FIRST CONTACT:

AN EXPLORATORY STUDY OF THE ROLE OF

PSYCHOANALYTIC INFANT OBSERVATION

IN SOUTH AFRICAN COMMUNITY

PSYCHOLOGY INTERVENTIONS

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DECLARATION

I, the undersigned, hereby declare that the work contained in this dissertation is my own original work, and that I have not previously in its entirety or in part submitted it at any university for a degree.

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ABSTRACT

Very little is known about the experiences of black children living in poverty in South Africa. This compromises the delivery of appropriate psychological services. This dissertation considers the contribution that psychoanalytic infant observation might make to a needs assessment process within the community psychology paradigm. To date, infant observation has predominantly been used for training psychotherapists and other professionals in Western contexts. The goal of the present project was to conduct a "classical" observation of a mother and child in a low-income South African community in the first year of the infant's life, in order to ascertain what kind of description it would yield. The question was whether such a description is useful for the needs assessment process, and ultimately, whether infant observation is a viable tool for psychologists working in low-income communities in South Africa.

The study was set in a poor, semi-rural, so-called coloured township in the Western Cape. The data were analysed using an intersubjective psychoanalytic lens and a social constructionist grounded theory approach. In overview, the findings relate to two main areas, namely a) the nature and content of the resultant description, and b) the effect of the process. The analysis of the case material showed that the observation produced an extremely detailed account of the experience of poverty and oppression, involving the way in which it influences all relationships, including the one between mother and child. The knowledge gained offers clear pointers to the kind of intervention that would benefit the particular infant in the present study, and potentially other infants in vulnerable social contexts as well. One surprising outcome was the extensive way in which the observation functioned therapeutically for the whole family. It is therefore concluded that infant observation can provide a very rich contribution to low-income communities on a number of levels, if it is able to make both the theoretical and practical adjustments needed. It is thus argued that it is necessary to look at infant observation in more critical ways, both in terms of how it has traditionally been conceptualised and how it is and can be applied across all contexts.

SAMEVATTING

Daar bestaan min inligting oor die ervarings van swart kinders in Suid-Afrika wat in armoede leef. Dit lê die lewering van gepaste sielkundige dienste aan bande. In hierdie studie word die bydrae bespreek wat psigoanalitiese baba-observasie moontlik tot 'n behoefte-assesseringsproses binne die gemeenskapsielkundige paradigma kan lewer. Tot nou toe is hierdie observasie hoofsaaklik gebruik om psigoterapeute en ander professionele persone binne 'n Westerse konteks op te lei. Die doelwit van die huidige projek was om - in die baba se eerste lewensjaar -'n klassieke observasie van 'n moeder en kind binne 'n lae-inkomstegemeenskap in Suid-Afrika uit te voer ten einde te bepaal watter soort beskrywing dit sou oplewer. Die vraag was of so 'n beskrywing relevant is vir die behoeftebepalingsproses en, in laaste instansie, of baba-observasie 'n bruikbare werktuig is vir sielkundiges wat in lae-inkomstegemeenskappe werksaam is.

Die studie is uitgevoer in 'n arm, semi-landelike, sogenaamde bruin gemeenskap in Wes-Kaapland. Data is geanaliseer met 'n intersubjektiewe psigoanalitiese lens en in ooreenstemming met die sosiale-konstruksieteorie. Kortliks saamgevat, het die bevindinge betrekking op twee hoofgebiede, naamlik (a) die aard en inhoud van die beskrywing wat daaruit voortgevloei het en (b) die uitwerking van die proses. Die analise van die ondersoekmateriaal het getoon dat die observasie 'n besonder gedetailleerde beskrywing van die ervaring van armoede en onderdrukking opgelewer het en, by name, van die wyse waarop dit alle verhoudinge, ook dié tussen moeder en kind, beïnvloed. Die inligting wat ingewin is, gee duidelike aanduidings van die soort intervensie wat 'n positiewe uitwerking sou hê op die spesifieke baba in die huidige studie, en potensieel ook sou hê op ander babas in kwesbare sosiale kontekste. Een van die verrassende konklusies was die mate waarin die hele gesin terapeuties baat gevind het by hierdie observasie. Die gevolgtrekking is dus dat baba-observasie op verskeie vlakke 'n kosbare bydrae kan lewer, mits dit die nodige teoretiese en praktiese aanpassings kan maak. Daar word gevolglik aangevoer dat dit noodsaaklik is om baba-observasie meer krities te ondersoek, en dit geld sowel die tradisionele konseptualisering daarvan as die wyse waarop dit oor alle kontekste heen toegepas word, en kán word.

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This dissertation is dedicated to my aunt, Professor Elize Botha (19/11/30 - 16/11/07)

with my love and gratitude.

I see everything…But most people are lazy. They never look at everything. They do what is called glancing, which is the same word for bumping off something and carrying on in almost the same direction, e.g. when a snooker ball glances off another snooker ball. And the information in their head is really simple. (Haddon, 2003, p. 40)

And I think that there are so many things just in one house that it would take years to think about all of them properly. Also, a thing is interesting because of thinking about it and not because of being new. (Haddon, 2003, p. 178)

Oh, can't you see
You belong to me
How my poor heart aches
With every step you take

Every move you make
Every vow you break
Every smile you fake
Every claim you stake
I'll be watching you

(The Police)

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CHAPTER ONE: Introduction

1.1 Context of the study

There are many poor infants and children in the world.[1] Every year approximately 135 million infants are born worldwide (Tomlinson & L. Swartz, 2003b). Of these, over 90% live in low-income or "developing" countries (Population Reference Bureau, 2002, quoted in Tomlinson & L. Swartz, 2003b, p. 487). Poverty is a major concern in South Africa (K. Gibson, 2002b). South Africa is classified as a middle-income country (Terre Blanche, 2004), yet at least 50% of the population is impoverished (Desai, 2005). South Africa is a country of extreme inequalities, and poverty is unevenly distributed: there is more poverty among black[2] people, in rural areas, and in female-headed households (Terre Blanche, 2004). This phenomenon in South Africa is connected with the effects of long-term oppression and discrimination under apartheid (Pillay & Lockhat, 2001). Desai (2005) noted that the material poverty that exists in South Africa is, quite uniquely, a consequence of deliberate policy, including "an assault on people's humanity" (pp. 1-2).

The majority of South African children are at risk as a result of poverty. Six out of every ten South African children can be defined as "poor" and potentially experiencing the mental health problems associated with this (K. Gibson, 2002b). It has been estimated that at least 15% of South Africa's children (more than 3 million) are affected by mental health problems of one form or another (Pillay & Lockhat, 2001). The majority of South Africa's children have been subjected to the consequences of the policies of apartheid, including the impoverished and hostile environments it gave rise to. The result is that such children are thought to show a much higher rate of psychological morbidity than children in other countries (K. Gibson, 2002b; Pillay & Lockhat, 2001).

It is widely asserted that conditions like poverty can have a negative impact on physical and mental health (Barbarin & Richter, 2001; Desai, 2005; McLoyd, 1998; Scheper-Hughes, 1992; Terre Blanche, 2004; Tomlinson & L. Swartz, 2003a). On the other hand, Terre Blanche (2004) warned against thinking of poverty as having a direct causal effect on mental health, suggesting rather that we should consider the challenges that poverty presents and the opportunities it takes away. Persistent poverty has been found to have more detrimental effects than transitory poverty, "with children experiencing both types of poverty generally doing less well than never-poor children" (McLoyd, 1998, p. 185). Desai (2005) noted that, especially in urban areas, millions of South Africans live in woefully inadequate shacks and do not have access to adequate heating, water and sanitation, despite the government's attempt over the past decade to meet basic needs. South Africa has an unsustainably high

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[1] In developmental psychology, the first year of life is typically considered to comprise infancy, while a child is defined as a person between infancy and puberty (Reber, 1995). Most broadly, the term child will also be used here to denote individuals between birth and maturity (Reber, 1995).

[2] I am mindful of the fact that the use of racial categories in South African scholarship is controversial: such categories are socially constructed and carry important social meanings (L. Swartz, K. Gibson & Gelman, 2002a). Following L. Swartz et al. (2002a), the category of "black" will be used in this dissertation to refer to all South Africans disenfranchised under apartheid. The category "coloured" is used to refer to South Africans of diverse and mixed racial origins.

unemployment rate (Desai, 2005). People living in poverty may work long hours for insufficient wages. They are susceptible to poverty-related diseases such as tuberculosis and AIDS, and are exposed to risk of injury (Terre Blanche, 2004). South Africa has a high infant mortality rate and a low life expectancy (Desai, 2005; Terre Blanche, 2004). Poverty leads to high rates of perinatal complications, and reduced access to resources that buffer such complications (McLoyd, 1998). Together with less home-based stimulation and lower teacher expectations, this partly accounts for diminished cognitive functioning in poor children (McLoyd, 1998). Secondly, schools in poverty environments may themselves be inadequate (Dawes & Donald, 2000).

Every tenth child in South Africa is malnourished (Terre Blanche, 2004). At its worst, poverty causes death by starvation (Desai, 2005; Sheper-Hughes, 1992). Chronic malnutrition can cause stunting and illness (Barbarin & Richter, 2001; Sheper-Hughes, 1992). For children, the ability to learn in a formal school environment can be further affected by poor concentration resulting from inadequate diet, and uncorrected visual and hearing problems. In summary, malnourishment can lead to "impaired physical, mental, scholastic and, in the longer term, occupational and social functioning" (Duncan & Van Niekerk, 2001). Poor children may take on more parental responsibilities at home and grow up in crowded environments. They are more likely to witness or be victims of crime and violence (Terre Blanche, 2004). K. Gibson (2002b) noted that there are still many areas in South Africa where very high levels of violence, which impact negatively on children's development, exist. Political violence has declined, but criminal and domestic violence, including sexualised violence, prevails in South African townships[3] (Duncan & Van Niekerk, 2001). Child abandonment and homeless children have been reported with increasing frequency in poorer rural environments (Duncan & Van Niekerk, 2001). Pillay and Lockhat (2001) listed post-traumatic stress disorder, sexual abuse, attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder and self-destructive behaviours as some of the childhood mental health problems that can arise in disadvantaged communities. Generally, it is thought that the experience of living in poverty can involve hopelessness, uncertainty about the future, and alienation from mainstream society (Terre Blanche, 2004).

Citing Harpham (1994), Cooper et al. (2002) noted that infants from poor communities in the developing world are especially vulnerable, because they are subject to parenting that is under the strain of both marked socio-economic hardship and high rates of depression. The susceptibility to depression of low-income mothers has been well documented (Belle, 1982) (see, for example, Murray and Cooper, 1997). Financial strain and responsibility for young children increases the risk of this mental health problem (Belle, 1982). For example, a high rate of maternal depression (one in three) and associated disturbance in the mother-infant relationship was found in the indigent peri-urban South African community of Khayelitsha (Cooper et al., 2002). Such women were found to be "significantly less sensitively engaged with their infants, and, correspondingly, the infants of these mothers were significantly less positively engaged in interaction with their mothers" (Cooper et al., 2002, p. 76). Writing in the United States, McLoyd (1998) noted that "the link between socio-economic disadvantage and children's socioemotional functioning appears to be mediated partly by harsh, inconsistent parenting and elevated exposure to acute and chronic stressors" (p. 185). There is a growing literature on resilience in the face of adverse circumstances (Terre Blanche, 2004). For example, research conducted in South Africa during the early 1990s

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[3] Shantytowns, or informal settlements. Townships were the legislated residential areas for urban black people during the apartheid era, and generally retain this demographic.

indicated that the deleterious impact of social stressors can be significantly diminished if children have recourse to effective and stable support systems (Barbarin & Richter, 2001; Dawes & Donald, 2000; Duncan & Van Niekerk, 2001).

In summary, poor children's needs are simply greater. In the following section I will consider the extent and nature of our current knowledge about this significant and pervasive problem in South Africa.

1.1.1 A lack of knowledge

Despite the fact that there are so many poor children in South Africa deemed at risk through poverty, we 1) lack conclusive, high-quality epidemiological data related to them; 2) lack in-depth knowledge about how their experiences shape their internal worlds;[4] and 3) lack adequate frameworks within which to conduct research.

There has been an explosion in psychological research on infants in the past few decades, resulting in a remarkable growth in knowledge and expertise about infancy (Gopnick, Meltzoff & Kuhl, 1999; Rochat, 2001; Stern, 1998a; Tomlinson & L. Swartz, 2003a, 2003b). New technology such as television has assisted in this (Gopnick et al., 1999; Stern, 1995). M.J. Rustin (1989) noted that the resources of video-recording, one-way screens and meticulous time measurement have added to the rigorous conditions of the child study laboratory. Stern (1995) referred to a "revolution in the scientific observation of babies" as a result of which "we have more systematic observations on the first two years of life than on any other period in the entire life span" (p. 1).

In a summary of recent literature reviews, Kruger (2005a), however, noted the dearth of work on poverty in psychology: "a gap that exists even while there have been more considerable efforts to deal with sexual orientation, ethnicity, gender, race, disabilities and age" (p. 16). Poor women in particular seem to have been "virtually excluded from mainstream psychological research" (Kruger, 2005a, p. 16). Similarly, poor children in South Africa have been marginalised in terms of research. There is a "proud tradition" in the infant mental health field of work that focuses on the poor and the marginalised in high-income countries (Tomlinson & L. Swartz, 2003a, p. 549). However, Tomlinson and L. Swartz (2003a) warned that not all marginalised groups are the same and that social structure in poorer countries has implications for health and human behaviour. In South Africa childhood suffering could be said to have a unique profile (Dawes & Donald, 1994; Donald, Dawes & Louw, 2000). Imported concepts of what constitutes childhood are arguably made irrelevant by the particularity of our socio-political history. Despite this, there is a paucity of research about the effects of poverty environments on the lives of black South Africans and children in particular (Bloom, 1996; K. Gibson, 1996; Pillay & Lockhat, 2001; L. Swartz, 1991, 2002):

> To date, literature and research on childhood mental health problems in this country have been skewed and have been more concerned with advantaged and urban children, with the result that little is known about the problems of children from poorer, rural, and peri-urban communities. Perusal of the psychological and psychiatric

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[4] The concept of the internal world is a psychoanalytic one that will be discussed fully in the next chapter. It refers to a psychical reality that is derived from, but not identical to, an external reality (Rycroft, 1995).

literature published in and about South Africa in the past few decades bears testimony to this. (Pillay & Lockhat, 2001, p. 89)

Accurate, high-quality epidemiological data on the incidence of mental health problems amongst South African children is therefore lacking (Barbarin & Richter, 2001; K. Gibson, 2002b; Pillay & Lockhat, 2001; Tomlinson, 2003; Tomlinson & L. Swartz, 2003a, 2003b). Surveying articles on infancy for the last five years in 12 major infancy and developmental journals worldwide, Tomlinson and L. Swartz (2003a) noted that 94 % of these articles were written in North America or Europe. As recently as 2006 Andrews, Skinner and Zuma pointed out that there are hardly any studies that, for example, compare the experiences of Sub-Saharan children orphaned by AIDS with those of non-orphans. Macleod (2004) discussed the way that psychology continues, in the main, to ignore some of the most pressing issues facing South Africa today. In her situational analysis of research in psychology over the last five years, it emerged that

> …quantitative methods based on "hard" science theory as well as the traditional topics of assessment, psychotherapy/counselling, psychopathology and stress continue to dominate psychological research. A minority of studies utilize theoretical frameworks and tackle topics that illuminate the interweaving of the individual with the socio-political context. (p. 2)

Furthermore, an analysis of the location and participants of research indicated that knowledge is still being generated chiefly about urban, middle-class adults living in the three wealthiest provinces, with university students being the most popular source of participants (Macleod, 2004). Macleod noted that this is in contradistinction to the demographic realities of South Africa. Some of the future challenges for psychology she highlighted were:

1. Theoretical development that brings insights from South Africa's unique sociohistorical-political context into local and international theoretical debates;
2. Expanding traditional approaches, topics and participants to ones that speak to the socio-political concerns of South Africa, and that represent South Africa's demography;
3. Forging links with researchers in the rest of Africa and other developing countries. (Macleod, 2004, p. 1)

Thom's (2003) extensive review found that the bulk of South African research has been descriptive or analytic in nature, in other words describing the extent of mental health problems and the need for services, and highlighting the obstacles to implementation of policy. However, there is a limited amount of work that tests interventions and assesses their impact, "particularly of innovative projects that involve a lot of community participation, and that seem to be working well" (Thom, 2003, p. 25). In particular, Thom (2003) highlighted that there is a need to research, among other topics, child and adolescent mental health services and women's mental health issues.

The reasons for the "glaring gaps" in the literature are complex (Macleod, 2004, p. 2). In South Africa black poverty has historically been neglected as a research subject because of racism: the first comprehensive study of black poverty in South Africa was undertaken only in 1983 (compared to an enquiry into white poverty in the 1920s) (Desai, 2005). Citing Kristeva and Foucault, Kruger (2005a) pointed out that techniques and procedures of power manifest on the most basic levels as techniques and procedures of exclusion, and that such techniques and procedures are economically and politically useful. In part, educational and research infrastructures in poorer countries also play a part in our lack of knowledge (Tomlinson & L. Swartz, 2003a). Because of inadequate South African health-management information services, information on service needs is sketchy and inadequate, and we

have had to use projections from international prevalence studies (Pillay & Lockhat, 2001). Tomlinson and L. Swartz (2003a) speculated that, because African researchers are working in foreign contexts or marginal ways, they might at times be unintentionally excluded, because they are producing work that does not always interact easily with the mainstream. In an earlier review of research on the social context of South African children (J. Lazarus, 2003), I[5] noted that, while there is some record of social ills stemming from apartheid

> …there is a comparative paucity of literature about *internal* life under conditions of poverty and neglect. As a result of Apartheid and the unequal distribution of resources, few accounts exist which might start to give us a glimpse into the interior world of poor black children. This lack has been exacerbated by the growth of a community psychology that has necessarily privileged the role of social deprivation in psychological suffering. (p. 7)

Again, there are numerous possible reasons for the particular character of existent accounts. Firstly, as noted above, there has been a necessary and conscious corrective emphasis on the social. The thinking connected with this and underlying South African "community psychology" will be explicated in Chapter Three. L. Swartz (1991) suggested, however, that a rigid focus on external factors such as stress and resilience when discussing the psychological problems of black people might indicate a subtle form of racism and self-protection against "the other"[6] (p. 241). He noted that talk of stressors, most prevalent in describing black patients, submerges talk of internal dynamics and allows one "to contemplate a mode of understanding African patients which does not require a deep empathy with them" (p. 244). Secondly, South African authors, like practitioners elsewhere, have commented on the tremendous emotional impact of psychodynamic work with deprived and abused clients,[7] and children in particular (Alvarez, 1992; Hoxter, 1983; Sinason, 1991, 2001). K. Gibson (1996) suggested that a need to dissociate from the emotional impact of working with severely traumatised groups might also contribute to a reluctance to work with the internal lives of severely deprived people, specifically children.

It is imperative to gather in-depth information about South African children's experiences to remedy this deficit. Tomlinson and L. Swartz (2003a, 2003b) drew attention to the fact that, despite the fact that 90% of infants born in the world live in low-income countries, most scholarly knowledge about infancy is produced in wealthy countries. They asserted that far more information on infancy throughout the world is needed. These authors showed that the recent plethora of psychological research on infants ignores cultural and historical variability. Infancy is portrayed as an a-contextual, romanticised zone, with little fieldwork being done and authors relying on secondary sources. In other words, infant research needs to be conducted in poorer countries and needs to consider cultural facets. Especially in a divided post-apartheid society, it is imperative that more local ethnographic-style field trips (in the sense of considering culture) are made. Tierney (2002) has stressed "the importance of understanding what is going

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[5] In a theory-based choice to forefront my own subjectivity, I will be speaking in the first person both as the author of the present dissertation and as the practitioner in the case study discussed.

[6] Olesen (2005) described "othering" as the "invidious, oppressive defining of the persons with whom research is done" (p. 242). S. Swartz (2006b) noted that "the other is half ourselves, the self that we cannot consciously entertain" (p. 3).

