important points that need to be drawn from the document quoted above.

Firstly, for youth in the township, life itself has not changed significantly, if at all, since February 2nd and more recently the signing of the very significant Peace Accord. In such a context, youth see no choice but to defend themselves and make the police "feel the same pain as their families feel and know what it feels like to visit the cemetery every week to bury your people". Secondly, youth in organisation and structures of defence realise the danger of spontaneous and "emotional" retributive violence. The comrade from the Diepkloof Defence Unit who made a statement at Vuyani's funeral stated that "students must stop taking their own action during the day. The problem of unplanned action is that it only leads to unnecessary death and injury". Similarly, Paul Matshiqi of the SACP (Soweto District) stated at the funeral that "the rhetoric of the defence units must stop. We need to have action as we have done long before the unbanning of organisations. Youth should play a pivotal role in the defence units, but their action should be governed by the political policy of organisations".

The response of these youth to the death of a friend, comrade and respected leader is to be expected. The South African state remains a structurally (and directly) violent one where reactive violence will of necessity, for Dom Helder Camara, form part of the "spiral of violence". For Ahmed, political violence is connected to a need to be heard. He continues that "anger and helplessness produce compulsions towards retributive violence – a factor which explains violence not only of the helpless but also of the powerful". (cited in Said, *New Left Review*)

The Need for an Immediate Legitimate Authority

What is clear is that political violence is not going to disappear for a long time. Violence, in fact, is intensifying and taking on new and more sinister forms. It is also not violence that is initiated by "militant youth" that is current ravaging South Africa. It is not the youth who are killing innocent people on the trains or slaughtering women and children in the squatter camps. The perpetrators in fact appear to be largely middle-aged to elderly men. Township youth, however, will respond to these acts of political violence out of anger and frustration. They deem themselves the "moral defenders" of the community with a duty to protect their families.

You know what I'm talking of it's the youth is always prepared to defend the community. I still remember when there was a rumour that Inkatha its here, you know that day I was very happy to see the way youth used discipline themselves … sometimes when there is a problem you know, the community just sit there and they say we know, comrades will do this and this, and when you fail to defend them they blame you, but when you say what you have

done, aren't you blaming yourself for sitting down, you know, your mother and brothers-in-law they tell you no, you are the comrades defend us, you know. But now things have changed, you know. When there is a problem we are involved ourselves. Not – we don't look upon someone to come to us and say do this and this, and this. We do our own initiative of defending our people. (respondent 2)

My friends almost we are together in politics. What is happening around the world round there's imbalance. We're looking the areas there's violence. What's happening there. What's the point of death. What it is doing defending all the masses. I only say the youth is the only people can defend their parents and their sisters … . When the youth they sitting with their friends they won't be discussing what's happening that year. What's the problem, you doing this and this. We analyse that the areas they say like this, there's a youth in Diepkloof, there's a youth. Why don't the youth defend their parents? (respondent 18).

Rhetoric of non-violence and political tolerance under the given circumstances, though important and nice, is not going to make sense to township youth, nor is it going to mobilise and organise youth. Youth have been forced into defensive mode which will include tactics which are violent. This violence has the tendency and potential to be spontaneous, haphazard and ultimately destructive. It is hence essential that youth are organised into structures that are able to give direction and leadership. The defensive strategies and tactics need to be carefully planned, centrally organised and properly executed. This, at present, cannot be done by parents or teachers. What is needed is another moral authority, which at this point seems to be that of youth organisations. In the edition of *Horizon* cited above, a member of the ANCYL of the Orlando East branch, Soweto, writes:

… Is it (ANCYL) able to defend not only its members but the support base from which its members are drawn? Why does the carnage continue with little visible resistance? Is the call for defence committees mere propaganda to appease the victims or a serious commitment which we are all prepared to carry out? To what extent are peace conferences helpful in addressing the violence? Is intolerance on the part of some elements of the youth contributing to the violence? If yes, what can be done about this?