[7] While psychoanalysis favours the terms "patient", the present dissertation will generally use the word "client" in view of the community psychology context of the study, except where referring to the most traditional psychoanalytic therapies.

on in your own backyard before thinking of going off to exotic places, as traditional anthropologists (are) supposed to do" (p. 10). Apart from the logistical and practical difficulties of infant research in Third World countries, the ethnographic endeavour itself has been problematised in such contexts in ways that will be examined in Chapter Four. Attempts at describing culture, which in itself is a difficult term to define, involve issues of power and, frequently, of fear and othering (Tomlinson, 2003; Tomlinson & L. Swartz, 2003b; L. Swartz, 2002).

It has been shown that for a number of complex reasons stemming from the impact of apartheid, there is very little detailed information about black children (and their mothers) who live in poverty. The present study will use a postmodern ethnographic lens in an attempt to remedy this. By this is meant a lens that involves "the comparative study of individual cultures" (Reber, 1995, p. 262), but which also interrogates this kind of encounter. The present dissertation takes its title, somewhat ironically, from the idea that one can discover a group of people in a moment or period of "first contact" in which they become known to the ethnographer (Geertz, 2000, p. 106). This idea will be problematised using postmodern tools. In the inimitable words of the ethnographer Clifford Geertz:

> …we don't know anything about the Nuer, the people Evans-Pritchard wrote about. I've never seen a Nuer, and I never will probably, and ninety percent of the students won't. Maybe a few will, but even they will go at a different time from the original investigator… (Olson, 1991, p. 192)

In the present study there were several kinds of first contact. Because there was a quest to uncover new information, I entered a community about which comparatively little was known. Here a meeting occurred between a newborn and her family and I wished to observe this interaction. But there was also another kind of new contact: namely between a researcher and a family, involving their respective cultures, social norms, politics and histories. The broader community also met and interacted with me. Following on from suggestions by Tomlinson and L. Swartz (2003b), it is felt that the nature of such a meeting space must be closely examined. It is assumed, but was also found, that we cannot separate "culture" and "internal life" either from each other, or from the political and socio-economic systems within which they exist. In other words, an infant observation constitutes a multi-levelled meeting space, and could potentially result in a very complex relationship with the practitioner.

1.1.2 A lack of services

The *Freedom Charter* (1955) foresaw that "All people shall have the right to live where they choose, be decently housed, and to bring up their families in comfort and security" (quoted in Terre Blanche, 2004, p. 267). Yet without sufficient research into the local conditions that are antithetical to this ideal, steps towards this "modest utopia" cannot be taken (Terre Blanche, 2004, p. 267). In South Africa low-income children of colour are perhaps the least powerful members of under-served communities disadvantaged by apartheid (Barbarin & Richter, 2001; Dawes et al., 1997; Dawes & Donald, 1994; Donald et al., 2000; Duncan & Van Niekerk, 2001; Petersen et al., 1997; Pillay & Lockhat, 2001). They often cannot speak or are not heard. And yet ironically their well-being is important in fostering a healthier South African society in the future, free of the legacy of the "psychopathogenic" policies of apartheid (Dawes, 1985, quoted in Pillay & Lockhat, 2001, p. 88). It is essential to deepen our understanding of the challenges such children face "through the exploration of the experiences of some of those on the margins of society" (Kruger, 2005, p. 3).

In South Africa Thom (2003) noted that there is "a huge unmet need for mental health services for children and adolescents, and a gross lack of resources for this vulnerable group" (p. 30). Child mental health services are concentrated in metropolitan areas and community mental health services for children are virtually non-existent (Pillay & Lockhat, 2001). Thom (2003) noted that important contextual factors are

> …the inheritance of previously fragmented services, where mental health services were isolated from general health services, were inequitably distributed, under-resourced and stigmatised, the broad range of role-players in the mental health field (from a variety of sectors) and the extent to which different disciplines and professions have been able or unable to move beyond the boundaries of their own specific contexts to a broader vision and understanding of mental health care. (p. 20)

Citing Thom (2003), Spedding (2005) noted that limited mental health care is still provided to a small percentage of the population that actually needs services. Public sector resources are scarce (Spedding, 2005) and mental health services for children are even less adequate than those for adults (Milne & Robertson, cited in K. Gibson, 2002b). Children from poorer families are generally more disadvantaged in terms of access to services, and because racial division in South Africa has corresponded to a division along economic lines (Foster & S. Swartz, 1997), resources available for black children are particularly insufficient. This means that problems are left untreated and develop into chronic or complicated conditions. For example, in a survey of mental health and related services available to low-income women in the Winelands region specifically (where the present study was set), it was found that services were predominantly located in bigger centres such as Stellenbosch and Paarl (Women's Mental Health Research Project, 2000).

K. Gibson (2002b) delineated some of the recent changes in the field of South African mental health. One of the core questions being raised is how to meet the needs of black communities and how to adapt psychological practice in order to do so (K. Gibson, 2002b). The community psychologist working in a context of poverty and rapid social change has a particular position that needs to be considered (Tomlinson, L. Swartz & Landman, 2003). Many of those involved in mental health in South Africa have been engaged in thinking about ways of "re-visioning the role of professionals in a way which would help to address the issue of scarce resources and overwhelming need" (K. Gibson & L. Swartz, 2000). The traditional practice model in South Africa has been criticised and is in need of transformation. Individual models of intervention are generally felt to be inadequate. Pillay and Lockhat (2001) stated that we cannot wait for the parents of disadvantaged children, who have insufficient economic resources, to identify psychological problems and seek consultations from mental health specialists. K. Gibson (2002b) cited Donald et al. (2000) for examples related to children. She made the point that part of this transformation process has been to try and involve black communities in thinking how best to work with mental health problems (empowerment). The post-apartheid government has implemented policies aimed at making health services accessible on a primary level, at local clinics and day hospitals (Spedding, 2005). However, resources are limited and psychological services are still considered a luxury reserved for the elite in the private sector (Spedding, 2005).

Planning efficient child mental health services requires a clear perspective of the rates of psychological and psychiatric morbidity, nationally and even regionally (Pillay & Lockhat, 2001). To plan and offer needed psychological services and to improve existing services in South Africa, in-depth qualitative research studies focusing on the experiences of low-income children within their specific socio-cultural contexts seem to be

imperative. An extensive review of the literature (J. Lazarus, 2003; J. Lazarus & Kruger, 2004a) made it clear that psychodynamically oriented practitioners in the United Kingdom, Europe and the United States work with deprived children both in groups and individually. The literature strongly suggested, however, that lasting change for such children can only be possible when the systems that surround them are also addressed (Boston & Szur, 1983; Hoghugi, 1998). In other words, research into children's lives ideally needs to target both internal life and external circumstances. Tomlinson et al. (2003) cited Richter (1995) when they asserted that there is also very little good-quality scientific research on the impact of existent infant intervention programmes in South Africa. They held that it was important to conduct research in this area in order to advocate for a state focus on early mother-infant intervention, which they felt would be of benefit to South Africa.

1.2 Using new tools

Concerns about the appropriateness of professional psychology for the needs of disadvantaged communities have been raised (see, for example, Foster & S. Swartz, 1997). In a recent review of international literature spanning 40 years, Kruger (2005a, 2006) noted that psychology has tended simply to pathologise the poor:

> This tendency to pathologise and to situate the origins of poverty in the personalities of the poor (irredeemable, lazy, dependent, careless, impulsive, weak, irresponsible) was prominent in earlier years and from there it was an easy step to justify demonisation, denigration, not getting involved or even worse, getting involved in curative ways. (Kruger, 2005a, p. 18)

Kruger (2006) explored the ways in which and reasons why the poor have been blatantly excluded from psychological research and practice. She found that poverty is quantitatively reduced to a variable or romanticised. Data about the poor are left as self-evident and not explored theoretically. Kruger (2006) suggested that such tendencies are ways of excluding the painful experience of poverty.

Psychoanalysis has specifically been criticised for its failure to deal with the problem of poverty (Kruger, 2005a). Despite its shortcomings, K. Gibson and L. Swartz (2004) warned us not to "reject wholesale" the potential of modes of psychological knowledge such as psychoanalysis (p. 466). K. Gibson (2002b) noted that there is in fact a "new psychoanalysis" that has developed sufficiently to have some flexibility as an analytic tool (p. 37). In recent years several South African institutions and leading practitioners have actively begun to use psychodynamic[8] thought to understand the complex fabric of the South African community psychology intervention (see, for instance, the recent *Reflective practice*, edited by L. Swartz et al., 2002a). In a previous review we noted that South African community practitioners have predominantly used psychodynamic tools to conceptualise and work with the feelings evoked by community work (J. Lazarus & Kruger, 2004a).

However, the psychodynamic paradigm's potential to provide a rich description of internal life and its reciprocal relationship to social context seems to have been under-utilised in South Africa to date. Given the proliferation of

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[8] It is acceptable to use the terms "psychoanalytic" and "psychodynamic" synonymously (Reber, 1995). The present dissertation will do so because there is no formal psychoanalytic training institute in South Africa at this time. Psychodynamic practitioners in this country are mostly psychologists who have absorbed psychoanalytic theory and have been trained to work with the unconscious within a therapeutic relationship.

community research and a new emphasis on psychodynamic work in the community, one can argue there is still a paucity in accounts of casework done with children in local communities utilising a psychodynamic perspective. This means (i) that there are still very few psychodynamic accounts of the internal lives of impoverished black or coloured South African clients (Bloom, 1996); and (ii) that not much has been written about how exactly the use of traditional psychodynamic techniques does or does not work in community settings (see, for instance, K. Gibson, Mogale & Friedlander, 1991; Richardson, 1994; Rudenberg, Jansen & Fridjhon, 1998; Williams, 2001). Bloom stated in 1996:

> We have…no research that gathers children's dreams, expressive behaviour and acting out, stories, drawings and other forms of art, and which systematically uses and interprets play and psychodrama. We still know very little about how apartheid's psychological turbulence and disruption distorted children's relationships with adults and thus distorted the formation of a benign superego and ego ideal. We are almost totally ignorant of how sado-masochistic sublimations and introjections were managed. (p. 59)

In the present dissertation the specific psychoanalytic tool of infant observation (Miller, M.E. Rustin, M.J. Rustin & Shuttleworth, 1989) will be adopted as a way to fill this gap. Infant observation was introduced at the Tavistock Centre[9] in London as part of the training course for child psychotherapists after the Second World War (Miller et al., 1989). It involves intently watching an infant (and her mother) in the home for an hour a week for the first one or two years of life. Notes about what transpired are written up afterwards. In 2003, concluding my MA in which I discussed a community intervention with children in a Play Group (see **Addendum A**), I proposed that

> …a focus should turn, in line with community psychology principles of prevention and empowerment, to the study of mother-infant behaviour. In Moretown,[10] for example, the principles of psychodynamic infant observation could be used in assessing appropriate interventions around maternal response. (J. Lazarus, 2003, p. 102)

When taken out of its context as a training tool, the potential of infant observation to assist community work by creating a watching and thinking space is conceivably great. New and particularised phenomena could be observed and worked with in this space. It is possible to think about infant observation as a way to gather substantial information about children and their mothers within a specific social, cultural, political and economic environment. The present research draws on the assumption that infant observation could yield an extremely detailed account of the way in which the environment, including cultural factors, unconscious forces and socio-economic positioning, impacts on one microcosm of relating. Beyond this, its focus on complexity and depth could be a useful adjunct to gaining a deeper understanding of the political and emotional dynamics in any community intervention. My hypothesis was that it could give us various insights that nothing else can. However, its viability as a method for gaining knowledge in communities needed to be tested.

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[9] Full name: The Tavistock Clinic and Portman NHS Trust.

[10] The same community in which the present research was conducted. Note that all names in the present study, including place, street and family names, have been changed to ensure the participants' confidentiality.

An infant observation account can record both deficits and strengths. It was hypothesised that such a thick description,[11] including the effect of the infant observation experience on the observer/practitioner, could add depth to a needs assessment[12] process in community work, by saying more about the interplay between context and the internal world. This information could potentially assist in designing highly empathic and particularised preventative community interventions. S. Briggs (1997b) suggested that "the [observation] role may be developed in a way in which professionals can use it to make accurate, informed interventions in families" (p. 212). At the same time, an infant observation account represents only one unit of information, and would therefore need to be used within the context of a larger needs assessment project when working in communities. (See **Addendum A** for details of the needs assessment process currently underway in Moretown.) One of the contributions of the present study is to continue to critically explore the limits and possibilities of psychoanalytic thinking within the community psychology paradigm (K. Gibson, 2002b).

An infant observation in a community setting is akin to an ethnographic endeavour, in the sense that the observer enters the community and home of the observed (participant observation). Infant observation can be regarded as a form of field research, in that in its most inclusive sense it involves an observer's immersion in a study of people acting in the natural courses of their daily lives. In fact, the design of an infant observation has been likened to ethnographic fieldwork in psychodynamic literature (Piontelli, 1992; M.J. Rustin, 1989, 1997, 2006; Winship, 2000, 2001). In ethnography the emphasis is on describing "social or cultural phenomena based on direct systematic observation" in the field (Bhana & Kanjee, 2001, p. 152). More specifically, as indicated earlier, ethnography is thought to be the *comparative* study of individual cultures (Angrosino, 2002; Bhana & Kanjee, 2001). It will be shown that this aspect has not traditionally been a focal point in infant observation accounts. However, when observing infants in any culture different from one's own, comparison with one's own culture and that described in other infant observation accounts could theoretically occur.

It is impossible to know with certainty beforehand what will translate across very different contexts (Tomlinson et al., 2003). Tomlinson et al. (2003) noted, "if social science research is to continue to develop and remain relevant throughout the world, it is important that knowledge and guidelines produced in any one context be interrogated from the perspective of another" (p. 205). Because most social science and psychiatric research is produced in wealthy countries, there is a particular onus on researchers in low-income communities to comment on the value and limitations of this knowledge for other parts of the world (Tomlinson et al., 2003).

1.3 Aims of the study

The over-arching aim of the present study was to contribute to planning and offering needed psychological services for low-income black children in South Africa, and to improve existing services. The focus of the study was

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[11] Denzin (1989) described this ethnographic term as follows: "A 'thick' description does more than record what a person is doing. It goes beyond mere fact and surface appearances. It presents detail, context, emotion, and the webs of social relationships that join persons to one another. Thick description evokes emotionality and self-feelings. It inserts history into experience. It establishes the significance of an experience, or the sequence of events, for the person or persons in question. In thick description, the voices, feelings, actions, and meanings of interacting individuals are heard" (p. 83).

[12] The concept of needs assessment in community psychology will be described in Chapters Three and Six.

methodological, namely to consider whether the thick description achieved through infant observation could be utilised in doing psychological work in community settings. This means that the study aimed to:

1. Provide a thick description of a single low-income mother-infant dyad (including their interaction);
2. Consider the potential contribution that such a description might make to a needs assessment process; and thus
3. Explore the utility of infant observation (a practice that is essentially informed by a theoretical framework constructed in Western contexts) as a tool for psychologists working in low-income communities in South Africa.

Following Tomlinson and L. Swartz (2003a), it has been argued here that it is dangerous to import knowledge without considering context, and to make generalisations from one context to another, without investigating the local. The orientation of the present project was very much to investigate the local, because so few studies have done this. The tools for doing this in terms of community work are still being tried out and developed (Orford, 2002). The purpose of the present investigation was to contribute to developing a methodology for working in communities, by using theory and fieldwork in an exploratory way. My premise was that using infant observation in a different context will substantially affect it and perhaps alter its value. To have value in its new context, it may need to change. A secondary question I was asking is whether infant observation gives us more of the child's context, in a deeper way. An important consideration here is how context is defined by infant observation, by more postmodern branches of psychoanalysis and ethnography, and by community psychology. An investigation of these paradigms will reveal that there are differences and tensions in this regard.

In a sense, then, the present study set out to ask questions about what infant observation can and cannot do within a new context. An unforeseen outcome, however, was that a broader critique of infant observation emerged, by which is meant a detailed analysis and assessment (*Concise Oxford English dictionary,* 2006). In other words, my suggestion was, in the end, that not only does infant observation need to make adjustments for a South African context, but that it needs to revisit its own theory and praxis. This is a larger finding that is applicable beyond South African community psychology interventions.

1.4 The researcher-practitioner

Aunger (2004) felt that "the only way for readers to appreciate where you are coming from, is to own up to your own biases as explicitly as possible by becoming aware of them yourself, and writing them down" (p. 9). It is important to situate myself, both in terms of making my perspective known, and in an attempt to assert my credentials for a study of this nature. I conducted the infant observation, wrote it up in reports, analysed the material, and represented it here in written form. Therefore I have been very prominent in the research process. I used a variety of theoretical lenses, with inherent assumptions, which I will discuss in the following four chapters. Broadly, my orientation is postmodern and psychoanalytic. It involves social constructionist and intersubjective perspectives (Chapter Two). I will also be using principles from psychodynamic community psychology (Chapter Three) and postmodern ethnography (Chapter Four). In Chapter Five I will discuss the infant observation paradigm, which is part of a more traditional psychoanalytic model. As an infant observer in the present project, I was a

practitioner, and yet my overarching aim was to ask questions about infant observation in a new context (research). This meant that I found myself with two quite different agendas simultaneously, that were in conflict in some ways. However, it was at these uncomfortable intersections that some of the most important questions, issues and findings became apparent.

I am a middle-class, 36-year-old, white, English-speaking South African from an Afrikaans background, who grew up overseas (in Germany, Israel and England) until the age of 11. I was childless at the time of the research. I am a clinical psychologist in part-time private practice, where I see children and their families, as well as adults. Before I trained, I worked as a stage, film, radio and television actress for 12 years. Towards the end of that career I was involved in writing, directing and performing in community, educational and industrial theatre projects.

I received my clinical training from Stellenbosch University, where I graduated with a Master's Degree in 2003. This training (which was co-ordinated by Professor Lou-Marié Kruger) consisted of working in both psychodynamic and community psychology paradigms. Before this, I received an MA in Psychoanalytic Studies (a non-clinical degree) from the Tavistock in 2002. On the M16 course I was taught modules on the wider application of psychoanalytic theory by M.E. Rustin and M.J. Rustin, whose work is cited liberally in the present dissertation. As part of the latter degree course, I conducted a year-long observation of a young child in a middle-class London pre-school in 2001 and thus have had experience of the Tavistock infant observation procedure in a Western context, used for its original purpose, namely as a training tool. My infant observation seminar leader was Annette Mendelsohn. By chance, the 2-year-old I observed in 2001 was a French child born to a French mother and an English father. She spoke no English, but attended an English-medium pre-school. Therefore a cross-cultural setting also existed here between the child and myself (a South African who spoke no French). There is also an interesting parallel with my own dislocation as a South African abroad (I initially spoke only Afrikaans as a child).

Since returning to South Africa, I have attended presentations and seminars by visitors associated with the Tavistock such as Valerie Sinason, Louise Emanuel and Suzanne Maiello, whose work is cited in the present dissertation. I am a member of the Tavistock Society of Psychotherapists and Allied Professionals (TSP), the Cape Town Psychoanalytic Self Psychology Group (CTPSPG), and the International Association for Psychoanalytic Self Psychology (IAPSP). My exposure to more postmodern forms of psychoanalysis such as intersubjectivity has occurred through the Self Psychology Group in Cape Town, through which I attend monthly reading groups, and which offers introductory courses and coordinates a biannual conference with international speakers.