This young person is asking important and insightful questions. He (and it is a male) is pleading for answers and direction which need to be urgently addressed to avoid chaos, continual anger and alienation and ultimately the much-feared anarchy which seems to be looming. He is also making an assumption that the ANCYL is able to have enough legitimacy among youth to call upon the organisation for help and to bring youth in the township under the discipline of the organisation to organise defence against threats of violence in the township. Questions and pleas such as the one above need urgently to be addressed and answered.

The youth are going to be involved in acts of political violence. To some extent it even seems that this is encouraged by the adults in the community when they are under threat. However, the youth do need guidance and they certainly need boundaries to be set bounded by a set of morals and goals. The activities of youth need to be subjected to discipline.

If we believe that discipline is useful, indeed necessary for the individual, it is because it seems to us demanded by nature itself … like everything else that exists, man is a limited being; he is part of a whole … therefore man cannot, without contradicting his nature, try to supercede the limits imposed on every side … . If then from our point of view, discipline is not good, it is not because we regard the work of nature with a rebellious eye, or that we see here a diabolical machine that has failed, but that man's nature cannot be itself unless it is disciplined. (Durkheim, cited in Giddens, 1977:112)

The youth certainly do need discipline. We have seen that in the townships, in the areas of traditional authority, parents and teachers have a long and difficult road to travel to rekindle the trust and respect of the youth (and vice versa). (This will take time but is an urgent matter that needs commitment from all members of the community). Ramphele states that "the attack on illegitimate authority structures at home, school and local community was not accompanied by the creation of alternative modes of authority. There was thus a void left in the lives of young people" (ibid, p.36). If traditional authority has broken down, there is even less chance of the youth taking moral direction from parents and teachers in relation to political activity and even more specifically, in relation to political violence. For many youth in the township, particularly for activist youth, youth political organisations have come to be seen as the "new moral authority". This should be seen as something positive to be worked with and developed.

Without the presence of some body which will give guidance and direction to the youth, responses to events and conditions will continue to be haphazard and disorganised. Real change will remain words on the lips of leaders and print on accords that have no real significance and meaning for youth.

The expectations of the youth need to be limited. The means by which their ends can be met need to be feasible so that continued frustration and anxiety do not persist.

Moreover, there needs to be some authority which can monitor these means and ends and so ensure that boundaries are maintained. No existing formal institution at this point is going to be able to ensure this. The authority needs to be seen to be legitimate in the eyes of the actors. At this point in our history, for many youth who have lived through the seventies and eighties, political organisations are the only formations with the legitimacy to tell youth what to do and how to bring people to recall.

By organisation what is meant is a body made up of people who share similar concerns or interests. It has principles and rules by which members abide. It has leadership which represents those who make up the organisation and from whom members are prepared to take direction. Organisation also provides a forum for developing unity and sharing concerns and experiences with others to whom they can relate in some way. Organisations are moreover places where personal and other development can occur and where jointly decisions can be made around appropriate strategies and tactics for dealing with problems confronting members. Another important part of organisation that is often neglected or forgotten is that members putting time and energy into organisation should be able to themselves benefit from these organisations.

In the past, political organisations have played various roles for youth:

they have served as arenas of education and training (often not very systematically). Bundy has clearly shown in examining the Cape Town 1985 school boycotts, how youth structures and organisations slotted in and provided "street pavement sociology" to youth who were not learning in the classrooms. Organisation became a legitimate site of learning for youth and allowed youth to critically assess their situation and make relatively informed decisions in this regard. Bundy shows, for example, how township youth clearly understood the link between the poor education of their parents and their parents' class position in society. He also shows how youth themselves understood that their own education was no guarantee for later employment. Black schools in South Africa are going to continue to be a site of struggle for students. Students are going to continue to feel ambivalent about imbibing "gutter education". So long as this is the state of education, organisation can continue to provide some forum for learning, reading and debate.