My personal and academic histories situate me in two very different worlds simultaneously and with fairly equal weight, namely a local South African one and a more Western, international one. To my knowledge, I am one of very few South Africans (if not the only one) who has received an MA from both the Tavistock and a South African university, and who is focusing on community work. Regarding the Tavistock, the assumption here is that an institution that developed the original, unapplied or "pure" form of infant observation capped me as an insider of sorts. I have experienced that this gives me credibility in the eyes of the Tavistock itself in terms of enabling my re-entry in order to present my work there. It may also affect the way South African infant observers see me, a few of whom have themselves brought home a kind of legitimacy by training at the Tavistock and returning to teach and

supervise. On the other hand, I also received a degree from a university that practices in different ways, including a focus on "community psychology". This in some ways makes me an outsider regarding "the Tavistock approach" (Waddel, 2006). I feel that I am uniquely positioned to conduct a study of this kind because of my dual focus. The potential for friction between these two positions also exists. At the same time, I recognise the "Tavistock" as a co-construction that my colleagues, my teachers and I all play a role in upholding at different times. This construction is linked with the concept of "the classic 'observational stance'" (Sternberg, 2005, p. 6), the "ideal observation" and the "'proper' way observation should be done" (Sternberg, 2005, p. 95). It may be so that sectors of the Tavistock Clinic itself are less conservative in practice and approach than is sometimes assumed. Lastly, my exposure to intersubjectivity theory, which I have recently begun to apply in my thinking about community work (J. Lazarus, 2005, 2006) offers an alternative perspective to the more modernist tradition upheld at the Tavistock.

The present research project represents my introduction to the field of ethnography. I have no experience of conducting fieldwork with an explicitly ethnographic purpose. However, postmodern ethnography allows genres to blur and disciplines to meet (Clifford & Marcus, 1986; Denzin, 1997; Ortner, 1999). This means that my psychoanalytic tools become a legitimate strategy for research in an ethnographic sense (Clifford, 1986). Secondly, the way in which ethnographies are invariably fictions (in the sense of constructions) and function as literature is increasingly being recognised (Clifford & Marcus, 1986; Denzin, 1997; Geertz, 1988; Olson, 1991). Thirdly, some contemporary and experimental forms of ethnography are moving towards becoming forms of art, including performance (Clifford & Marcus, 1986; Denzin, 1997). My background is in the arts: my BA majors were English and Drama, and I concurrently obtained a Performer's Diploma in Speech and Drama (1992). I also studied History of Art, Greek and Roman Literature and Thought, and Philosophy towards my first degree. I have painted and published poetry at student levels. My Tavistock MA applied psychoanalytic theory in considering an unusual piece of "Outsider Art" by a South African called Helen Martins (J. Lazarus, 2002). Late in her life, Martins turned her home, which was situated in a small village, into an artwork called *The Owl House*. My focus was on the ways in which her past, her internal world, and her physical, cultural and metaphorical dwelling places intersected. Conceptually and practically, an ethnographic lens was an essential component in the present study. Ironically, it provided the greatest challenges and the broadest usefulness, and enabled the deepest learning. In retrospect, I feel I am interestingly situated for a study of this nature. I have stood inside and outside the paradigms of both classical psychoanalysis and ethnography at different times.

1.5 Organisation of the dissertation

In this chapter the research problem and rationale for the study have been outlined. In Chapter Two the postmodern metatheoretical lens of the thesis will be described. Together these two opening chapters comprise a first section that lays out the theoretical points of departure and assumptions of the thesis. In a second section three chapters will outline three major traditions or paradigms that have further informed the study theoretically, and which comprise the literature review. These are psychodynamic community psychology, postmodern ethnography and psychoanalytic infant observation. In each case the ways in which these paradigms engage and do not engage with a postmodern psychoanalytic perspective will be investigated. Throughout Sections One and Two important concepts for the discussion that follows will be highlighted and developed at the end of each chapter ("key terms").

These preliminary remarks will culminate in an attempt at giving working definitions of the terms at the end of Section Two. In a third section the methodology of the present study will be described. In Section Four its results will be noted and discussed. An evaluation of the study will be conducted in the concluding chapter and recommendations will be made.

1.6 Key terms

This introduction has noted that, in terms of knowledge production, context is important. In other words, when we use a tool such as psychoanalytic infant observation, it is important to think about where and how it originally developed. The kind of information it has produced in the past will be contingent on where the observations have taken place, and on who has been observed. Secondly, the present research project set out, without privileging the external, to find out more about every aspect surrounding the observed child, and how this might affect her relationships and development. In this way the most inclusive ethnographic sense of the word "context" is implicitly employed. Thirdly, it was recognised at proposal level that the subjectivity or personhood of the researcher would be involved in the present study and would have to be considered. Lastly, it seems important at the outset to define the concept of therapy. From a medical perspective this is an "inclusive label for all manners and forms of treatment of disease and disorder" (Reber, 1995, p. 794). In other words, it involves change in the direction of mental health, a term which in itself poses "medical, logical and empirical problems" (Reber, 1995, p. 452), but is generally used to designate a high level of behavioural and emotional functioning. Reber (1995) noted that "therapy" is a very broad term connotatively and denotatively, and is typically used with qualifiers to designate the form of therapy referenced - for example, psychoanalytic psychotherapy.

1.7 Conclusion

In South Africa many children live in poverty without access to health services, including mental health services. At the same time, this sector of the population has been neglected in terms of local research about what their difficulties and needs are. There are broad ideas about how poverty may affect socio-economically disadvantaged children, but there is little detailed information about the actual experience of South African children living in poverty. This means that it is hard to plan adequate services. It is suggested that one way to remedy this is to actively investigate the lives of such children by means of ethnographic case studies that add detail to the needs assessment process in community psychology projects. It was therefore assumed that an ethnographic lens would be an important tool in the present study. It will be shown that a contemporary ethnographic approach further allows the practitioner to engage with the complex issues that arise in a study of this kind. These include issues of difference, power and representation, all of which are felt to be crucial to South Africa in the light of our history of apartheid. One way of adding depth that has been explored in community work is the psychoanalytic tool of analysing the unconscious. The present dissertation suggests that very traditional tools such as psychoanalytic infant observation might be employed in this endeavour.

CHAPTER TWO: Theoretical points of departure

2.1 Introduction

The present research is located within a psychoanalytic paradigm that draws on postmodern thinking. As a study, it aims to investigate that which is marginalised and has been forgotten, as indicated in the previous chapter. It also represents a critique of more traditional modes of thinking, operating and theorising. Postmodernism is a form of interrogation with "an intense concern for pluralism" and "an acknowledgement of difference and otherness" (Jencks, 1992, p. 7). This is felt to be an important lens in a country like South Africa, where power is contested and there has been "a legacy of racial, gender and other forms of oppression" (Foster & S. Swartz, 1997). In the present chapter the characteristics of a postmodern psychoanalytic lens will be considered in some detail.

2.2 A definition of postmodernism

Postmodernism has become a key term across a range of disciplines since the 1980s (Waugh, 1992). Frosh (1991) noted the complexity of the term and of the various forces that make up the postmodernist movement. Waugh (1992) pointed out that there are "many Postmodernisms" and that they have "a variety of theoretical precursors and historical trajectories" (p. 1). Theorists such as Nietzsche, Barthes, Foucault, Derrida and Lacan are important in its genealogies (Waugh, 1992).

Postmodernism, Waugh (1992) suggested, is a theoretical and representational "mood" or "structure of feeling" that has developed over the last thirty years (pp. 1, 3). This tendency involves a "loss of faith in the progressivist and speculative discourses of modernity" (Waugh, 1992, p. 3). The advance of modernity was associated with a focus on reason (Frosh, 2000). The project of postmodernism might be summarised as dismantling the received certainties of modernism, including the task of deconstructing the self (Frosh, 1991). The postmodern mood implies the collapse of the grand narratives of modernity. Frosh (1991) quoted Lyotard's (1979) well-known summary: "I define postmodern as incredulity towards metanarratives" (p. 23). Postmodernism opposes the illusions of wholeness and of received wisdom or knowledge within which we take refuge (Frosh, 1991). Lyotard (1979) identified the renunciation of universalisation, a loss of confidence in the modern notion of "progress", and a process of self-reflectiveness (of "working-through…operated by modernity on itself") as three particular debates which can be distinguished in the term postmodern (quoted in Frosh, 1991, pp. 22-23). Individuality is seen as being permeated by sociality. Waugh (1992) noted that the term initially carried emphatically aesthetic connotations. At first it described "a range of aesthetic practices involving playful irony, parody, parataxis, self-consciousness, fragmentation" (Waugh, 1992, p. 3):

> Interestingly, by 1990, although "Postmodernism" as a concept has emphatically spilled out of the boundaries of literary critical debate, it still carries with it, wherever it goes, the idea of "telling stories". But the stories are now indistinguishable from what was once assumed to be knowledge: scientific truth, ethics, law, history. (Waugh, 1992, p. 1)

Postmodernism suggests dissent and diversity; "the margins have become the centre" (Frosh, 2000, p. 60). It grants privileges to the voices of those usually silenced (Lesch, 2000) and asks about otherness both as something to

encounter without and within (Frosh, 2000; S. Swartz, 2005). Frosh (2000) pointed out that postmodernism argues against the existence of general theories and the value of broad debates (p. 61). Local knowledge and specific modes of practice are seen as more useful in understanding the world (Frosh, 2000).

Frosh (2000) wrote about the development of critical psychology as reflecting a wider struggle over the nature and forms of power. His comments about what critical psychology is situate it firmly within the postmodernist ethos and provide a useful sense of how postmodernist thought operates:

> It is about excrement, about spoiling the purity of the vision of the normative as "good", about denouncing claims to truth. It is constantly provoking, never-endingly analytic, always trying to see the system in the individual, always prising open the "natural" to see how it is constructed. It is gendered and racialized, it promotes social and political analysis; it celebrates diversity and otherness. What romance… (p. 58)

These ideas form a framework for critical thinking in the present dissertation: "Postmodernists challenge Enlightenment ideas about truth, knowledge, power, history, self, and language still predominant in the West" (Flax, 1993, p. 48).

2.3 A definition of social constructionism

Social constructionism is a postmodernist metatheory that has informed approaches to a number of social sciences (Durrheim, 1997; Gergen, 1997). One could say that it involves the application of a postmodernist perspective in practical terms (Lupton, 1995). It represents a shift away from empiricism (dualism and representationism) (Durrheim, 1997). Theorists such as Berger and Luckmann, Gergen, Bruner and Shotter have developed it. As Gergen, Lightfoot and Sydow (2004) have pointed out, social constructionism is not a unified theory, but an unfolding dialogue, and attempts to summarise its values and practices are somewhat antithetical to its nature. However, Wetherell and Maybin (1996) described social constructionism as a way of thinking about the self that begins with the social context. The self and the social world are not seen as separated; social constructionism questions the independent and self-contained nature of the individual (Wetherell & Maybin, 1996). Referring to Gergen (1991, 1994), Wetherell and Maybin (1996) noted that the self is seen not as an object for description, but as "a continuously changing and fluid history of relationships" (p. 222). It is felt that the social world, or meaningful human activity, should be at the heart of psychological investigations (Gergen, 1973; Shotter, 1993).

Weldes, Laffey, Gusterson and Duvall (1999) held that social constructivist analysis implies a commitment to three interrelated principles, namely:

1. What is understood as reality is socially constructed.
2. Constructions of reality reflect, enact, and reify relations of power. In turn, certain agents or groups of agents play a privileged role in the production and reproduction of these realities.
3. A critical constructivist approach denaturalizes dominant constructions, offers guidelines for the transformation of common sense, and facilitates imagining of alternative life-worlds. It also problematizes the conditions of its own claims; that is, a critical constructivism is also reflexive. (p. 13)

2.4 Central concerns in social constructionist thought

2.4.1 Reality and truth

Several South African masters and doctoral students have examined the basic tenets of social constructionism recently (Appelt, 2006; Herbst de Villiers, 2006; Lesch, 2000; Long, 1999). Of importance to the present study is the social constructionist idea of anti-realism: the notion is that the nature of social life is constructed through language, in a performative and not a descriptive sense (Gergen, 1997; Long, 1999). Hosking and Morley (2004) noted that social constructionists hold that "objective truth is not absolute truth but socially certified truth" (p. 327). There is, in other words, no one unitary truth to be uncovered in a positivist sense (Durrheim, 1997; Gergen, 1997). Clifford and Marcus (1986) succinctly articulated this position as follows: "What appears as 'real' in history, the social sciences, the arts, even in common sense, is always analyzable as a restrictive and expressive set of social codes and conventions" (p. 10). This raises the question of verisimilitude, as Denzin (1997) has pointed out. Our understanding of reality is always a representation and not a replica (Herbst de Villiers, 2006). Citing Baudrillard (1983), Denzin (1997) noted that "the very definition of the real becomes: that of which it is possible to give an equivalent reproduction" (p. 13). Denzin (1997) held that the researcher can only ever produce a text that reproduces multiple versions of the real. Each version is also thought to impinge on and shape that which is being studied. Verisimilitude, in Denzin's view, is the text's ability "to reproduce and deconstruct the reproductions and simulations that structure the real" (1997, p. 13).

Waugh (1992) noted that "the Cartesian assumption of a radical split between knowing subject and inert object of knowledge has led to a world in which the detached superiority of the scientist becomes the model and ground of all existence" (p. 2). Social constructionists' stories about truth do not focus on reason and the subject/object relationship (Flax, 1993). Instead, they focus on discursive practices. They contest the idea that the mind can somehow receive accurate information about reality, without its being obscured by theoretical assumptions, methods and mental processes (Flax, 1993). It is felt that it is not possible to "directly observe" data in an empirical sense. We cannot produce a body of knowledge that faithfully mirrors nature "out there" (Rorty, 1979, quoted in Durrheim, 1997, p. 18).

Social constructionism is described as "an active and subjective approach of becoming involved with how people make meaning of their lives" (Herbst de Villiers, 2006). These meanings are seen as context-dependent (Lesch, 2000). People act towards objects and other actors based on the meanings that the objects have for them (Wendt, 1992, cited in Weldes et al., 1999).

2.4.2 Subjectivity

The concept of subjectivity alludes to that which is dependent on the mind for existence; something that is subjective is thought to be "based on or influenced by personal feelings, tastes or opinions" (*Concise Oxford English dictionary*, 2006, p. 1435). In other words, subjectivity is related to a particular perceiving consciousness or person. From a social constructionist perspective, personhood is seen as emergent, contextual, discursive,

multiple, relational and mutual (Wetherell & Maybin, 1996). Identity and personhood are thought to be contextual in that they are located in and defined by complexes of social activities (Wetherell & Maybin, 1996). In other words, "consciousness and self emerge in fields of meanings and practices which are socially and culturally organised" (Wetherell & Maybin, 1996, p. 229). There is no self apart from social context. This position is perhaps best summarised by Berger and Luckmann in their influential text, *The social construction of reality* (1967):

> While it is possible to say that man has a nature, it is more significant to say that man constructs his own nature, or more simply, that man produces himself…it is important to emphasize that the relationship between man, the producer, and the social world, his product, is and remains a dialectical one. That is, man (not, of course, in isolation, but in his collectivities) and his social world interact with each other. (quoted in Mishler, 1981, p. 141)

In other words, social constructionism recognises that we have multiple selves: "We are not single persons, but a multitude of possibilities any one of which might reveal itself in a specific field situation" (Lincoln, 1997, quoted in Olesen, 2005, p. 248).

2.4.3 Language

Language, and the way it relates to the status of knowledge, is a central concern in social constructionist thinking. Hosking and Morley (2004) said that "social constructionists are likely to be contextualists who…think that what we say does not just mirror the world but in some sense helps to constitute that world" (p. 319). In the positivist paradigm, it is assumed that language can describe and represent external objects in the world (Durrheim, 1997). Flax (1993) pointed out that, in social constructionist terms, language "cannot be a transparent, passive, or neutral instrument" (p. 49). Language is not a way to label objects - on the contrary, social constructionists stress that thought is dependent on language (Flax, 1993).

Language partially constructs our personhood and affects the meanings of our experiences and understandings of them (Flax, 1993). We are, Flax (1993) noted, "born into an ongoing set of language games" (p. 49). Our identities are seen in part to be discursive products, in that "language, talk and discourse provide some important raw materials for the construction of the self" (Wetherell & Maybin, 1996, p. 228). Discourse involves conversations, narratives and stories. It has been defined as "the talk and texts of social life" (Wetherell & Maybin, 1996, p. 240). Lupton (1995) described discourse as:

> …a pattern of words, figures of speech, concepts, values and symbols. A discourse is a coherent way of describing and categorizing the social and physical worlds. Discourses gather around an object, person, social group or event of interest, providing a means of "making sense" of that object, person, and so on. (p. 18)

Discourse analysts stress that language is a practical activity and not just an abstract system of rules (Wetherell & Maybin, 1996). Talk and writing are ways to constitute or build worlds, lives and selves (social reality) (Wetherell & Maybin, 1996). As Taylor (1985) observed: "language is constitutive of the reality, is essential to its being the kind of reality it is" (p. 34). Stevenson (2004) noted that what follows is "the potential for multiplicity in accounts, and the rejection of straightforward representationalism" (p. 19). Discourse analysis is about examining texts and how language is used to establish power (Lupton, 1995).

2.4.4 Power

The focus of social constructionist thought is, as the name suggests, on interaction and social processes rather than on the intrapsychic (Long, 1999). This includes an examination of how institutions and institutional discourse plays a role in the construction of reality (as in the work of Foucault) and has led to the practices of narrative and discourse analysis. Hosking and Morley (2004) noted that "conversations matter. If we pay more attention to the structure and process of conversations we may be able to bring new insights to change in individuals, groups, and communities" (p. 327).

Lesch (2000), citing Danziger (1997), pointed out that power is an important term in social constructionism and that "current patterns of interaction are dependent on power structures originating in the past and maintained by many institutionalised practices and conventions" (p. 50). Discourse, in Foucauldian terms, "is understood as a way of understanding language, power and subjectivity" (Long, 1999, p. 21). Dominant discourses are sustained by power relations but are in themselves important sources of power, because they bring with them the power to define and thus constitute the world (Weldes et al., 1999). As Foucault (1979) argued, "power and knowledge directly imply one another…there is no power relation without the correlative constitution of a field of knowledge, nor any knowledge that does not presuppose and constitute at the same time power relations" (quoted in Weldes et al., 1999, p. 18). Flax (1993) pointed out that the emphasis on power distinguishes social constructionists from hermeneutic thinkers. When we acquire linguistic skills, she held, we "enter into specific circuits of power" (p. 49). "Truth" is seen as an effect of multiple discursive practices, including the circulation of power (Flax, 1993).

2.5 Postmodern psychoanalysis

Psychoanalysis is a vast field and a comprehensive review will not be attempted here. Instead, after a brief definition, the particular brand of psychoanalysis that informs the analysis in the present study will be considered. Most broadly, it should be noted that all the concerns of social constructionism delineated above feature as concerns in postmodern psychoanalysis. My discussion will delineate some theoretical ideas that are used in the present thesis but will then emphasise psychoanalytic practice. Kruger (2006) commented that what is particularly important is that psychoanalytic practice (the cure) and technique (the method of the cure) have, since Freud, always been firmly tied to theory.

2.5.1 A definition of psychoanalysis

Psychoanalysis emerged in late nineteenth-century Europe and has become one of the strongest influences on twentieth-century thought (Frosh, 1987). Originating with Freud, it postulated the existence of a dynamic unconscious:

> …the idea that in each of us there is a realm of psychological functioning which is not accessible to ordinary introspection, but which nevertheless has a determining or at least a motivating influence on the activities, thoughts and emotions of everyday life. (Frosh, 1987, p. 2)

Since Freud, psychoanalysis has produced many different schools of thought, each with its own theories, which yet share this basic assumption (Frosh, 1987). Frosh (2000), writing about critical psychology and citing Eliot (1920), noted that Freudian psychoanalysis set in motion "the relentless quest for *what's really happening*, for the underlying, the hidden, the that-which-trips-us-up, 'the skull beneath the skin'" (p. 58). S. Swartz (2006a) noted that "insofar as the analytic work includes unconscious needs, impulses and desire, it must also assume a discourse shaped by anxiety and defence" (p. 434). The structure and content of the unconscious is a debated topic. Frosh (1987) noted that most analysts agree that it is made up of the residues of infantile experiences, possibly alongside instinctual impulses, particularly sexual ones. There is further agreement that children develop by passing through certain stages and that the experiences of early life (up to age 5), particularly with the parents, are of significance for later life (Frosh, 1987).