In fact I joined the ANC Youth League because it is fighting for the unity of youth in South Africa and again you know it prepares each and every youth to be understanding things, and it educates and again it encourages youth that they should discipline themselves all the time. In fact the thing which I like most is its fighting to unite the whole youth of our country and keep them under one umbrella … . It is very much important for youth to be in organisation because if you are roaming around and not maybe bothering yourself to know what is happening in the country it means that you are going to be easily influenced by the people who are not

committed to humanity and who doesn't respect a human life, using you against the people and doing funny things. So I believe if you are in organisation like the ANC Youth League, then discipline is there, I mean you are being taught every day about discipline and to respect human life. (respondent 13)

Organisations have attempted to channel the anger and energies of youth. Youth for example, along with other organisations took up campaigns calling for the resignation of councillors. Councillors were perceived to be corrupt and to be charging unfeasible rates and taxes on the community. Of course these organised campaigns involving marches, boycotts and letters to local government often ended in acts of violence against councillors and other "agents of the state". If the state had responded to the demands of the youth, it is unlikely that the same level of violence generally initiated by the youth would have occurred. More recently an important campaign taken up by the Youth League and COSAS is the "Back to School Campaign". In the July/August edition of *Horizon* (the journal of the ANC Youth League) it is stated that "while fighting for the liberation, learning must continue. For this reason COSAS has, along with organisations such as the NECC, thrown full weight behind the Back to School, Intensive Learning and Right to Learn campaigns" (p.18). The article in the journal continues that "to ensure effective implementation and co-ordination of these campaigns, the organisation (COSAS) is setting up campaigns committees at national and regional levels. But COSAS is not just waiting for the government to improve conditions in the schools, says Maseko. With the help of the SA Democratic Teachers Union, it has encouraged students to set up alternative learning projects such as Winter Schools and to use the NECC's study guides. Violence in the school premises has been a major factor disrupting schooling in many areas. The COSAS congress resolved to pioneer the setting up of defence units in the schools with assistance from the ANC and to participate in and help build township defence units." (p.19)

The youth themselves see their organisations as directing their behaviour, providing discipline, to unite youth and to provide education.

In fact, the ANC Youth League, I joined the organisation because it is fighting for the unity of all the youth in South Africa and then again it is fighting to unite all the youth of South Africa, and again it prepares each and every youth to be, and it educates and again it encourages the youth that they should discipline themselves all the time. So I believe that if you are in an organisation like the ANC Youth League then discipline is there. I mean you are being taught every day about discipline and to respect human life. (interview 10)

I join organisation because of I think discipline. Because of I mean if you understand everything about youth, then you'll be discipline especially if you are in some organisation because of I think each and every organisation they've got their own policies, so he understand everything because of conduct everything, then you can do discipline. (respondent 8)

It is, however, not only the youth that perceive youth organisations as having a central and constructive role to play in the positive development of youth. Most of the key adult informants I interviewed shared similar views. They believed very strongly that organised and disciplined youth are not the youth responsible for spontaneous and anarchic forms of violence. They also believed that organised youth have a sense of responsibility to the community and a respect for the dignity of its members. They are seen to be the group of youth who can be reasoned and negotiated with. Interestingly, the two Diepmeadow councillors interviewed expressed these views very vigorously – after ensuring that I would not make public what they had said in association with their names, of course.

60% of youth if not more in Diepkloof are involved in organisation, especially those in school. Those youth who don't attend are part of gangs. Youth in political organisations you can reason with. They give you time to discuss. They are prepared to talk to you … . The youth who are emotional are the ones involved in violence. The ANC Youth League are not so much violent. You can reason with them. The problem is when they start to mix with the criminal youth. (councillor A, Diepmeadow City Council, 1991)

The enlightened youth take out membership in organisations. These youth read more. They read literature supplied by the organisation. These youth are prepared to discuss with you … . I would respect leadership in the organisations of youth. They are prepared to think, talk and discuss … . The organisations have influence over youth. If they could preach the CODESA gospel, the youth would go along with it. (senior liaison officer of Diepmeadow City Council, 1991)

The older people in the community appreciate youth in organisation. They feel these youth makes things change. This is different from the gang youth who they see are destroying the community. The older people feel proud of the youth in political organisations … . The organisations are important for youth. For instance the question of leadership and even the question of discipline. We find with the political activists in any political situation they are disciplined. The organisation are able to control youth whereas those other youth are not controlled and this is a problem … . Organisations definitely give direction. Where you find there is chaos, it is always the other youth, not the political youth. The political ones are the ones that control them because they say this is tarnishing their image. (Mr Tloteng, senior social worker, NICRO, Soweto, 1991)