In object relations theory the internal world is described as being peopled by mental representations of others (internal objects), "sharing as they do some of the characteristics of 'real' people as well as some of their capacity to trigger behavioural response, yet being demonstrably 'different'" (Greenberg & S. Mitchell, 1983, p. 11). Greenberg and S. Mitchell (1983) commented that object relations theory, originating in the work of Klein, is built on the "potentially confounding observation that people live simultaneously in an external and an internal world, and that the relationship between the two ranges from the most fluid intermingling to the most rigid separation" (p. 12). The implication is that people react not only to an actual other, but also an internal other (Greenberg & S. Mitchell, 1983).

Laplanche and Pontalis (1980) defined projection as the psychic expulsion of "qualities, feelings, wishes or even 'objects'" from the self into another person or thing (quoted in S. Swartz, 2006a, p. 431). S. Swartz pointed out that such operations are identifiable in verbal exchange, "and in particular in the use and abuse of ordinary conversational rules" (2006a, p. 431). Klein (1946) originally described the related concept of projective identification "as a mechanism of defence by which the patient locates an experience that is felt to be intolerable in an external object, which is then felt to be affected by the experience" (Colam, 1997, p. 31). Colam (1997) went on to discuss the way in which Bion (1962, 1970) later outlined projective identification as functioning as a form of non-verbal communication. Both the processes of projection and projective identification are thought to be primitive or immature defence mechanisms, which can occur both in the infant and in the adult (Bateman & Holmes, 1995).

In terms of practice, it is thought that the intense examination of psychological and cultural phenomena such as "dreams, slips of the tongue, works of art, [and] neuroses" can unearth the underlying dynamics of mental life (Frosh, 1987, p. 2). This happens most clearly in the therapeutic situation, or "talking cure", described below (Frosh, 1987, p.2). Core concepts are the use of free association, interpretation and the transference (Rycroft, 1995). The patient is encouraged to report her thoughts without reservation and concentration (Rycroft, 1995). Psychoanalytic technique demands that in response "all criticism, advice, encouragement, reassurance, and the like, is rigorously avoided" (Segal, 1986, quoted in Colam, 1997, p. 30). Freud recommended that the analyst attempt a kind of free-floating attention (Piontelli, 1992). This ties in with the analytic attitude described by Bion (1974, cited in Casement, 1985) of "not knowing", that is, of entering the therapy space with as few assumptions as possible

(see also Ivey, 1999). The psychoanalytic frame creates the therapeutic context, which is comprised of a private, stable space, regular sessions of the same length over an extended time period, and payment (Colam, 1997). It is important that the analyst refrain from "doing" by avoiding extra-analytic contact, retaliation in the analysis, and contact with third parties (Colam, 1997, p. 30). It is felt that a properly established frame provides safe and open conditions for unencumbered communication (Langs, 1982, cited in Colam, 1997). Langs (1982) pointed out that changes in the therapeutic "rules", though consciously gratifying to the patient, are unconsciously experienced as negative (quoted in Colam, 1997, p. 30).

Jacobson (1993) noted that the opening phase of an analysis is characterised by the mutual attempts of the analyst and patient to establish a meaningful attachment or analytic bond. The patient's previous life experiences with fundamental issues such as basic trust come into play. Jacobson (1993) likened this process to the mutual accommodation and attunement visible in mother-infant interactions, and emphasised the importance of the "holding environment" at this time (Winnicott, 1960, pp. 43-44). The latter term describes a process whereby the infant (or patient) is supported emotionally while in the grip of difficult feelings. A related concept is that of "mirroring", namely the way in which the mother's face reflects the emotional states she sees in the infant's face (Winnicott, 1971b). Winnicott and Bion both extended Klein's ideas. Winnicott was supervised by Klein for five years (Aguayo, 2002). Bion (1959, 1962, 1970), who was Klein's analysand, developed the notion of container/contained, whereby the mother (or analyst) helps the processing of overwhelming, undigested feeling that is projected into her. By means of an empathic response, these feelings are detoxified as they resonate in her and are returned in a more processed form.

It is felt that the analytic frame creates containment for the patient by providing an inherent sense of safety and protection (Langs, 1982, cited in Colam, 1997). In the analytic encounter, "the patient's life history begins to surface with increasing intensity, deepening, expanding, testing, distorting, threatening and sometimes rupturing the initial therapeutic bond" (Jacobson, 1993, p. 528). This is the transference: reactions that appear to arise with the analyst can be seen to actually originate with figures from the patient's past. The counter-transference is the process whereby the analyst uses her "own intrapsychic experiences of the patient to comprehend the patient's inner workings", the idea being to communicate these understandings to the patient (interpretation) (Jacobson, 1993, p. 529). In attempting to differentiate itself from hypnosis, early psychoanalysis emphasised the importance of providing a "blank screen constant" which avoided the taint of suggestion (Jacobson, 1993, p. 535). Against this, the patient's hidden wishes could emerge and become "interpretable in the service of mastery and autonomy" (Jacobson, 1993, p. 535). Jacobson (1993) noted that effective interpretation strengthens the bond, but that this may in itself "provoke fears of engulfment, or of humiliation, leading to an affective storm and crisis quite bewildering to patient and analyst alike until the link is seen and understood" (p. 530). He added that if not grasped, a negative therapeutic reaction can develop. The analytic frame, meanwhile, "implies a capacity in the therapist to control his or her countertransferences and to create conditions and modes of relatedness best suited for the patient's therapeutic needs" (Langs, 1982, quoted in Colam, 1997, p. 30).

From the beginning of psychoanalysis the relationship of analyst and patient has thus been an area of interest and controversy (Jacobson, 1993). There has always been a dynamic tension between "the analyst's stance of mirror-

like opacity, meant to provide an ideal silent backdrop for transferences to appear most clearly" (Jacobson, 1993, pp. 523-524) and the kind of human interaction which is necessary for the analytic situation to proceed at all. The human side of the relationship has been referred to using a variety of terms, including the "real relationship" (Jacobson, 1993, p. 524).

Winnicott, with his emphasis on the role of the maternal environment, can be seen as a forerunner of contemporary relational forms of psychoanalysis (Ogden, 1994; Strozier, 2001). Bion also moved Kleinian theory away from drives and towards relationships (Bateman & Holmes, 1995). Equally, Bowlby (1969) thought about defences in interpersonal terms in his development of attachment theory. He described secure attachment by the infant to an available caregiver as a positive primary defence, while avoidant and ambivalent attachment styles are thought to develop as a way of retaining closeness to unavailable or rejecting attachment figures (Bateman & Holmes, 1995).

2.5.2 Postmodern psychoanalysis

A significant challenge to "classical" psychoanalysis has been the rise of Kohut's (1971, 1977) Self Psychology in America, which emphasised deficit rather than conflict (Bateman & Holmes, 1995). A core concept in Self Psychology is the self-object, which is "one's subjective sense of a sustaining intimate relationship with another whose security and interest maintains the self" (Bateman & Holmes, 1995, p. 46). Self-object needs, which are considered normal, lead to self-object transferences, comprising mirroring, idealising and twinship transferences, "each corresponding to a different pole of the tripolar self" (Bateman & Holmes, 1995, p. 46). The theory is that the child needs to be mirrored, to idealise the caregiver, and to attain a sense of being paired with another who has talents and abilities. If these self-object functions were not met in childhood, a lack of cohesion in the self and low self-esteem can occur. The adult client will again seek these experiences in analysis, as in all later relationships (Bateman & Holmes, 1995).

K. Gibson (2002b) noted that since Freud psychoanalytic thinking has developed to recognise that the subjectivity (the phantasies[1] and feelings) of *both* analyst and patient are equally important. Developments in Self Psychology since Kohut have opened exciting possibilities for the exploration of the interplay between identities in the therapeutic space. Strozier (2001) described the current focus in psychoanalysis as encompassing relational issues, intersubjectivity, and the self:

> Before Kohut, psychoanalysis talked about patients in ways that objectified their experience. A theory of self is of necessity connected, mutual, interdependent. There are many contending views at present in what can be very generally called relational psychoanalysis, from the constructivists to the postmoderns to the intersubjectivists. What they share, however, is a basic sense of experience (which is to say, self) that first entered psychoanalytic thinking in a coherent way with Kohut. (p. 224)

Citing Stolorow, Atwood and Orange (2001), Leighton (2004) noted that postmodern psychoanalysis "rejects notions of Cartesian objectivism and the autonomy of the isolated mind and embraces that which is pluralistic, subjective and perspectival" (p. 170). This has translated into a commitment to a "two-person theory" (Leighton,

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[1] In the unconscious sense, and as differentiated from conscious fantasies, daydreams or wishes (Bateman & Holmes, 1995).

2004, p. 170). By this is meant the assumption that in the therapeutic dyad "both realities are valid, though they may be different, and both mutually influence each other" (Leighton, 2004, p. 171). There is recognition of a "co-constructed stance" (Hainer, 1999, quoted in Leighton, 2004, p. 171).

The present dissertation will use intersubjectivity theory, which is a metatheory of psychoanalysis (Orange, Atwood & Stolorow, 1997). The intersubjective systems perspective in psychoanalysis has developed over the past three decades in the United States. Definitions of it vary in different theoretical contexts (S. Swartz, 2006a). I will be using the work of theorists such as Brandchaft, Atwood, Stolorow and Orange, rather than the relational intersubjectivity of Ogden, Benjamin and Bollas.

Intersubjectivity is interested in complexity, context and organic systems (Orange, 2005). The intersubjective viewpoint is that in analysis a psychological field or system is created by the intersection of two subjectivities (Atwood & Stolorow, 1984). Both of these subjectivities have also emerged from different systems. An "interest in subjectivity as central to our experience of the world" is thus at the core of intersubjective thought (S. Swartz, 2006a, p. 433). The principal components of subjectivity are thought to be unconscious organising principles, and its emergence and modification are seen as "irreducibly relational" (Orange et al., 1997, p. 4). Relatedness between subjects is thus a second core concern. Human beings are seen as organisers of experience, with differently organised subjectivities that are in constant interplay with each other (Orange et al., 1997). A third concern is contextualism, namely the way in which specific intersubjective contexts have shaped our developmental processes as children: "the observational focus is the evolving psychological field constituted by the interplay between the differently organised subjectivities of child and caretakers" (Atwood & Stolorow, 1984, quoted in Orange et al., 1997, p. 4). There is a central claim that "all psychological life emerges from the interplay of two or more worlds of experience" (Buirski, 2005, p. xi). S. Swartz (2006a) noted that from a feminist perspective, intersubjectivity "opens the door to negotiations about power" (p. 433):

> …moreover, in taking seriously the search for individual meanings, it constructs a platform from which the clinical subject might speak and be heard. This addresses feminist qualms about the erasure of women's voices in psychoanalytic theory's patriarchal cellars. (S. Swartz, 2006a, p. 433)

In terms of practice, analysts within this paradigm insist on thinking and working contextually in the therapeutic process - in other words, with an eye on who patient and analyst are and have been, and who they are together (Orange et al., 1997). This involves reflection (thinking):

> We must examine the theories, prejudices and assumptions that form our own subjectivity, but we can work psychoanalytically and understand psychoanalytically only from within the intersubjective field. (Orange et al., 1997)

Orange et al. (1997) utilised Kohut's radical insistence "that the entire domain of psychoanalytic inquiry is subjective experience" (p. 6). Kohut believed that the only data for psychoanalytic understanding are those that are accessible by introspection and empathy (Orange et al., 1997). Since Kohut, the centrality of empathy (empathic immersion) in therapeutic technique has been recognised: attuned responsiveness by the therapist is thought to allow the integration of the patient's disavowed affect states (Buirski, 2005; Buirski & Haglund, 1999). Rather than disputing or verifying the objective reality of the patient's complaint, an attempt is made to understand personal

meanings (Buirski & Haglund, 1999). Analysts working in this paradigm are sceptical about the existence of interpretation-free facts, and try to keep from imposing "realistic" preconceptions about facts and values onto their patients (Orange, 2005, p. xi). In this paradigm, subjectivity is defined not as a thing in itself, but as personal worlds of experience (Orange et al., 1997).

The implication is that the analyst can never stand outside her own subjectivity in a kind of "God's eye view" of the patient (Orange et al., 1997, p. 4). Analytic neutrality and objectivity are seen as impossibilities (Buirski, 2005; Orange et al., 1997). Both members of the therapeutic dyad bring their own organisations of experience, based on past relating, to create what has more appropriately been termed the "co-transference" (Orange et al., 1997). Intersubjective systems theory is thus built around the notion that context and relationship are central components of the clinical exchange (Buirski, 2005; Buirski & Haglund, 2001; Orange et al., 1997). There is a recognition that the analytic situation is "a dyadic intersubjective system of reciprocal mutual influence, to which the organising activities of both participants make ongoing, codetermining contributions" (Orange et al., 1997, p. 43).

Instead of maintaining an external perspective of participant observation, the analyst is seen as "undergoing the situation" with the patient (Gadamer, 1975, quoted in Orange et al., 1997, p. 5). Analysis is reframed as "the dialogic attempt of two people together to understand one person's organization of emotional experience by making sense together of their intersubjectively configured experience" (Orange, 1995, quoted in Orange et al., 1997, p. 5). The concept of humans as self-contained bundles of instincts is transcended. In terms of practice, Orange et al. (1997) proposed eschewing specific analytic rules and techniques in favour of psychoanalysis as "a kind of practice in the Aristotelian sense" (p. 27):

> Unlike technique, practice is always oriented to the particular. Practice embodies an attitude of inquiry, deliberation and discovery. It eschews rules, but loves questions - questions about what is wise to do with this person, at this time, for this reason. (Orange et al., 1997, p. 27)

To date, intersubjectivity theorists do not seem to have commented explicitly on the Tavistock infant observation procedure. This is possibly because infant observation research – in other words, systematic experimental infant observation, as epitomised in the work of Stern, Beebe and Tronick – is more prominent in the United States than is the British Tavistock model of "naturalistic infant observation" in homes, for training purposes (Sternberg, 2005, p. 7). Theoretically and practically, there also seems to be a sharp divide between the intersubjective world and the Tavistock paradigm, with little cross-pollination. By contrast, relational forms of psychology and experimental infant observation have proved a good fit. I will consider this point further in Chapter Five, when I examine current critiques of the observation procedure from within psychoanalytic circles.

2.6 The application of social constructionist thought to the present study

The present study attempts to utilise infant observation, which emerged in 1948 and is part of a modernist paradigm, in a community psychology setting. It is proposed that the recent contribution of social constructionist thought to both psychoanalytic and ethnographic thinking will be a useful adjunct for dealing with the complexities of such a project. This is because social constructionism is able to interrogate the Lacanian concept of the "Real", or the "underside of experience": "the way unarticulated pockets of emotion act to disturb the orders of

representation with which we are more easily familiar - those of logic and law, and also of common fantasy" (Žižek, 1991, quoted in Frosh, 2000, p. 63). In other words, social constructionism helps us to think about that which lies outside particular paradigms, and about the nature of our chosen paradigms themselves. It is a way to contest or deconstruct privileged constructions of the world (Weldes et al., 1999). I will use this lens to deconstruct "the Esther Bick method" (Sternberg, 2005, p. 9), in other words, the classical tradition of infant observation that is upheld as the gold standard for observers worldwide.

2.7 A note about feminism

Feminism was not explicitly chosen as a lens in the present study at the outset, because my proposal grew out of an earlier clinical intervention, namely the Play Group, which was situated within a community psychology paradigm (J. Lazarus, 2003) (see **Addendum A**). The intervention in fact formed the practical component of a community psychology module during my clinical training. However, as always, feminism showed itself to be an important perspective during the process and analysis of the present study. Therefore its basic tenets, as they have a bearing on the concerns that arose in my study, will be very briefly outlined below, and considered extensively in later papers.

Feminism, which emerged from the social criticism and activism of the early 1960s, cannot be reduced to a single theory or homogenous system of thought or action (Mulvey, 1988). However, Mulvey (1988) quoted Jaggar (1983) in giving a simple working definition of feminism as referring "to all those who seek, no matter on what grounds, to end women's subordination" (p. 71). The women's movement grew out of opposition to social institutions that maintained male privilege and power (Mulvey, 1988). The concept of "women's nature" as something biologically determined was shown to obscure key factors of sexism and inequality (Mulvey, 1988). Instead, postmodern feminist theory holds the epistemological position that the mind, the self and knowledge are socially constituted and are the products of particular socio-cultural contexts (Flax, 1990). These ideas were explicated in this chapter in a consideration of social constructionist thought.

It is felt that not only women's representation of experience, but the material, social, economic or gendered conditions that articulate that experience need to be analysed (Olesen, 2005; Scheper-Hughes, 1992). Recently sexual identity has been constructed as performative rather than either given or socially ascribed (Butler, 1990, 1993, cited in Olesen, 2005). As the concept of "a universalised woman" has faded, researchers have become more sensitive to differences among women, even in the same group (Ferguson, 1993, quoted in Olesen, 2005, p. 241). Tuana (1993) argued that it was more realistic to expect pluralities of experiences rather than "a common core of shared experiences that are immune to economic conditions, cultural imperatives, etc." (quoted in Olesen, 2005, p. 250).

Feminist criticism has emphasised the gendered nature of things. Postmodern feminism is concerned with the deconstruction of stereotypical sex roles and the exposure of unequal power relations and social control. The absence of women from, or marginalised women in, research accounts has been noted (Olesen, 2005). The question of voice and the nature of the account are concerns that go back to the earliest beginnings of feminist research

(Olesen, 2005). Feminists insist on "hearing the voice of the oppressed, the silent and the abject" and "the possibilities of speaking and hearing through the misunderstandings and defences of race, class and gender positions" (S. Swartz, 2006a, pp. 433-434). If the personal is political, then documenting "the everyday, everynight activities" of women's lives is central (Olesen, 2005, p. 244). However, this enterprise is problematised: how to make women's voices heard without exploiting or distorting those voices is an ongoing concern (Olesen, 2005). Hidden problems of control occur when literary devices are borrowed to express voice (Olesen, 2005). The researcher, who has responsibility for the text, remains in the more powerful position, and one must ask which audience she is writing for (Olesen, 2005). These concerns were examined above in **2.4** and will be drawn on throughout the present dissertation. Olesen (2005) argued that "research *for* women should extend and amplify research merely *about* women" (p. 236). In other words, descriptions about unknown, unrecognised and oppressive aspects of women's situations should lead to action to realise social justice for women (and men) in specific contexts (Eichler, 1986, 1997, cited in Olesen, 2005).

From a feminist perspective, it seems impossible to think about infants living in poverty, as the present study attempts to do, without reference to their mothers. Spedding (2005) argued that feminist theory directs attention to the necessity of listening to mothers' voices, and that the feminist approach to psychotherapy "provides an imperative opportunity for their voices to be heard" (p. 34). Kruger (2003) citing Collins (1994) noted that different sets of expectations and preconditions are associated with motherhood in different contexts. Feminist researchers have aimed to "document experiences that had previously been ignored, forgotten, ridiculed, and devalued" and in so doing have "set out to collect alternative voices of women, including voices on motherhood" (Kruger, 2003, p. 198). She held that feminist psychologists should continuously explore and try to understand how women are experiencing motherhood and why. In an extensive body of work Kruger has dealt with the profound impact of factors such as race, religion, culture and personal history on the ways in which women narrate pregnancy and motherhood. In 2005b she argued that psychologists should not only listen to their clients' stories, but that they should also be attuned to the unspeakable and the uncontrollable. In any study focusing on infants, space also needs to be allowed for that which the mother cannot say.

It should be noted that the phallocentrism of classical psychoanalytic theory has been thoroughly critiqued by feminists, but many authors have also articulated different schools of psychoanalysis with feminist thought (see, for example, Benjamin, 1990; Chodorow, 1978; Flax, 1990, 1993; Gallop, 1982; J. Mitchell, 1974; S. Swartz, 2006). Psychoanalytic theories about the acquisition of subjectivity and gender identity have been described as "exceedingly controversial" (Moore, 1999, p. 42). One of the debated issues is whether Freud's account of the production of sexuality endorses patriarchal forms of heterosexuality, in the context of a theory of fixed sexual difference that postulates masculinity as the norm (Moore, 1994). Feminists have argued that psychoanalysis in effect "pays scant attention to power, race, gender or class" (S. Swartz, 2006, p. 433).

2.8 Key terms

In the foregoing discussion several concepts that are central to the present study have again been touched on, namely context, subjectivity, relationship, and internal versus external life. Firstly, the idea of context was

revisited. Intersubjectivity presents context as the particularity of the meeting space between people, including their gender constructions. Every person invariably brings his or her own personal history, assumptions and psychological theories to bear on the clinical situation, as on any other. This includes racial, sexual, socio-cultural, political and economic positioning. In a comparable way, feminism recognises "the essential interrelationships among the larger social structure, the immediate context, and individual well-being" (Mulvey, 1988, p. 70). In other words, one cannot consider a person without considering her surroundings. Social constructionism has alerted us not only to our subjectivity, but our multiple selves. Such aspects are thought to inform any relationship that results in unique ways that must be recognised. Relationship is thus a third important consideration in postmodern psychoanalytic thought. It is recognised as a site both where old traumas are replayed, and where a particular interaction between individuals is occurring in the present. A fourth concept that is linked to the concept of context is that of internal versus external life. Psychoanalysis has classically made a distinction between these two realms, while acknowledging the fluid interplay between them. Within this paradigm, the concept of inner human dynamics remains in tension with the realm of external physical and material conditions. For a long time psychoanalysis took more of an interest in an internal reality than in thinking about how environmental ills cause mental health problems. "Context" in a traditional psychoanalytic sense refers then predominantly to maternal influence rather than, say, political turmoil or poverty. From a social constructionist perspective, however, the very duality of internal/external and maternal/socio-political will be questioned. These complex concepts will be returned to and expanded on at the end of Chapter Five, where working definitions will be provided.

2.9 Conclusion

In this chapter a metatheoretical lens for the present study involving social constructionism and intersubjectivity was described. Intersubjectivity is centrally concerned with the past and the unconscious, with different subjectivities, with relationship, and with specific context. Social constructionism asks questions about how language and power operate in the creation of particular "truths".

In the following three chapters, which constitute the theoretical framework for the present study, three major traditions that impacted on and informed the choices in the present study will be considered. These are the paradigms of psychodynamic community psychology, postmodern ethnography and psychoanalytic infant observation. In an examination of the theoretical and empirical literature, the contribution and deficits of each paradigm will be shown. The ways in which they can be profitably articulated with each other will be considered. The assumptions laid out here, such as the social construction of reality and the existence of the unconscious, will be taken as given and will not be queried.

However, the ways in which these theoretical paradigms use concepts such as subjectivity, context, relationship and power will be examined. In each case the question being asked is what these major traditions add to the enquiry; in other words, how useful are they to the present investigation? These questions enable a position from which I will conduct a critique of infant observation, arising out of its application in a South African community context. Chapter Six, in which the present study's methodology is described, will show that each of these three traditions has also contributed methodologically to the way that the study was conducted and its results interpreted.

SECTION TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW
CHAPTER THREE: Community psychology and psychoanalysis

3.1 Introduction

In most countries of the world community psychology developed in response to oppressive systems and the helping services linked to them, such as in apartheid in South Africa (Pretorius-Heuchert & Ahmed, 2001). Community psychology defines itself in opposition to mainstream psychology. It critiques the traditional paradigm for its inaccessible mental health services, its lack of active recognition of the way in which social context pertains to the genesis and development of mental health problems, and its limitations in cross-cultural contexts (Naidoo, 2000). Extensive reviews of different aspects of community psychology have been conducted (see, for example, Susskind & Klein, 1985). A comprehensive description of the development of different forms of community psychology both worldwide and in South Africa has been done (see Maw, 1996).

In its concern with redressing social ills, community psychology has in the past had a tendency to focus on social determinants, which has often also involved a critique of depth psychology, with its interest in internal processes. However, in an important development, psychodynamic practice in South African community work has recently begun to examine internal and interpersonal dynamics within community projects, using psychoanalytic ideas. The contribution of psychoanalysis, as K. Gibson and L. Swartz (2004) have noted, is that through this lens "it is possible to look below the neat surface of things for the ambivalent and contradictory possibilities this model is capable of grasping" (p. 468). In other words, psychodynamic insights allow us to consider community processes more deeply, and importantly, to uncover that which is hidden, unknown or unacknowledged.

In this chapter the theoretical principles underlying a psychodynamic community psychology approach will be described as a way of situating the present study within this paradigm. Examples of how these principles have been utilised in South African practice by major contributors will be given. In thinking about community work, I will predominantly discuss South African practice because it has been argued that the problems with which South Africa presents are unique and need tailor-made solutions (Dawes & Donald, 1994; Desai, 2005; Donald et al., 2000). After briefly examining the history and basic principles of community psychology, there will be a discussion of three important considerations that have come out of psychodynamic community work in South Africa - namely, relationships (where the emotional and political are inextricably linked), reflexivity and the holding environment. All three issues have come out of a realisation that what happens between people in any community intervention is crucial material to be worked with (K. Gibson & L. Swartz, 2000). This central principle will be taken as a theoretical point of departure when attempting to apply infant observation within a community psychology paradigm.

3.2 The origins of community psychology in South Africa

Community psychology arose in the 1960s and 1970s in the United States in the wake of the social upheaval of the civil rights era (Naidoo, 2000). It grew out of an awareness of the advantages of collective action and was given

impetus by the community mental health movement of the 1960s (Spedding, 2005; Tlali, 2000). In South Africa community psychology arose in the general political struggle against apartheid in the 1970s and 1980s (Naidoo, 2000). It functioned as a progressive, liberatory practice that was part of the political and social change leading to the demise of apartheid (K. Gibson & L. Swartz, 2004). Psychologists began to organise themselves around political issues (see, for example, L. Swartz, K. Gibson & S. Swartz, 1990; S. Swartz & L. Swartz, 1986). Existing psychological service delivery, it was argued, maintained the status quo (Naidoo, 2000). There was concern for the fact that psychological resources were unequally distributed and that the South African majority had little or no access to them (Spedding, 2005). Apart from being inadequate and inaccessible, it was also shown that existing mental health services were inappropriate and discriminatory (Naidoo, 2000). They seemed unable to address the impact of apartheid on its victims and the social problems facing South Africa (Naidoo, 2000). Traditional psychotherapy was felt to be "lacking in social utility" (Heller, Price, Reinharz, Riger & Wandersman, 1984, quoted in Tlali, 2000, p. 78) and too individualistic. As Mulvey (1988), citing Ryan (1971) put it:

> To provide individual therapy to people who were without adequate food or decent housing and not to address these life conditions seemed irrelevant at best. These social scientists also criticized clinical psychology for "blaming the victim" while reinforcing a social order responsible for his or her victimization. (p. 71)

In South Africa the appropriateness of Western-based psychological models have thus repeatedly been contested (see, for example, Anonymous, 1986; Nsamineng, 1993). Community psychology sought to find more appropriate ways of working (Druiff, 2001; K. Gibson & L. Swartz, 2004; Long, 1999; Maw, 1996; Spedding, 2005).

3.3 The basic principles of community psychology

3.3.1 A definition of community psychology

There is no single definition of community psychology and its practices are quite varied (K. Gibson, 2002b; Spedding, 2005). Lounsbury, Cook, Leader and Meares (1985) spoke of "the variegated concerns of this bustling new field" and noted that "formal definitions of community psychology suggest a vast and potentially heterogeneous territory" (pp. 39-40). Rappaport (1984) defined community psychology most broadly as being oriented towards the social (cited in Tlali, 2000, p. 81). Tlali, citing Tolan, Keys, Chertok and Jansen (1990) said, "community psychology is interested in the person in context and context in persons" (p. 80). Trickett (1996) upheld "the importance of developing theory, research, and intervention that locates individuals, social settings, and communities in sociocultural context" (p. 209). Lounsbury et al. (1985) noted that most definitions of community psychology incorporate the perspective of an "environmental, ecological, or systems viewpoint" (p. 40). In terms of aetiology, the psychological problems of individuals are thought to have their roots in the broader society (K. Gibson, 2002b; K. Gibson & L. Swartz, 2004). Therefore a central principle in community psychology is that of context (Orford, 1992).

Specifically, Orford (1992) noted, community psychology is concerned with social change (cited in Tlali, 2000, p. 81). Several other authors (Edwards, 2002; Naidoo, 2000; Tlali, 2000) have stressed that a helping framework, in which community and individual well-being is improved and resources extended, is central to the model. The

political has always been recognised as an essential and inevitable part of community intervention and research; in fact, K. Gibson (2002b) referred to "the fundamentally political objectives of community psychology" (p. 36).

In summary, S. Lazarus (1985, cited in Duncan & Van Niekerk, 2001) identified the following values as the defining characteristics of community psychology:

1. Commitment to marginalised communities;
2. An ecological perspective;
3. Prevention;
4. Empowerment;
5. Social action;
6. Professional-client collaboration;
7. Self-reflection and critique (evaluation).

Mulvey (1988) noted that feminism and community psychology share both a historical context and significant theoretical assumptions, such as the importance of empowerment for social change. S. Swartz (2006a) pointed out that advocacy and activism have been part of the definition of feminism since the term came into use more than a century ago. Mulvey (1988) argued that community psychology should incorporate a feminist agenda more fully into research, theory and practice. In an overview of feminist theory, Spedding (2005) pointed out the importance of considering the socio-cultural context of marginalised women. In attempting to comprehend the lives of low-income women, Belle (1994) noted that "by ignoring dramatic differences in their actual life contexts we could attribute their differences to personal factors alone, once again pathologizing the psychological outcomes of oppression" (p. 47). Like community psychology, the women's movement criticised clinical psychology, and psychoanalysis in particular (Mulvey, 1988). Both paradigms suggested that the relationship between therapist and client was a disempowering one and that therapy encouraged adjustment to a system of inequitable power and control (Mulvey, 1988).

Several South African authors have outlined the tenets of community psychology by way of introduction to their own studies in the field (see, for example, K. Gibson, 2002b; Long, 1999; J. Lazarus, 2003; Spedding, 2005; Maw, 1996). K. Gibson (2002b) and Lounsbury et al. (1985) pointed out that there are considerable variations in the way different writers interpret the basic ideas of community psychology and envisage them being implemented. Spedding (2005) noted at least four varying approaches: the mental health model, the social action model, the ecological model, and the organisational model. Both K. Gibson (2002b) and Long (1999) highlighted several international and local debates in the field of community psychology that have helped define it. In overview, these concern the role of the community practitioner (whether she should be involved in social action, or prevention in a more narrow sense) and of community psychology itself (such as taking a stand against apartheid, and recognising the role of society more fully).

Therefore some of the complexities inherent in community psychology inevitably come up in any discussion about what it has been and might be, in its various contexts. Spedding (2005) suggested that global definitions for

community psychology should in fact not be pursued: "Surely communities themselves, whether on a macro or micro level, are responsible for shaping definitions of community psychology, relative to their needs and concerns, within their unique contexts?" (p. 44). Her call was for community psychologists to collect more local meanings, so that a specific community creates a specific "community psychology" that is tailored to its needs. Lounsbury et al. (1985) predicted that in the field of community psychology "we might witness a vast amount of research which will be characterised by an increasing differentiation and expansion of topics dealing with therapy, diagnosis, intervention, and consultation" (p. 98).

In terms of practice, community psychology challenges an individualist bias and addresses the root causes of psychological difficulty through changes to context, most often using group, organisation or community-based forms of intervention (K. Gibson, 2002b). Consultation is the primary model for intervention, by which is meant that experts assist organisations to help themselves (Maw, 1996). This has been referred to as "giving psychology away" (Miller, 1969, cited in Orford, 1992, p. 138). Meeting the needs of communities in the change process is felt to be important. As K. Gibson (2002b) put it, community voices need to be heard in professional circles. Needs assessment is thus a core tool in community psychology (Orford, 1992). In this field, research is often closely linked to estimating the incidence and prevalence of psychological problems within a given population. This is not, however, felt to be a sufficient source of information about needs, particularly when individual needs vary greatly within one category of people in need (Orford, 1992). Awareness of this fact has led to the development of the needs assessment approach, which can take various forms. The function of needs assessment is to produce a more detailed, textured understanding of a community's difficulties, including highlighting some of the factors that are related to the prevalence of the problem (Nelson & Prilleltensky, 2005).

In community psychology the role of the psychologist changes; she may be involved in advocacy, consciousness raising, and social upliftment (K. Gibson, 2002b). She will intervene at social and community levels, with the location of her practice being as close as possible to local contexts (Orford, 1992). Long (1999) quoted Tollman (1991) when she said that "accessibility has also meant relocation of the site of psychological intervention from the hospital or consulting room into the community in order to redress past imbalances where many communities had limited access to psychological interventions" (pp. 12-13). K. Gibson (2002b) noted that the community psychologist identifies with the concerns of the socially and politically disadvantaged members of any society. A primary purpose is the empowerment of marginalised groups (Spedding, 2005) and the extension of mental health services to the historically oppressed (S. Lazarus & Seedat, 1995). K. Gibson and L. Swartz (2004) noted that:

> Community psychology is often represented as being more politically sensitive than other forms of psychological theorising and intervention. It was specifically designed to shift power from professionals into the hands of ordinary people and to build the capacity of communities to address problems in their social and political environments. (p. 466)

Organisations working with disadvantaged children in South Africa deal directly with the effects of apartheid on their clients (K. Gibson & L. Swartz, 2000). At the same time, K. Gibson and L. Swartz (2000) showed that an additional burden is the impact of South Africa's painful political history on the emotional life of organisations themselves. They highlighted "the common experiences of deprivation and loss, fears around the abuse of power

and problems with acknowledging the differences between people, which are a part of South Africa's political legacy" (p. 133). These authors showed that this political legacy has had a major impact on the functioning of these organisations, and also, by extrapolation, on the consultation relationship. They argued that it is therefore important to achieve some kind of understanding of political experiences in childcare work. They felt that the containment of political experiences for the carers (in the technical sense of processing overwhelming feeling) is the very thing that allows their work to continue and be effective.

A critique of community psychology has been that it is primarily practice- rather than theory-based (K. Gibson, 2002b; J. Lazarus, 2003; Long, 1999; Orford, 1992; Rieff, 1977; Seedat, Cloete & Shochet, 1988). In a 1985 review of the literature, Lounsbury et al. identified an under-emphasis on theoretical research and noted that "this field is still at an early stage of development; conceptual base building is essential for the growth of a cumulative body of scientific knowledge" (p. 93). In 2000 Naidoo noted that it is still a paradigm not yet fully realised.

3.3.2 Defining communities

As the name suggests, community psychology regards whole communities, and not only individuals, as possible clients (Pretorius-Heuchert & Ahmed, 2001). This approach involves identifying a coherent, distinctive "community" to be worked with (Kelly & Van der Riet, 2001). The inherent assumption is that such a community necessarily has some form of homogenous identity in order to be classified like this (Kelly & Van der Riet, 2001). Ka Sigogo and Modipa (2004) described the way in which the term has most commonly been used in South African psychology:

> The concept "community" refers to a sense of coherence that enables people to make sense of their social actions, social interactions and thought processes. Shared experiences among people gathered in "community" contribute to the creation of a "common character". Recently, in the South African context, the term has acquired political meaning and reflects the political histories and beliefs of people in a given socio-political context (Butchart & Seedat, 1990). In addition, the concept is used to refer to African communities, in their diversities, interacting with different political environments. (p. 317)

This is a very problematic definition. K. Gibson (2002b), Long (1999) and Maw (1996), among others, cautioned against using the concept of community too glibly, as it is not a simple concept to define. Communities may be less homogenous than the word suggests, and issues of difference and power within them should not be overlooked. Communities have multiple sub-groups, with differing access to resources within the larger community (Kelly & Van der Riet, 2001). In South Africa the apartheid government in fact artificially constructed many communities (Butchart & Seedat, 1990). Butchart and Seedat (1990) argued that an uncritical view of such groupings can reinforce racial divides. Similarly, Ka Sigogo and Modipa (2004) wrote about the idea of community operating as a code for race. In this way, they criticised the term for anchoring a sense of racial difference; they noted, for example, that we do not often speak of "white communities" in South Africa (p. 317). Secondly, this term may play a role in a greater discourse of avoidance of issues of race and privilege. It may gloss over the fact that not all social groupings in South Africa have shared the same social, political and economic benefits (Ka Sigogo & Modipa, 2004). In 2005 I highlighted these enormous and ongoing disparities, noting that "in reality, the races are still largely geographically separated, to the point that working cross-culturally as a white psychologist often entails

going out into communities very different to one's own, to bestow 'community psychology' on the masses" (J. Lazarus, 2005, p. 2). Here I was suggesting that inherent in the community psychology model is the idea that the more privileged (who do not live in "communities") move out into areas classified as "communities" to assist the poor.

In so doing, it is easy to overlook the complexities and tensions in a community in the attempt to produce general statements about the community as a whole (Kelly & Van der Riet, 2001). An uncritical view of communities can lead to romanticised notions about them, which may in itself serve certain functions. For example, Sterling (2002) showed how the "simplicity" of a quiet rural community (Mooidorp) was a myth created by consultants defensively idealising a community in which there were in fact complex issues around shame, confidentiality and a reluctance to engage with offered services (p. 26). Without recognising the "difficulties and ambiguities of experience" in both community members and community practitioners, such work can be impeded (Sterling, 2002, p. 31). K. Gibson and L. Swartz (2004) put it this way:

> The community psychologist may harbour romanticised ideas of harmonious communities and a satisfying role for themselves involving good works and high deeds. This, however, may end up deflecting attention away from understanding the complexity of society and the fact that relationships between professionals and "communities" are often fraught with tensions and difficulties. (p. 467)

In the present dissertation I will be using the complex word "community" in a particular way, namely to denote black South Africans living in poverty in townships created by the apartheid system. They represent part of the under-serviced sector of the population that psychologists in the New South Africa need to reach. This is not a definition of community that implies cohesion and shared cultural identity, but rather the historical disadvantage of black South Africans, and the associated phenomenon of poverty. In the interests of simplicity I will, however, dispense with inverted commas (which can be implied) when referring to "community", "community work" and "community psychology" in the present thesis.

In the following section I will consider how psychodynamic ideas have been used in the community psychology model in South Africa. I will emphasise the work of Kerry Gibson, because many of these ideas are represented in her work in the area of community psychology over two decades. She has also produced the most extensive research study involving the principles discussed. She reviewed ten years of community work by the Child Guidance Clinic at the University of Cape Town as part of a doctoral dissertation on the consultation model.

3.4 Psychodynamic community psychology in South Africa

The emphasis on psychodynamic ideas in community psychology practice is a relatively new one in South Africa. It has been taken up by leading practitioners in the field (see, for example, L. Swartz et al., 2002a[1]). Despite the critique by community psychology of the psychodynamic approach (see Druiff, 2001 for a comprehensive review),

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[1] An extensive review of this literature as it pertains to work specifically with children was conducted elsewhere (J. Lazarus, 2003; J. Lazarus & Kruger, 2004a).

arguments have increasingly been made for its being an important "tool to think and work with" in the South African context (L. Swartz et al., 2002b, p. 4). K. Gibson and L. Swartz (2000) argued that a resolution of the political crisis has allowed for a more reflective workspace - in other words, a thinking space. L. Swartz et al. (2002b) have noted how important a reflective analytic approach is in community work, "even in a situation in which material and emotional deprivation would appear to call for more action-oriented approaches" (p. 5). Previously, "the idea of a slow and thoughtful process seemed like an unaffordable luxury when in reality lives were being threatened" during the apartheid regime (K. Gibson & L. Swartz, 2000, p. 137). Although some of this tension has eased, it can be argued that ongoing poverty and inequality still create conditions of great urgency for community interventions. In this sense, psychodynamic work is admittedly still under pressure in a community context.