Where township youth organisations have legitimate, well-trained and responsible leadership, youth who are committed to organisation will feel compelled to adhere to the discipline and authority of the organisation and to account for their behaviour or face the consequences of not following the principles or codes of conduct of the organisation. Of course, in reality many youth are only part-time members of the organisation. Others act in the name of the organisation without being firmly located within the organisation itself – the so-called "comtsotsis" are a good example of this. In the nineties this has become even more of a problem. Youth who in the eighties would not join political organisations because of the threat of detention, harassment and possibly death, have now joined organisations in large numbers. They have not been exposed to the stringent discipline and training of the youth of the seventies and eighties. While many have foresight and are committed, they lack the experience of the eighties youth. The opening up of organisations with the unbannings also allowed for a multiplicity of youth to join who were unknown to previous youth leadership. Control over youth who associate themselves with political organisation has become more difficult in the 1990s.

In the 1980s, people became involved from a politically educated point of view. It was difficult to get people involved. 1980s youth politics was a responsible job. You had to understand the theory of organising. People of this time had a clear understanding of collectivity and reading. Youth used to read a lot. We had a vision of our programme. In the 1990s youth flocked to organisations. The youth did not have to go out and organise. Political education programmes were lacking. Politics have changed. The basic

requirements of the 1980s are no longer used as criteria. Some people in leadership lack analysis and a clear vision of beyond. Political education is not taken as seriously. (key youth "A" activist of the 1980s in Diepkloof, now national office-bearer of NEHAWU, 1992)

The unbanning of the ANC and its approach to armed struggle and the lack of reportbacks alienated old activists. Old activists became demoralised. These people had been committed to seizure of power. Transition to the ANC had an effect on activists trained in a particular political climate. Some of these activists have joined service organisations, gone back to school and some are just sitting around. It's a sad moment to see activists we know saying that the only thing they can do is vote. We have lost much of our old leadership. This has weakened the youth league locally in the sense that we have a new brand of leadership not grilled in congress politics – they have a poor sense of strategies and tactics. Seasoned activists should have helped in this regard … . There are still some seasoned activists in Diepkloof branch. However, the death of Vuyani as someone consistent and seasoned is a great loss. It is going to be some time before we get someone of his calibre. (key youth activist "B" of the 1980s in Diepkloof, on first national executive of ANCYL)

The question of leadership of youth organisations is one which needs to be urgently addressed. From my experience in doing research with the ANCYL in Diepkloof, a few things have come to my attention which I imagine can be generalised to most township branches of youth organisations. Firstly, the average age of members of the youth league is about fourteen or fifteen – of course, therefore most youth in youth organisation are at school. The leadership is generally of a similar category. While these youth have much political and life experience, they remain young and at a stage where schooling is or should be their primary activity.

They are also struggling with the psycho-social conflicts of any youth of that age category – the stage which Erikson denotes "identity versus role confusion". This stage for Erikson is characterised by "mental as well as emotional development … . As impatient idealists, they often join one or another movement advocating rapid and dramatic change. They are the backbone of religious cults and of violent/revolutionary groups … . Caught between childhood and adulthood, the adolescent seeks to establish an adult identity that will integrate what has gone before and will lead in an appropriate direction through what is yet to come." (Ruch 1984:395) The development

of youth in the township is generally hastened in many respects by the conditions (political and social) in which these youth have matured and they have often been forced to take on responsibilities not common to the youth of generally industrialised countries from which Erikson draws his theory. Perhaps in some regards the development of youth in South Africa has also been retarded by the conditions facing them – the development and establishment of autonomy and role exploration is hindered by the socio-economic conditions from which township youth emerge as well as due to the general lack of facilities and life opportunities.