Community psychology and psychoanalysis are more compatible than they may seem at first glance.[2] Borg (2004), writing in the United States, is among recent international practitioners who are exploring the intersections between psychoanalysis and community psychology. Borg is a practising psychoanalyst as well as a community/organisational consultant working in New York city. He used psychoanalytic ideas to describe a community intervention in a four-year project with an impoverished community in South Central Los Angeles after the riots that occurred there in 1992. He arrived at new community concepts that are psychoanalytically informed. K. Gibson and L. Swartz (2004) noted that psychoanalysis has always been interested in the interface between the individual and society. This responds to a concern of community psychology. The conception of internal life in psychoanalysis is not an isolated or static concept, as was shown in Chapter Two. For example, as S. Mitchell and Black (1995) put it, "Klein's vision of mind is fluid, perpetually fractured and kaleidoscopic" (p. 111). There is thought to be a constant interplay between internal, external, past and present, which is exemplified by such processes as projection and the transference (K. Gibson & L. Swartz, 2004). Object relations and attachment theory provide two ways to think about the relationship between the external and the internal, and the way in which the social world, in the form of early interactions with the mother, is internalised (J. Lazarus & Kruger, 2004a). Psychoanalysis could thus be said, in some of its forms, to share community psychology's focus on how environment impacts on development. Both paradigms are concerned with prevention by means of early intervention (J. Lazarus, 2003).

However, it seems that the main contribution by psychodynamic psychology to community psychology can be an exploration of the unconscious. Hayes (2002) quoted Laplance and Pontalis (1973) when he said that:

> Psychoanalysis has a specificity, and lays claim to being the knowledge of a particular object. Psychoanalysis can be defined as "…a method of investigation which consists essentially in bringing out the unconscious meanings of the words, the actions and the products of the imagination (dreams, phantasies, delusions) of a particular subject." (p. 16)

Kruger (2006) has referred to this pursuit as a focus on the gaps, namely, on what has been left out:

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[2] I have argued for the legitimacy of psychoanalytic ideas for community practice elsewhere (J. Lazarus, 2003). This will thus be taken as a premise and the main points underlying this argument will only be summarised here.

As a clinical and research psychologist I have been rendered deeply suspicious of everything that is certain, proven and even empirically verified. Instead my adherence to (Freud's) theoretical assumptions has forced me into a sustained (and some would say perverse) interest in everything that is not there and a suspicion about everything that is there. (p. 3)

Examining the unconscious helps us to make sense of the irrational, the illogical and the emotional. Therefore it can tell us more, and in greater depth, about the subject under study. Using the tool of the unconscious, psychoanalysis can lend depth to the endeavour in community psychology to find out more about needs. It was previously noted that psychodynamic technique has been firmly tied to theory, including theory about the unconscious, since its inception. This theory could supplement community psychology, which has been criticised for lacking theory and focusing on external circumstance, in important ways. On the other hand, psychologists working in different paradigms within traumatised low-income South African communities have argued that to say that the practitioner has some kind of privileged knowledge about the client that is unavailable to the client herself is disempowering (Appelt, 2006).

The question is how exactly to make use of the unconscious in the arena of community work, where the subject under study is not only the individual, but also the systems that surround her. Traditionally, we take up a reflective or thinking attitude during and between clinical sessions with individuals. We analyse the counter-transference (how we feel when we are with the client) because we believe it transmits information to us about the unknown, hidden parts of the client. In South African community work, however, as described, individual work of this nature is not suitable. Below I will describe the ways in which South African community work has utilised psychodynamic ideas to date.

3.4.1 J. Lazarus and Kruger

In an earlier review we noted that what has typically been done in South Africa is that community psychology has used psychodynamic principles in the process of consultation (J. Lazarus & Kruger, 2004a). There has been a focus on consultation relationships, because this is the central locus of practice. We described how practitioners have begun to turn to an examination of the unconscious in order to help unpack the powerful dynamics affecting the consultation relationship (Long, 1999; Maw, 1996, 2002). This was referred to as "reflective practice" (thinking practice) (L. Swartz et al., 2002a). Central to this was considering the way in which the personhood of the practitioner, and its interplay with that of the client against the history of apartheid, was influencing outcomes (reflexivity). An allied concept is that of self-reflection (considering self-experience). A consciousness of self and self in the work is seen as an important source of information. In other words, this kind of community psychology has begun to embrace both the general psychodynamic principle of thoughtfulness, and the more specific intersubjective concept of considering how different worlds intersect in any therapeutic space. In the literature reviewed there was most often a retrospective focus on how the unconscious had been at work in a project, although arguments were also made for more direct interpretation of the unconscious to clients within interventions (Long, 1999; Maw, 1996, 2002). Analysis also guided the practitioner's choices in the intervention in an ongoing way.

Within this context, working reflectively (thoughtfully) and reflexively (self-referentially) was seen to be a way to manage the complexity of community work. Exploring the unconscious to examine the origin of emotion and behaviour was reassuring for the practitioner, because it provided explanation and meaning. This way of conceptualising cases provided containment and allowed the work to continue, even when it was difficult.

Regarding children, we showed that psychodynamic ideas have again chiefly been used to inform consultation relationships with organisations working with children. Secondly, a small body of literature described using psychodynamic ideas to help to gain access to "the inner lives of children of whom we know little (partly through self-reflection on the part of the practitioner)" (J. Lazarus & Kruger, 2004b, p. 22). Drawing on these local examples (K. Gibson et al., 1991; Milne, 1995; Roos, Prinsloo & Van Niekerk, 2001; Rudenberg et al., 1998; Williams, 2001), we began to argue that psychoanalytic tools could potentially be applied innovatively in more direct therapeutic ways with children in community projects, and then described a case study (the Play Group) that did this (J. Lazarus & Kruger, 2004b). Based on this community intervention, we argued that one could make verbal interpretations to such children in the course of an intervention, including interpretations about the complex relationship that existed between them and the practitioner, linking it to their social reality and past history. Therefore, technically, relationship and interpretation within a play therapy context were highlighted as tools that could become important in work with deprived children (J. Lazarus & Kruger, 2004a). Thirdly, the importance of a psychodynamic frame was emphasised as a way to hold the practitioner emotionally while she was working in this way (containment).

We thus found that psychodynamic ideas have been used to understand, explore and manage community work, predominantly via the consultation relationship. At the same time, we held that more traditional ways of working psychodynamically in communities could be utilised. In overview, our most important conclusion was that relationship is central in community projects and actively needs to be worked with, sometimes in direct interpretation to the client, and always in ongoing supervision.

3.4.2 K. Gibson and L. Swartz

K. Gibson (2002b) and K. Gibson and L. Swartz (2000, 2004) have developed their ideas about emotion in political work over some years. They noted that "what is unique about psychoanalysis is the weight it gives to emotional processes in understanding psychology" (K. Gibson & L. Swartz, 2004, p. 469). These authors asserted that an important principle in a psychodynamic community psychology is the examination of emotion. This adds a new, but complementary dimension to community psychology's focus on the political, which was explicated above. K. Gibson and L. Swartz (2004) noted that psychoanalysis, while retaining its social conception of the person, is able to look at how people and groups operate under the sway of powerful emotional processes. The role of emotion, they argued, has been minimised by social theorists who are more interested in understanding political phenomena. K. Gibson and L. Swartz (2004) argued that "emotion may provide an important link between the individual and the social world, showing how political identities and relationships are forged and internalised at very deep levels" (p. 469).

K. Gibson (2002b), in an intensive case study of three consultation relationships with community organisations, targeted the ways in which the social is represented in relationship in community work. She held that there "seems to be a gap in understanding about the way in which broader social issues play themselves out in the micro-structures and relationships of human service organisations and in the consultation relationship itself" (2002b, p. 7). She pointed to the fact that recent local research in community psychology has therefore become more interested in the way in which emotional processes may be a more fundamental part of human service work and partnerships than they were previously considered to be (K. Gibson & L. Swartz, 2000; Long, 1999; Maw, 1996). She held that the use of psychoanalytic knowledge is a prime way to understand the significant role of emotion and irrationality in community work.

An example of a study in which understanding emotion was felt to be important was K. Gibson and L. Swartz's (2000) description of the experience of consulting to organisations involved in the provision of care to disadvantaged groups of children in South Africa. They noted that practitioners attempted to develop culturally appropriate materials, but that it became clear that it was not about the suitability of the content of training workshops, "but more about complicated power dynamics, resistance to change and emotional misunderstanding" (p. 137). The authors commented that this was not surprising, in retrospect, considering the context of the work. Psychodynamic ways of thinking were useful in exploring and unravelling the *meaning* behind extremely powerful and confusing feelings aroused in providing the requested training and support. This concept of uncovering what might lie behind strong feelings in community work is an extremely important notion. These authors have shown that a "helpful" or well-intentioned community practitioner may in fact find herself experiencing difficult and negative feelings during the course of an intervention. Cross-cultural work in South Africa arouses significant reciprocal anxiety. K. Gibson and L. Swartz (2000) suggested that a psychodynamic approach could help to digest, explain and work with these feelings in a productive and containing way, so that the work can continue.

These authors showed that it is essential to examine emotion in political work, because the political becomes internalised. There seems to be a complex link between the political and the personal. Secondly, the political will be expressed in emotional ways in the relationships involved in community interventions. Because of its political context, community work is never just "personal", even when it uses psychodynamic ideas related to internal life. It would therefore be a mistake to try and theorise about intrapsychic and even interpersonal elements without taking broader context into account. Community psychology has emphasised this and for this reason has at times opposed the use of a psychodynamic lens in order to guard against an acontextual view. For example, elsewhere I noted that "a focus on the internal may provide a dangerous excuse for social atrocity" (J. Lazarus, 2003, p. 30). To neglect the external is to neglect the forces that shape internal life and thus constitute both a physical and psychic reality. I argued that these domains are inextricably linked (J. Lazarus, 2003) and that there is therefore no need to favour one above the other. Referring to Orange et al. (1997), who in turn quoted Bakhtin (1981), I complained that "there seems to be a psychoanalytic divide between studying psychological experience and studying that real life toward which it is directed and by which it is determined" (J. Lazarus, 2005, p. 8). In the postmodern view such dualistic categories as physical and psychic, internal and external, and individual and social are in themselves thought to be problematic.

Chapter Two showed that psychoanalysis has developed sufficiently to be able to embrace this inter-relationship between internal and external life, and between the subjectivities of the practitioner and client. Elsewhere (J. Lazarus & Kruger, 2004a) it was noted that when we attempt to use psychoanalytic ideas in community work, we can no longer speak of a single, unified paradigm, because contemporary psychoanalysis "has become quite complex and varied" (S. Mitchell & Black, 1995, p. 206). K. Gibson (2002b), citing Ghent (1992), held that current relational forms of psychoanalysis are essentially concerned with motivation and meaning. This represents a departure from the traditional Freudian emphasis on structures of the mind, focusing instead on making sense of mental and emotional processes in the context of a social relationship. As S. Mitchell (1988) put it: "Mind has been redefined from a set of predetermined structures emerging from inside an individual organism to transactional patterns and internal structures derived from an interactive, interpersonal field" (p. 17). K. Gibson extrapolated this idea to indicate that there is consequently less concern with identifying familiar patterns related to theory and more emphasis on discovering new patterns: "From this perspective, meaning making has less to do with underlying causes and more to do with the performative functions any communication serves in the context of a relationship" (2002b, p. 39).

In a retrospective view of my community work with children, I drew on the work of Orange et al. (1997) to criticise my own lack of an intersubjective focus during this intervention (J. Lazarus, 2005). I argued that considering practitioner subjectivity, power and one's own positioning is crucial in South Africa. I called for a contextualist stance that admits that "our present understanding of anything or anyone is…inevitably limited by the historicity of our own organised and organising experience" (Orange et al., 1997, p. 89).

The important points arising out of this review are that a psychodynamic South African community psychology can use the unconscious both to increase understanding and in the direct use of established therapeutic techniques such as relationship and interpretation. However, such relationships will be fraught because the political will be present in them in emotional ways. In line with postmodern thought, context and subjectivity then become more important. Reflection and reflexivity will help to create containment for these challenging processes in community work. For the purposes of the present study, and following on from these ideas, I will emphasise the importance of 1) complex relationships, 2) increased practitioner reflexivity, and 3) a holding environment in this kind of work. It is argued that these principles are important for all situations where contact occurs between communities and practitioners, whether they are involved in research, intervention, or both.

3.5 Important assumptions in psychodynamic community work

3.5.1 Complex relationships

Hollway (1998) referred to the way in which the phrase "the personal is political" informed emancipatory thought in the women's movement. This redefined political struggle as a battle fought in women's daily lives. In South African community psychology it could be said that "the political is personal" in that the history of oppression must invariably be present in all cross-cultural encounters in one way or another, even when not overtly acknowledged.

The implication is also that this could be a site for healing, specifically if there is a deeper analysis of the unspoken. Commenting on my community work with the Play Group children, I noted:

> Several years on, I am still doing research in the same community, and I am always struck by how important relationship is in such processes. Intellectually, I can state that the relationship between a white psychologist in South Africa and a poor black child is a very rich source of information (historically, politically, and emotionally), as well as a site for deep intervention. It also feels almost unbearable. (J. Lazarus, 2005, p. 8)

There has been a recent focus on relationships in the literature on community work (see, for example, K. Gibson, 2002b; K. Gibson & L. Swartz, 2000; K. Gibson & L. Swartz, 2004; Long, 1999; Maw, 1996; L. Swartz et al., 2002a). In 2002b K. Gibson claimed that "the relationship between the community psychologist and the community is central to understanding and intervention in this field" (p. 27). In this section K. Gibson's case study of three consultation relationships with organisations serving children at risk will be considered (2002b). It is felt that this important work highlights typical and often unconscious facets of practitioner-community relationships, including the role of power, politics, emotion and difference.

In community work, entering this territory may be a particularly complex endeavour. I referred to it as "traversing the land of guillotines" (J. Lazarus, 2005, p. 8) by which was meant that community work is a fraught arena (and often avoided) because it is so closely tied to the history of oppression in South Africa. Community interventions often constitute cross-cultural therapy contact, and always involve discrepancies between class, material wealth and education. K. Gibson (2002b) and Long (1999) noted that even where black psychologists work in black communities, their education and training often sets them apart. This results in a complex and potentially painful interplay between the history and legacy of apartheid, cultural difference and current context (K. Gibson, Sandenbergh & L. Swartz, 2001; Maw, 1996; L. Swartz, 1998).

K. Gibson and L. Swartz (2000) summarised the issue succinctly when they referred to "a situation in which the dynamics we experienced in our consultation relationships appeared to be a mirror of the most difficult aspects of our damaged social and political environment" (p.139). K. Gibson and L. Swartz (2000) have pointed out that from a psychodynamic perspective, community practitioners can be helped to see that these issues are not impediments to the work, but "the very substance of the work itself" (p. 138). A consideration of the unconscious offers one way to unpack the complexity of any interactional process: "Psychoanalysis acknowledges that motives may not only be mysterious to the participants involved but also that they may be multiple, contradictory and generated independently of rational intention" (K. Gibson, 2002b, p. 39).

Psychodynamic community psychology in South Africa can be said to have brought the dual roles of the political and the emotional into focus, and has examined the way that these are interlinked and expressed in relationships in community work. K. Gibson (2002b) wrote about the consequent complexity of consultation relationships. The pain and difficulty in relationships involved in community work is widely acknowledged in the literature (K. Gibson & L. Swartz, 2000). This view is contrary to initial hopes for a neat and logical partnership. In fact, K. Gibson showed that such relationships are subject to "a variety of powerful but not always well understood

dynamics and processes" (2002b, p. 7). This results in a certain unpredictability about the outcome of such interventions.

Much has been written about inequalities in power and political influences in the consultation relationship; such considerations have in fact been highlighted as important starting points in any attempt to transform mental health (Long, 1999; Maw, 1996; Mogoduso & Butchart, 1992; Seedat & Nel, 1992; L. Swartz, 1998; Terre Blanche, 1994). K. Gibson (2002b) noted that the power of the psychologist may operate in subtle and insidious ways, despite the intention to give psychology away (in the sense of empowering others) or to minimise the expert status of psychologists (S. Swartz & L. Swartz, 1986). It has been acknowledged that in South Africa historical inequalities have created a particularly difficult set of power relations between a largely white profession and the black communities its practitioners work with (K. Gibson, 2001, 2002b). These ideas need to be extrapolated to thinking about any relationship occurring within the context of community work, including those involved in research.

In her seminal project K. Gibson (2002b) explored the social and psychological dynamics of consultation partnerships across three case studies. Her study was, however, still situated within a concern with the broader political context of mental health. She took the well-established concept of dynamic layering within organisations, and demonstrated ways in which emotional processes also hold political meaning and in fact interact with, and reproduce some of, the more painful political realities of South African society. Using a psychodynamic lens, she tried to develop a deeper understanding of this process. She was able to document and analyse the enormous emotional and political complexities involved in such relationships. The community psychology approach, she observed, typically gives less consideration to the emotional dynamics of such work and the subtle forms in which they appear in the intervention. In her analysis of several consultation relationships with organisations working with children at risk, she illustrated the indivisible connections between "politics and emotion". In this way, she further expanded concepts of community consultation using psychoanalytic ideas.

Within the interventions themselves, psychodynamic thought was used to help practitioners connect with oppression, racism and colonialism - "the very issues that community psychologists were struggling with" (K. Gibson, 2002b, p. 36). It becomes clear that to ignore these aspects (because they are painful, or seem to lie outside some kind of theoretical domain) is counterproductive and can threaten the life of the project. K. Gibson (2202b) produced a case study of each consultation relationship, using process notes and interviews. Fundamentally, she found that meanings were assigned to the relationships, based on the specific emotional and political dynamics of each organisation and each relationship. In this way the practitioners' understanding could be expanded. Her insights from the analyses were used to reflect on and deepen the understanding of central concepts such as training, support and empowerment, which underlie the practice of community consultation.

Interviews with workers about how they had experienced the consultants' involvement led to answers which, crucially, only really made sense in the context of the complex dynamics of the relationship which had developed between them:

It seemed to me that hidden in the answers to the obvious questions about whether people's needs or expectations had been met was a complex network of underlying motives and assumptions. These in turn seemed to carry powerful emotional and political meanings that themselves needed to be understood. (K. Gibson, 2002b, p. 9)

The psychodynamic approach gave K. Gibson's (2002b) study a spirit of open-ended enquiry. She began her analysis of three case studies with a few "relatively straightforward questions" that were just "a starting point for exploring the meanings and motives that ultimately might lie behind the answers" they generated (2002b, p. 10). Her intention in fact was to show the "complex and emotionally laden interaction of personal, relational, organisational and social circumstances" as well as the less conscious concerns they reveal (2002b, p. 10). In summary, K. Gibson (2002b) was able to decipher and work with some of the unconscious purposes of the relationship. Her study resulted in great specificity and variation about differing needs. It is noted that this very detailed insight is potentially very useful to a needs assessment process. K. Gibson's (2002b) work also contributed, as the present study hopes to, towards theorising about complex community projects. K. Gibson (2002b) held that:

As much as the literature on community psychology raises and addresses important questions about context, power, the politics of expertise and the need for social transformation, it seems to leave some aspects of these experiences insufficiently accounted for. It appears that there is room for a theory that develops a fuller understanding of the inter-penetration of the social and political with the individual. (p. 37)

3.5.2 Practitioner reflexivity

K. Gibson (2002b) pointed out that a consideration of the psychologist's role is increasingly considered essential to the community psychology intervention, "the focus of which must always be the reciprocal relationship between psychologist and the community" (p. 38). Richter (2002) commented that any serious engagement with community change must at the same time involve a high degree of introspection on the part of those trying to make this difference: "In transforming our practice and in attempting to transform people's lives, we similarly transform ourselves" (p. vii). The practitioner's consciousness of herself is seen as an important source of information in two ways, namely thinking about who she is (positioning) and what she feels (counter-transference). K. Gibson and L. Swartz (2004) stated that:

With the notion of the unconscious, this approach invites us to challenge what seems ordinary or obvious and to consider explanations that may contradict and even threaten our conventional understanding. It may thus encourage psychologists to think beyond the comfortable accounts they give of their actions and to reflect more critically on their own work. (p. 468)

It has been argued that the position of the social researcher has become central in a postmodern world. K. Gibson (2002b) drew on the intersubjective approach (Stolorow & Atwood, 1992) to argue for an acknowledgement of the contribution the psychologist makes in interventions - "whether by their emotional response, their enactment of power or their cultural positioning" (p. 38). The issues which K. Gibson and L. Swartz (2000) mentioned in their consideration of organisational and consultation dynamics are also of relevance to a cross-cultural infant observation in a poverty setting. The researcher and participant will also have "their own political histories, often from very different sides of the apartheid fence" (K. Gibson & L. Swartz, 2000, p.139) and unequal access to resources in the past and present. Racial, class and gender identities in South Africa carry pain (K. Gibson & L.

Swartz, 2000; S. Swartz, 2005). Reflected in personal identity is our country's history of authoritarian practices and difficulties with balancing leadership and democracy (K. Gibson & L. Swartz, 2000). No community practitioner can claim to stand outside of this intricate web.

K. Gibson (2002b) argued that a psychoanalytic understanding, when used well, could contribute to the developing awareness of the researcher's role through self-reflection. Particularly, thinking about what one feels can be a clue to the unconscious emotional dynamics between researcher and researched (Hollway & Jefferson, 2000). This has been referred to as listening deeply (Stein, 1994). However, accounts of the consultation relationship mostly reflect the experiences of psychologists themselves (K. Gibson, 2002b). In 2004 we commented that in the literature about community child work there is a lack of integration of the psychodynamic tools of describing the links between internal and external life, communicating with clients for change, and containment of the practitioner:

> In other words, in studies where the counter-transferential feelings of the community workers were focused on, it was not shown how the containment and management of these feelings impacted on the child clients. Conversely, in case studies where actual work with children was described there was little or no focus on how their inner worlds impacted upon the clinicians working with them and how a reflective process can be powerful in getting better information or providing more effective help. (J. Lazarus & Kruger, 2004a, p. 66)

It may be important, in community infant observations, to realise that feelings put into the practitioner by means of projective processes may be related to socio-political and cultural positioning. In other words, there is no clear divide between internal and external. Focusing on internal, unconscious processes need not imply an exclusion of the contribution that the environment is making. It would be a mistake, in pursuit of some kind of "psychoanalytic purity", to look at internal processes as something separate from environment. In effect, the internal *is* external, and vice versa.

3.5.3 The holding environment

The difficulty of community work has been referred to by a number of practitioners (see, for example, K. Gibson & L. Swartz, 2004). Work with deprived children is described as particularly taxing (Alvarez, 1992; Boston & Szur, 1983; Copley & Forryan, 1987; K. Gibson, 1996; Hoxter, 1983). In South Africa psychodynamic theory and technique have often been used to contain the counter-transferential feelings of community workers in contact with children (J. Lazarus & Kruger, 2004a). This extends to both supervision and consultation work. This framework has been described as "holding the consultant who holds the practitioner who holds the child" (J. Lazarus & Kruger, 2004a). In exploring the utility of group process for low-income dyads, Spedding (2005) referred to "rocking the hand that rocks the cradle" in the title of her work. Containment (Bion, 1959, 1970) is thus a fundamental psychoanalytic principle that informs community work on many different levels.

In our review of the literature we concluded that local authors "have showed convincingly that the use of critical self-reflection and a holding environment in supervisory and consultation work are crucial elements of community work with deprived children" (J. Lazarus & Kruger, 2004a, pp. 60-61). Without this containment, in which relationships can be thought about and the meanings of actions, feelings and words analysed, the danger exists that

valuable projects could be abandoned (J. Lazarus, 2003, 2005). Both practitioners and clients in the community may resort to acting out more difficult issues such as difference, power and inequality. Where there is no space to think or talk about what is really going on, the intervention may create tremendous bi-directional strain. This is particularly true in the emotionally and politically charged territory of community work (K. Gibson, 2002b; J. Lazarus, 2005).

3.6 Key terms

Community psychology's definition of context is a systemic one: namely, that every problem that an individual faces needs to be thought about in terms of the multiple environments which surround her. In other words, within the community psychology paradigm, context refers to social context. The individual is seen as the product of a particular socio-political and economic history. As in the feminist perspective, mental health problems are viewed as the product of a problematic system, instead of pathologising the individual's functioning. Secondly, when theories and practices are imported for the purposes of community work, it is felt that attention must be paid to the particular community context: the setting must be allowed to shape the action, and practitioners must remain flexible and responsive to the environment. This relates to a concern raised in Chapter One, about importing methods for learning about children (and indeed knowledge) without considering different contexts.

Context is also thought to influence relationship in psychodynamic community work: it becomes a site in which national history, among other things, is represented and replayed. As Long (1999) put it, "psychoanalysis is best utilised in community settings when it explicitly recognises socio-political influences and includes these in the object-worlds of ourselves and our clients, and when recognition of power and difference are foregrounded" (p. i). In other words, there is such a thing as a socio-political internal object, which can affect the transference. Relationship is equally, or more, important in psychodynamic community work as it is in psychodynamic work more generally. Related to this is the importance of reflexivity for the current discussion. This relates to a process of referring to self (Potter, 1996), whether it is the researcher, practitioner, or method itself that becomes self-conscious or is increasingly revealed in this way. Involved in this is the psychodynamic tool of reflection (thinking) and self-reflection (thinking about the self). By using these concepts, community psychology to a degree operationalises a postmodern stance. It has been argued here that community psychology and indeed psychoanalysis can further incorporate postmodern thinking by recognising that the internal and the external are one thing.

3.7 Conclusion

Community psychology's main contribution to the present psychoanalytic endeavour is its awareness that the political atrocities in South Africa's past shape the psychological and material realities of its citizens in an ongoing way. Its dedication to a more active, searching and practical approach to social problems is important. The present study situates itself as part of a progressive and varied community psychology tradition that urges practitioners to move out into "communities", to empower and to increase services for the historically oppressed. It embraces a spirit of innovation, flexibility and adaptability to context. As a study, it also aligns itself with a focus on the root

cause of psychological problems and a preventative approach. It follows on from community psychology's emphasis on change that its own methodologies include needs assessment. It has also, like psychoanalysis, used a case study approach.

In addition, a psychodynamic community psychology provides a way to work with unconscious aspects of community interventions, specifically the ways in which politics and emotion intersect and play themselves out in relationship. In terms of social constructionist concerns, psychodynamic community psychology has placed emphasis on the emotion and subjective experience of the practitioner (as a source of insight) as well as on the political and social context of any intervention. Community psychology is centrally concerned with power and acknowledges that intervention constitutes a political act.

However, it can be argued that community psychology needs a way to deconstruct the needs assessment process. Particularly for the purposes of the present study, an overtly postmodern ethnographic approach offers a way to think more deeply about *whose* meanings are being constructed (as opposed to being gathered), and about what actually happens when we use "observation" and/or interviewing to collect information about people. This extends to the use of infant observation in a needs assessment process. The present study will thus use an ethnographic lens in conjunction with the one offered by infant observation, and situate both within the community psychology paradigm delineated above. This represents a novel three-way synthesis that is intended to expand the usefulness of infant observation for the South African context. The next chapter examines the contribution that postmodern ethnography can make.

CHAPTER FOUR: Ethnography and psychoanalysis

4.1 Introduction

It was suggested in Chapter One that infant observation for community needs assessment purposes must be considered to be an ethnographic project, as is any research that attempts to produce thick description about infants in conditions of poverty. Here it will be proposed that a postmodern ethnographic lens in particular will be of central importance in a study that attempts an infant observation in a South African community setting. This lens is a crucial aid to the critical interrogation of such an endeavour, because it takes into account issues of representation and authority. It throws a reflexive light on the practitioner; that is, it takes into account who she is and what she brings to a research project, and advocates that she should be "positioned" within some context in the ethnographic picture (Aunger, 2004). Postmodern ethnography considers the particular context of all observed behaviour when thinking about meaning. It also admits that there are many meanings, and that power is at play in determining whose meanings are foregrounded in any text. Feminist ethnographers have made valuable contributions in this respect. As the previous chapter on community psychology has shown, power in the interaction between practitioner and community is a central concern in community work. Postmodern forms of ethnography are helpful because they have begun to consider this aspect in thinking about the ways in which the researcher, who is an outsider, enters communities in order to gain information about them.

4.2 Definitions: Ethnography, culture and fieldwork

The Greek root of the word "anthropology" refers to "knowledge about humans" (Eriksen, 2001, p. 2). "Ethnography" also derives from Greek and literally means the description of a people and its way of life (Angrosino, 2002). While older dictionaries use the word "race" in their definition of ethnography, the most recent edition of the *Concise Oxford English dictionary* defined it as a "scientific description of peoples and cultures with reference to their particular customs and characteristics" (2006, p. 490). Ethnography is a method of studying a person or a group of people in order to learn about them. Most often ethnographic studies are undertaken in order to gain information about unfamiliar groups' ways of life, and copious written records are typically the result (Angrosino, 2002; Aunger, 2004). Angrosino (2002) noted that in contemporary social science, ethnography refers both to the process of research and to the account (whether in writing or on film) that results from that research.

Ethnography has always involved not just the description of a particular society and culture, but an analysis that tries to respond to the question of why (Delaney, 2004). In writing ethnographies, "anthropologists utilize the theories and jargon of the discipline at the time of writing and hope to contribute new theoretical insights and knowledge" (Delaney, 2004, p. 21). In other words, ethnography is both about recording and interpreting other people's way of life (Keesing & Strathern, 1998). If anthropology is about humanity, then ethnography is about how we talk about humanity; Geertz (1973) commented that in anthropology, what practitioners do is ethnography. Ethnography can be thought of as a general strategy for conducting research, the end product of which is a description of sorts, but it is not in and of itself a way to gather information (Angrosino, 2002).

In the nineteenth century, when attempts were made to systematise the research process involved in ethnographic study, it became associated with the new discipline of cultural anthropology. This comparative analysis of the peoples of the world gave rise, Angrosino (2002) maintained, to the concept of culture itself: "the idea that people's behaviours, beliefs, interactions, and material productions were not random, but rather formed a 'complex whole' that was meaningful, logical, more or less consistent, and worthy of respect on its own terms" (p. 2). The whole discipline of anthropology, Geertz (1973) noted, arose around this concept of culture. Cultural anthropology, which is itself a wide-ranging discipline, is defined most simply as the comparative study of contemporary peoples throughout the world (Ferraro, 2004). Important for the present study is the idea here of conducting a study of living cultures, and specifically, in a process of comparison with other cultures. Ferraro (2004) noted that cultural anthropologists do not limit themselves to a single domain of activity, but study all aspects of "culture". By extension, one could say that cultural anthropology is interested in the way people differ.

The definition of culture is a central question in anthropology, and it is not a simple concept to define (Geertz, 1973, 2000). In fact, culture has been described as "one of the two or three most complicated words in the English language" (Williams, 1983, as quoted in Weldes et al., 1999). This reflects the transition that has taken place regarding the concept of culture in Western thought over the past century. The Latin root of the word (to cultivate) indicates that culture refers to that which is not "natural", but has been acquired by humans as members of society (Eriksen, 2001). Ferraro (2004), writing from a more traditionalist perspective, suggested that cultural anthropologists see culture as "the total lifeways of a group of people" (p. xiii). He claimed that it is this broad perspective which is "particularly effective at helping us better understand people different from ourselves" (p. xiii). By contrast, Aunger (2004), citing Sapir (1934), noted that "cultures, as ordinarily dealt with, are merely abstracted configurations of idea and action patterns, which have endlessly different meanings for the various individuals in the group" (p. 64). In other words, the concept of culture is essentially a construction and is not as binding or homogeneous as is sometimes suggested. This makes it difficult to give a single, stable definition of culture. Clifford and Marcus (1986) noted that, in the postmodern view, "culture" is always relational, an inscription of communicative processes that exist, historically, between subjects in relations of power (citing Dwyer 1977; Tedlock 1979). On reflection, the historical predicament of ethnography is therefore that it is has in fact always been caught up in the invention, and not the representation, of cultures (Wagner 1975, cited in Clifford, 1986). This has, however, not always been recognised in ethnographic practice.

A defining feature of cultural anthropology in contrast with other social sciences is its reliance not on secondary data, but on face-to-face contact between the researcher and the subject (Ferraro, 2004). Ethnography is a way of conducting research that happens in a "natural" as opposed to laboratory setting. Fieldwork is defined as "the study of people acting in the natural courses of their daily lives" (Emerson, 1983b, p. 1). By "natural" is meant that the ethnographer attempts to learn about people in their own environment. Fieldwork involves a deep immersion into the life of a people (Keesing & Strathern, 1998). Admittedly, the very presence of the ethnographer makes any "natural" setting somewhat unnatural. In more postmodern forms of ethnography, the whole notion of "natural" will be problematised.

Denzin (1997) outlined the history of anthropology as moving from a traditional or realist period to a modernist

phase and then a (current) postmodernist moment. Today it is regarded as "preposterous to generalise about entire societies" as it is recognised that no two individuals see the world in the same way (Eriksen, 2001, p. 22). R. Rosaldo (1989), among others, has since critiqued the way in which this moment in anthropology studied the other as alien, foreign and strange (cited in Denzin, 1997). Ethnography has undergone such change during the twentieth century that old definitions of it are thought to be no longer workable (Denzin, 1997). Postmodern ethnography has become a subversive tool through which new models of truth and method are being sought (R. Rosaldo, 1989, cited in Denzin, 1997). Below, a brief overview of the emergence of postmodernist thought in ethnography will be given.

4.3 Postmodern ethnography

4.3.1 A crisis of representation: overview

Postmodern ethnography developed as a result of a crisis in anthropology towards the end of the twentieth century (Aunger, 2004; Clifford & Marcus, 1986; Denzin, 1997; Eriksen, 2001; Eriksen & Nielsen, 2001). Denzin (1997) described this as a "crisis of representation which caused a profound rupture in the mid-1980s" (p. 17). The effect of postmodernism on ethnography has been to question the concept of producing a factual account of anything, including culture. Anthropology has subsequently become a changing and diverse arena in which questions both about who has produced and may legitimately produce ethnographic accounts, and how, are widely debated: "We are in a moment of discovery and rediscovery as new ways of looking, interpreting, arguing, and writing are debated and discussed" (Denzin, 1997, p. 19).

Clifford Geertz has played an instrumental role in the changing identity of anthropology by developing the theoretical approach called symbolic or interpretive anthropology, which first presented itself as an alternative to the structuralist approach in the 1960s and 1970s (Geertz, 2000). Sewell (1999) described Geertz as the most influential American anthropologist of his generation. Denzin (1997) cited Geertz's well-known work, *The interpretation of cultures* (1973) as signalling the beginning of the move out of the modernist phase. Geertz is accredited with turning anthropology toward a concern with the complex, established systems of meaning within which people live (a postmodern preoccupation). Geertz has said, in his inimitable tone, "If there's ever a place where you can't argue that you can put the facts over here and the text over there and see if they fit, it is surely in anthropology" (quoted in Olson, 1991, p. 192). Geertz has also helped to reconfigure the boundary between the social sciences and the humanities and to make anthropology more accessible and relevant to a range of humanist disciplines (Ortner, 1999). Geertz's work has also offered the social sciences "a powerful alternative to the seemingly irresistible juggernaut of (a certain kind of) science" (Ortner, 1999, p. 1). Anthropology, as practised by Geertz, offered "a means of reaching deeper" in the study of ordinary people's lives in a way in which quantitative methods borrowed from sociology could not (Sewell, 1999, p. 38).

A substantial critique of modernist ethnography has come from within feminism. Since the 1970s feminist anthropologists have shown how classic accounts of "societies" actually refer to male perspectives on them (Eriksen, 2001). Prior to 1974 there were only a "handful of ethnographies that take a woman's perspective" (M. Rosaldo & Lamphere, 1974, p. 1). Twenty years later Behar (1996) criticised Clifford and Marcus (1986) and other

male writers for still failing to recognise women's theoretical and literary contributions to anthropology. She noted the "maintenance of a prestige hierarchy within the discipline that has fixed a (male) canon of what counts as important knowledge" (Behar, 1996, p. 9). This has occurred despite the fact that there have always been larger numbers of women in anthropology than in many other disciplines in the academy (Cole, 2001). The personal is not only political, then, but also professional (Cole, 2001).

Women originally received minimal attention as the subjects of anthropological research (Lewin, 2006). Moore (1994) noted that the implicit model for the person in much ethnographic writing is, in fact, an adult male. Traditionally, men's place in society was described, but there was a lack of interest in female activities and roles, linked to the conception that women are biologically inferior to men (M. Rosaldo & Lamphere, 1974). Feminist anthropologists have begun to redress this imbalance by describing women's lives from a woman's point of view (M. Rosaldo & Lamphere, 1974). In summary, women's studies in the 1970s challenged the field of anthropology by asking "who was traditionally studied, by whom, and in what ways, and toward what end", and anthropology has reinvented itself in response to such criticisms (Cole, 2001, p. x). In an interview Geertz noted that there has also been feminist support for the drive to make anthropological discourse less "scientistical" (quoted in Olson, 1991, p. 200).

Margaret Mead (see, for example, 1935, 1949) contributed the most widely read and earliest argument for the viewpoint that, based on cross-cultural and social-psychological evidence, what Westerners take to be the "natural" endowment of men and women is "hardly necessary, natural or universal (as an ethnocentric perspective might lead one to expect)" (M. Rosaldo, 1974, p. 18). Her work therefore prepared the way for the feminist revival in the 1960s (Janiewski & Banner, 2004). Thereafter, within feminist anthropology, "the primary angle of attack has been on the project of creating universal explanations that will serve to neatly wrap up gender (or anything else) in a tidy bundle with no loose ends" (Lewin, 2006, p. 44). Clifford (1986) noted that feminist theorising is of great significance for rethinking ethnographic writing, because "it debates the historical, political construction of identities and self/other relations, and it probes the gendered positions that make all accounts of, or by, other people inescapably partial" (p. 19). Female authors who are consistently engaged in examining the cultural construction of gender and sexuality include Ortner, Whitehead, Strathern (Ortner & Whitehead, 1981) and Chodorow, Stack and Tanner (M. Rosaldo & Lamphere, 1974).

In summary, what recent authors have pointed to is the fact that ethnography is, in line with postmodern thinking, an essentially interpretive mode (Olson, 1991). Postmodern ethnography recognises the role of interpretation throughout the process of investigation, "from the inevitability of interpretation in the participants' accounts of themselves to the interpretations of the researchers who write about them" (K. Gibson, 2002b, p. 81).

4.3.2 Theoretical and practical implications

If postmodern ethnography admits that culture is an issue of interpretation, then the question of who is interpreting arises. The ethnographer herself suddenly becomes visible. Secondly, the issue of relationship between the ethnographer and her subject of study becomes interesting. How do they negotiate meanings, who represents them,

and in which ways? Such questions mean that the conceptualisation and practice of the ethnographic endeavour, including how we observe and write, necessarily changes.

4.3.2.1 Subjectivity and the interpretation of meanings: Who speaks?

Because postmodern ethnography recognises that there is no unitary truth to be sought or described, it instead emphasises poly-vocality or the multiplicity of meanings (Durrheim, 1997; Gavey, 1989). There are thought to be as many meanings as there are people. Hosking and Morley (2004) said that "the meanings of knowledge claims, and the tests of their validity, are inextricably bound up with the 'local' and 'situated' identities of those who formulate such claims and of those who evaluate them" (p. 327). In other words, in any ethnographic endeavour we need to pay attention to who is making claims, and why, at all times.