The past youth leadership are generally no longer in youth organisation. Many have outgrown youth organisation, others have become disillusioned and have relented their activism, others are simply not interested in being part of youth organisation for a number of reasons which need to be explored, yet others have become involved in more sinister activities as gangsters or part of the "comtsotsi" phenomenon. Whatever the case, youth organisations probably more than any other organisations need mature, trained and committed leadership able to give appropriate and well-thought-through direction. A key concern, therefore, for youth organisation and those concerned with the interests of youth should be to encourage and ensure that mature, working and trained youth play a central role in youth organisation. This is essential so that the developmental and leadership roles of youth organisations can adequately be implemented and to ensure that the tentacles without heads that Sitas describes do not continue to germinate. What seems to have happened with the decline of experienced youth leadership is that political violence has become less directed and disciplined. Gurr would probably refer to this form of violence as "turmoil" by which he means that political violence is "relatively spontaneous, unorganised political violence with substantial popular participation, including violent political strikes, riots, political clashes, and localised rebellions" (ibid: 11). This, I believe, is different from the violence of the 1980s which formed part of an overall strategy of "people's war" and was highly organised and goal-directed. It would probably approximate another of Gurr's forms of political violence, "internal war" which is "highly organised political violence with widespread popular participation, designed to overthrow the regime or dissolve the state and accompanied by extensive violence, including large-scale terrorism and guerrilla wars, civil wars, and revolutions" (ibid: 11). 1991 and 1992 has seen an increase in seemingly goalless violence. Perhaps the best example of this was the oil tanker that was set alight in Diepkloof Extension on May 19, 1992.

A section of Randshow Road in Diepkloof Extension, Soweto, was turned into an inferno yesterday when a petrol tanker ambushed by protesting pupils exploded … . Quick action by firefighters saved a row of houses from total devastation as the 5 metre high flames leapt over garden walls, damaging four homes and several vehicles. The badly burnt truck driver was earlier pulled to safety and rushed to Baragwanath Hospital … . Scholars demonstrating against the DET's decision to increase matric exam fees had this week carried out similar attacks on motorists in Diepkloof, Pimville and Klipspruit… (*The Star*, 20 May 1991)

The following Sunday, a perplexed Sefako Nyaka of the *Sunday Star* asked why kill bystanders, burn petrol tankers and stone private cars in response to a decision to increase school examination fees. Nyaka interviewed a "self-styled student leader" "Comrade Castro" about the incident.

In a dimly lit, smoke-filled room at the back of the house in Zone 4, Diepkloof, Castro and two of his mates were at pains to explain why anger directed at the DET had to be vented on the driver of a petrol tanker. 'The DET does not want to listen. Maybe if they see that we mean business they will stop the exam fees', he said nervously. 'It is unfortunate that the driver (of the petrol tanker(found himself in the crossfire,' Castro said. But, he added, the tanker was a legitimate target. So are all delivery vehicles and police cars … . Had they co-ordinated this week's attacks? 'No, we only gave direction,' Castro said as he pulled himself out of his chair, announcing angrily that this was the end of the interview. (*Sunday Star*, 24 May 1992)

What this incident illustrates is that youth are still prepared to rally to the calls of the township political organisations, in this case the call of COSAS to boycott school as a response to high examination fees for matric pupils. Once out of school, students are "directed" to engage in acts of "political violence". However, this reactive violence is not co-ordinated. It is a clear example of the type of political violence Gurr terms "turmoil". The "leadership" person involved in this incident acknowledges that the violence was not co-ordinated by the youth leadership – a directive had only been given that this should occur. Of course, the shortage of responsible and experienced local youth leadership cannot alone be seen as causal for the undisciplined political violence that youth are engaging in throughout the country. The "comtsotsis" who are basically youth engaged in anti-social behaviour and "who attempt to justify their behaviour as legitimate political activity" (Straker, op cit: 73) are another major problem for youth organisations in ensuring disciplined and accountable political activity. The "comtsotsi" phenomenon, of course, was a feature of youth activities in the 1980s, but has arguably increased with the decreased quality of leadership and the "unmonitored" influx of youth into political organisations.

These days in Diepkloof there are more people, not necessarily comrades joining organisations. So when these people are together one is carrying a gun, one thinks he is above the community, you see. So now take for instance when five people, all of them are carrying gun, you see then they start doing wrong things, then tomorrow we need an explanation from them. (respondent 2)

It is clear that youth organisations in the 1990s face a variety of serious problems: inexperienced leadership; the rising "comtsotsi" phenomenon; an influx of new and undisciplined youth as well as a generally confusing political terrain where on the ground nothing significant has changed, yet political violence (especially when carried out by the youth) is no longer condoned openly by the leadership of the movement which once encouraged the activities of ungovernability of the "young lions". Nonetheless, these organisations remain the organs in the township that through their perceived legitimacy are able to mobilise the youth and assert some form of moral authority. These organisations have very strong "codes of conduct" which relate to the behaviour of youth both inside and outside the organisations. These codes of conduct are generally adhered to by the majority of members of youth organisation, who are not a part of the "comtsotsi phenomenon". Youth organisations need to acknowledge the problems which exist within their own organisations, particularly that of proper training of youth leadership. This will need the support of the "mother body" political organisations in the townships.

Conclusion

Youth organisations need to prepare their members for a new society which can only be more just and peaceful. While various retributive strategies may seem appropriate presently, they need to be challenged in the long term. Youth need to be educated now about non-violent and alternative methods of dealing with all forms of conflict and antagonism. Moreover, while political violence may appear justifiable as a defensive strategy for youth when repressive violence is clearly still in force, other forms of personal violence certainly are not – i.e. violence against women; violence against children in the home and classrooms as well as violence as a means generally for achieving goals or "solving" disputes on a day-to-day level of operation. Youth need to be educated about problematic methods of problem-solving and be challenged organisationally with regard to the way that personal problems are dealt with. The long-term dangers and effects of a militarised and violent society need to be made explicit and a cause for concern. Youth organisations because of their powerful position as legitimate bodies for the youth also need to play a role in reasserting the need for rebuilding constructive relationships between adults and youth in the schools and in the families and households of the youth.

Finally, in the past youth organisations have organised along very militaristic principles. Part of this form of organisation gave way to a type of ascetism among youth activists who denied any personal existence and needs. Their lives became that of the struggle in the name of "the masses". Self-denial became the order of the day and while the youth were certainly aware of the needs and interests of the community, they had little sense of their own needs and sense of self-development. For Durkheim, the moral regulation of the large group needs to be one which encourages the individual to be both "egoistic" and "altruistic" in orientation. "Both egoism and altruism must be constructed, in part, in terms of duties to oneself and to others … both egoism and altruism and their related conditions of existence are necessary for a society of rational, active, social subjects. In order to avoid both anomie and fatalism it is necessary to create a clear and coherent normative system with some flexibility to allow for individual interpretation…"(Pearce, ibid: 151) What Durkheim is arguing here is that individuals cannot have a healthy, productive existence in modern society if they are simply subordinated to the demands of society and the dictates of the

collectivity. Individuals need to be aware of their own needs and be in touch with their personal feelings. Moreover, for Durkheim in any formation which proposes active democracy, "individuals would need the rights, capacities and opportunities to organise themselves, to develop their understanding, to communicate their viewpoint and effectively pursue their interests when negotiating with other individuals, groups and institutions." (op cit: 161)

In conclusion, there is no doubt that the socialisation of youth, their day-to-day experiences of violence and the context of a generally militarised society have had a massive effect on the consciousness of youth and consequently their understanding of the legitimacy of violent methods on a number of levels. Youth organisations have begun to challenge these forms of problem-solving in various contexts (e.g. COSAS's campaign against corporal punishment) and have also played a role in channelling youth's anger and attempting to avoid complete and unaccountable chaos. It is hence my contention that it is often unorganised or partially organised youth who are *largely* responsible for spontaneous acts of political violence. The role of youth organisations in a present and future South Africa will play a key role in determining whether South African youth do in fact simply become a "lost generation" or whether they play a central and constructive role in developing a peaceful and democratic South Africa which, at the end of the day, is the hope of all youth.