In comparison to more traditional definitions that are about descriptions of behaviour, Geertz has stressed meaning when it comes to culture. In 1973 he reviewed the definitions of culture given in the important anthropological work, *Mirror for man* (Kluckhohn, 1940). He noted that, among other definitions, culture can be seen as an abstraction from behaviour, a theory on the part of the anthropologist about the way in which a group of people in fact behave, or a behavioural map, sieve, or matrix. In other words, authors such as Geertz began to admit that the map is most certainly not the territory (Baudrillard, 1981). Clifford (1986) noted that culture is, on consideration, composed of seriously contested codes and representations. Geertz framed human behaviour as symbolic action that, like language, signifies something: "The thing to ask (of actions) is what their import is" (Geertz, 1973, p. 10). His position is perhaps most famously summarised in the following quote:

> The concept of culture I espouse. . . is essentially a semiotic one. Believing, with Max Weber, that man is an animal suspended in webs of significance he himself has spun, I take culture to be those webs, and the analysis of it to be therefore not an experimental science in search of law but an interpretative one in search of meaning. It is explication I am after… (Geertz, 1973, p. 5)

Geertz's semiotic concept of culture taught us that anthropologists need to interpret the guiding symbols of each culture (1973). Systems of meaning, Geertz argued, are the collective property of a group. Culture, according to Geertz (1973), is "a system of inherited conceptions expressed in symbolic forms by means of which people communicate, perpetuate, and develop their knowledge about and attitudes toward life" (p. 89). Culture in this sense contributes to imposing meaning on the world; it is not something passive that we record. Geertz noted that he is comfortable being called a social constructionist because he believes that meaning is socially, historically and rhetorically constructed between people (Olson, 1991).

Geertz explained that when we say we do not understand the actions of people from a culture other than our own, we are acknowledging our "lack of familiarity with the imaginative universe within which their acts are signs" (1973, p. 13). Geertz stressed that, like literature, any ethnographic work is a product of time, place, and circumstance and that its context should not be ignored. He also compared cultural analysis to the literary criticism of a text. He advocated "sorting out the structures of signification…and determining their social ground and import…Doing ethnography is like trying to read (in the sense of 'construct a reading of') a manuscript…" (1973,

pp. 9-10).

It follows that case studies and ethnographic reports can more accurately be viewed as "account[s] of experience" (K. Gibson, 2002b, p. 81). K. Gibson (2002b) cited thick description as one effective way to locate and explain the experiences of participants in research. Generally, a thick description is understood as an account in close detail (Emerson, 1983c). Geertz (1973) defined this term, which he borrowed from Ryle, to describe his own specific mode of practice, as a "stratified hierarchy of meaningful structures" (p. 7). Geertz (1973) held that thick description is the very object of ethnography; it is not defined by its methods and techniques, but as an "elaborate venture" in thick description (1973, p. 6). When we unpack the concept of thick description as a stratified hierarchy of meaningful structures, several implications can be noted. Firstly, cultural and social activities will be targeted in such an account; secondly, context is important; thirdly, activities will be described with an emphasis on the complex connections between actions; and lastly, the meanings of events that are relevant to those involved in them will be presented.

In thick description context is therefore central and is always considered in trying to understand the meaning of actions. As context changes, Geertz argued (after Ryle), the meaning of human behaviour changes. A thin description, which may be very detailed and accurate, however, lacks meaning. Fieldnotes are thus written up in a way that makes sense of or analyses what has been observed. In this view the task of the anthropologist is specifically to contextualise a society's practices, so that they become meaningful to an outsider. The preoccupation with locally meaningful context is, as Emerson (1983c) and Mishler (1979) pointed out, antithetical to other social science procedures in which contextual meanings are reduced in the interests of standardisation and comparability.

Geertz (1976) wrote about developing "experience-near" concepts to describe culture (p. 223). By this he meant concepts which would "naturally and effortlessly" be used by members of a society to define what is seen, felt, thought, imagined, and so on (Geertz, 1976, quoted in Emerson, 1983c, p. 25). In other words, he advocated using concepts that would be readily understood by members of the society being described. As Emerson (1983c) put it, the focus is on what is "salient to the variety of local actors themselves" (p. 25). This means admitting and embracing the particular subjectivity of those people being studied.

However, Aunger (2004) wondered whether it is ever possible to achieve a view of personal meaning from the participants' perspective. Furthermore, psychoanalytic thinking suggests that some meanings may be hidden even from the participants themselves, because such meanings are in the realm of the unconscious. Nevertheless, the drive to uncover participants' subjective meanings, rather than to impose an outsider description of their way of life, remains important and will affect the researcher's stance and mode of enquiry. The complex question of whose experience is being represented arises along the way. The ethnographer may aim to capture the meanings of the people under study, but in effect she is always seeing them through her own lenses. Who the writer is therefore becomes something that must be considered in the text in some way.

Closely linked to the endeavour to be experience-near is the question of the researcher's role in the community being studied. Geertz railed against notions of ethnographic research that assume that researchers must be

objective, detached and scientifically uninvolved in the community under investigation (Olson, 1991). To represent ethnography "as though it were a laboratory study of some sort" is, according to Geertz, "almost in a kind of positivist sense false" (Olson, 1991, p. 188). Instead, he championed the idea of a studied self-reflexivity, or of the "positioned observer" (after R. Rosaldo) - a recognition that "you are somebody: you come out of a certain class; you come out of a certain place; you go into a certain country; you then go home; you do all of these things" (Olson, 1991, p. 205). Geertz eventually reconceptualised his life's work as research conducted not by an impersonal, objective scientist, but "by human hands - that is, mine" (Olson, 1991, p. 188). Chapter titles such as "Being There" and "Being Here" (Geertz, 1988) point to his awareness of distance, gaze and subjectivity in his dual roles of observer and author.

In other words, postmodern ethnographic texts recognise that what is being presented is far from objective fact and truths that have somehow been captured by one person viewing another. Geertz acknowledged that readers of ethnographic texts need to "either take it or leave it. You don't know anything about the place. You could read another couple of books and probably get more confused, but there's no way of matching it to 'reality'" (Olson, 1991, p. 192). Because postmodernism recognises the inevitability of interpretation in this way, the position of the researcher becomes central. Denzin (1997) held that the qualitative research act can no longer be viewed from within a neutral or objective positivist perspective. Upon consideration, class, race, gender and ethnicity are seen to shape the process of inquiry (Denzin, 1997). It is now recognised that researchers influence all aspects of their research in direct and indirect ways (Reason & Rowan, 1981, cited in K. Gibson, 2002b).

In conclusion, ethnography is increasingly seen to admit to subjectivities of all kinds. There is a new sensitivity to the concerns and experiences of those being described, as seen from their own perspective. This means considering context. Secondly, the role of the researcher in research necessarily becomes a key area for consideration. There is new recognition of the presence of the interpreting ethnographer.

4.3.2.2 Subjectivities and power: Who may speak?

Anthropology can be thought of as a relational practice in that it involves one person observing another, as concepts such as photographic ethnography and visual anthropology attest to. Yet Weldes et al. (1999) noted that it was more or less taboo in more traditional ethnography to explicitly explore the relationship of domination between "traditional" peoples and colonial states - "a relationship in which anthropologists themselves were implicated in complex and contradictory ways" (p. 7). Nowadays issues of power relations, the subject-object, the "other" and "power over" or "power to" are increasingly being thought about in the postmodern view. For example, Clifford (1986) acceded to the point that ethnographic work has always been enmeshed in a world of enduring and changing power inequalities and in fact enacts power relations. He commented that ethnography's function within these relationships is complex, often ambivalent, and potentially counter-hegemonic (Clifford, 1986).

Traditional ethnographic accounts often presented a negative portrait of "the ambitious social scientist making off with the tribal lore and giving nothing in return, imposing crude portraits on subtle peoples" (Clifford, 1986, p. 9). There is a particular gaze here that reflects the inherent inequality of power between observer and observed. The

interpretation of cultures is a political arena involving power and "one of the ways ethnographic writing is determined is politically - the authority to represent cultural realities is unequally shared and at times contested" (Clifford, 1986, p. 6). Thus Clifford (1986) has noted that it is important to stress the dangers of aestheticism and the constraints of institutional power. Some voices will invariably be privileged above others. Traditionally, polyvocality was restrained in traditional ethnographies by giving to one voice a pervasive authorial function and to others the role of sources, informants to be quoted or paraphrased. There is now a "general trend towards a specification of discourses in ethnography: who speaks? who writes? when and where? with or to whom? under what institutional and historical constraints?" (Clifford, 1986, p. 13). The issue of culture is thus problematised when seen through a postmodern lens - What is it? Who defines what it is? Through whose eyes is it being described? The inviolate authority of the ethnographic report has, over time, been turned upside down (Aunger, 2004).

Therefore "it soon becomes apparent that there is no 'complete' corpus of First-Time knowledge, that no one - least of all the visiting ethnographer - can know this lore except through an open-ended series of contingent, power-laden encounters" (Clifford, 1986, p. 8). Clifford (1986) suggested that the way to work with this is firstly to admit that in ethnography we constantly reconstitute others and ourselves through specific exclusions, conventions and discursive practices. Secondly, these processes need to be analysed in and of themselves.

4.3.2.3 Language and subjectivity: Writing culture

In their seminal text, *Writing culture*, Clifford and Marcus (1986) held that "Ethnography is not 'only literature'. It is, however, always writing" (Clifford, 1986, p. 26). In *Works and lives* Geertz (1988) also examined the notion that ethnography itself is overtly a kind of writing and an act of putting something on paper. Clifford and Marcus (1986) went as far as to claim that one of the principal activities of ethnographers is writing. Ethnographies were described as fictions, in that they were admitted to be something made or fashioned. Some authors have expressed this by saying that anthropologists do not find things at all, but make them, or even make them up (Trinh, 1989, cited in Denzin, 1997). In this sense, they have invented things that are not actually real. The partiality of cultural and historical truths thus urgently needs to be recognised.

Academic and literary genres invariably interpenetrate (Clifford, 1986). Metaphor, figuration and narrative are seen to affect the ways cultural phenomena are registered (Clifford, 1986). The maker of an ethnographic text, Clifford (1986) held, cannot avoid "expressive tropes, figures, and allegories that select and impose meaning as they translate it" (p. 7). This raises questions about the ethics of writing. All constructed truths are made possible by powerful "lies" of exclusion and rhetoric (Clifford, 1986, p. 7). Ethnographic texts are in this sense systems or economies of truth, and "power and history work through them, in ways their authors cannot fully control" (Clifford, 1986, p. 7). In 1986 Clifford and Marcus noted that the concept that literary procedures pervade any work of cultural representation is a recent idea in the discipline:

No longer a marginal, or occulted, dimension, writing has emerged as central to what anthropologists do both in the field and thereafter. The fact that it has not until recently been portrayed or seriously discussed reflects the persistence of an ideology claiming transparency of representation and immediacy of experience. Writing

reduced to method: keeping good field notes, making accurate maps, "writing up" results. (p. 2)

Clifford (1986) noted that in classical ethnographies the voice of the author was always manifest, but that conventions of textual presentation and reading forbade too close a connection between authorial style and the reality represented. The subjectivity of the author was separated from the objective referent of the text. At best, the author's personal voice was previously seen as a style in the weak sense: a tone, or embellishment of the facts. Clifford (1986) pointed out that the actual field of experience of the ethnographer was traditionally presented only in very stylised ways (such as arrival stories): "States of serious confusion, violent feelings or acts, censorships, important failures, changes of course, and excessive pleasures are excluded from the public account" (p. 13). Clifford and Marcus (1986) suggested that the ethnographer's troubles, hopes and confusions are mostly left out of traditional accounts, even when she is working under manifestly difficult circumstances. These authors asked what desires and confusions the overly confident and consistent ethnographic voice might be smoothing over and placed "an implicit mark of interrogation beside it" (Clifford, 1986, p. 14). They asked us to consider, in effect, how the "objectivity" of such a voice is created in the writing.

A focus on text making and rhetoric serves to highlight the constructed, artificial nature of cultural accounts. This involves undermining overly transparent modes of authority. Geertz expressed the wish for anthropology to be seen as "textual construction" (Olson, 1991, p. 193). As a result, he encouraged close readings of anthropological texts in which questions are asked about how we construct ethnographic images and how texts should look (1988). He held that by thinking of research reports as texts, we open them up to deeper interpretation, which leads to a broader understanding of the subject (Olson, 1991). Geertz recommended the same modes of inquiry for anthropology as for composition. In *Works and lives* (1988), for example, he examined the writings of four major anthropologists as if he were a literary critic explicating canonical texts. He wondered what makes a text in anthropology persuasive, noting that this varies from author to author (Olson, 1991). As he explained in an interview, it is not simply a matter of presenting a body of facts, but seems to have much more to do with the author's ethos, and the power of his or her presentation. Perhaps unsurprisingly, Geertz began college as an English major, and initially wanted to be a novelist and journalist (Geertz, 2000). Olson (1991) commented that it has often been noted that his prose, even in more technical anthropological writings, is very readable - even, at times, entertaining, in the best sense of the word. Geertz held that he thought of himself as "a writer who happens to be doing his writing as an anthropologist" (Olson, 1991, p. 190). Perhaps it is this background that has assisted Geertz to work with the literary quality of ethnography.

Geertz's famous thick descriptions are, however, not to be confused with his fieldnotes. Delaney (2004) noted that traditionally an ethnography was thought of as that which anthropologists write up after completing their fieldwork. In fact, Geertz has said that he finds it impossible to produce ethnographic accounts in the field; "mostly, here I write and there research" (Olson, 1991, p. 190). In other words, most ethnographic writing is in fact second-level writing with the distinct purpose of synthesising and conveying what was noted in the field. What is noted in the field is, however, invariably selective and analytic in its own way. Therefore such clear distinctions will be problematised below, and in my discussion of the present case study in Chapters Six and Seven. We can no longer hold that we are able to record facts when we make fieldnotes about what we see. Fieldnotes are texts with specific

authors. They involve a further, and not a first, level of analysis (the first having been the observation itself). Self-reflexivity in ethnography thus becomes mandatory: "The writer can no longer presume to be able to present an objective, noncontested account of the other's experiences" (Denzin, 1997, p. xiii). Amusingly, Geertz has referred to older, more traditional anthropological accounts as being "written from the moon - the view from nowhere" (Olson, 1991, p. 204). From a postmodern perspective, Denzin (1997) newly defined ethnography as a form of enquiry and writing that produces descriptions and accounts not only about the ways of life those written about, but about the writer herself.

Considering feminist and postmodern ethnographic injunctions to "attend to representation, voice, and text" (Olesen, 2005, p. 257), how should or can we write about what we observe? There have been various responses to the critique that the ethnographer has been left out of accounts, sometimes resulting in what Marcus (1994) called "messy texts" (quoted in Denzin, 1997, p. xvii). This contrasts with "the tyranny of the finished text" that Parker wrote about (1992, p. 21). Experimental writing by feminist ethnographers is growing (Olesen, 2005). For example, Wolf (1992) presented three versions of voices from her anthropological fieldwork in Taiwan (cited in Olesen, 2005). Behar (1993) experimented with an extended double-voiced text in which she and her participant acted as co-creators in representing a life history (cited in Olesen, 2005). Some feminist anthropologists create performance pieces, dramatic readings, or plays performed at academic conferences (Olesen, 2005). Among the more experimental forms of writing Denzin (1997) reviewed are experiments in autoethnography, ethnographic poetics, anthropological and sociological poetry, evocative and layered accounts, short stories, ethnographic fictions and ethnographic novels, and narratives of the self. Not all authors agree that new forms of writing represent a way out of the representational crisis. Clough (1992), for example, held that simply by writing any fieldworker makes a claim to moral and scientific authority (cited in Denzin, 1997). Too often, Denzin held, experiments in writing "fail to fully engage with a new politics of textuality that would 'refuse the identity of empirical science' while openly engaging social criticism as the form of preferred discourse" (1997, p. 18). He added that nowadays the gaze that probes is anchored in the interactional experiences of the reflexive ethnographer, in other words, in relationships.

Geertz noted that writing style is in fact authorial signature, and is one way for the ethnographer to be represented in the text (Olson, 1991). Clifford (1986) noted that "it has become clear that every version of an 'other', wherever found, is also the construction of a 'self' and the making of ethnographic texts involves a process of self-fashioning" (pp. 23-24). In *Works and lives* (1988) Geertz noted how difficult it is to find somewhere to stand in the text that meets the injunction to give, at one and the same time, an intimate view and a cool assessment (Olson, 1991). Different ways of bringing ourselves in more are still being discovered and developed, and some seem unsatisfactory: "People take photographs with their own shadow in them; that doesn't seem to me to be a particularly marvellous solution. The whole question is how to do this without being awkward" (Olson, 1991, p. 204). Some authors have tried to get around the issue of subjectivity by reviewing their own roles in a short paragraph or page in the finished work (see, for example, Herbst de Villiers, 2006; Lesch, 2000). Such insertions can, however, be insufficient or unintegrated. Geertz stated that:

…we have to go further than that; we have to situate our selves within the text…It's not confessional

anthropology, and it's not about what I was feeling or something of that sort; it's trying to describe the work I've been doing with myself in the picture. (Olson, 1991, p. 204)

How exactly we do that is perhaps contingent on the particular situation. From a psychoanalytic perspective, it may indeed be about feeling. As discussed, emotion gives us important clues as to the unconscious aspects of any interaction. K. Gibson (2002b), citing Banister, Burman, Parker, Taylor and Tindall (1994), suggested that reflexivity is increasingly presented as perhaps a slightly too glib answer to the dilemma of the researcher's involvement in the research. She said, "If you reflect on your own role sufficiently and discuss these reflections openly in your research, the idea is that you can create a more transparent understanding of the way in which you, as the researcher, have shaped the research" (2002b, p. 86). She noted that this does not account for more unconscious motives, however. K. Gibson (2000b) held that the way to deal with the hidden parts of our identities is "with reflection and with the containment provided by theory and relationships" and even then we will only achieve "an approximate understanding of our own motives" (p. 86). This endeavour to understand that which is hidden is, however, what sets psychoanalysis apart from other disciplines, and it is in this that its potential contribution to ethnography lies. This idea will therefore be discussed more fully in the next section.

In conclusion, the interpretation of meaning(s) has become a central concept in postmodern ethnography (Geertz, 2000). The subjectivity of the researcher is addressed with increasing self-reflexivity. The ways in which power works throughout the production of ethnographic knowledge are increasingly examined. Language is seen as a site where meaning is constructed using signs rather than where facts are conveyed. Following on from these ideas, the character of fieldwork essentially also changes. In Chapter Six the nature and approach of postmodern fieldwork will be examined briefly in a consideration of the present study's methodology.

4.4 Ethnography and psychoanalysis

4.4.1 The contribution of psychoanalysis to ethnography

Keesing and Strathern (1998) noted that ethnographers increasingly have to recognise that they gather information on levels that cannot always be accessed by conscious methods. Much information "never goes into the notebooks…a knowledge of scenes and people and sounds and smells that cannot be captured in the written word" (Keesing & Strathern, 1998, p. 9). Psychoanalysis, as described in Chapter Two, offers a way to access and work with the unconscious. Ethnography is interested in gleaning the meaning of cultural manifestations for the subject being described, which is generally thought to be accessible via informants and observation. Psychoanalysis reminds us that, through the workings of the unconscious, the meaning of behaviour may be obscure, even to the subject herself. According to psychoanalysis, this is an essential part of the human make-up. It is felt that unconscious meanings are equally crucial to any understanding. A psychoanalytic ethnographic study will thus be interested both in what the subject can know and explain, and what she cannot. In this way psychoanalysis may make a contribution to unpacking "layers of meaning" in a postmodern ethnographic endeavour (K. Gibson, 2002b, p. 83). Postmodern ethnography has recognised, as Frosh (2000) put it, that "whenever a truth is found, there is another, alternative one underneath" (p. 66). This highlights the tremendous complexity of the ethnographic

endeavour to uncover and represent cultural meanings.

There is a great deal of subtle work necessary in order to access unconscious meanings, involving interpretation by the researcher. As K. Gibson (2002b) intimated, researchers also carry motivations that are hidden to themselves. Introspection can make these meanings clearer. Psychoanalysts are uniquely placed to work with their own subjectivities, because the analyst is considered the tool or instrument for analysis. Citing Frosh (1999), K. Gibson (2002b) noted that "the meanings that people produce are not simply arbitrary textual productions, but are emotionally instigated structures of meaning that govern how they live their lives" (p. 82). In other words, psychoanalysis offers a focus on emotion that may be helpful in coming to understand what is happening in any ethnographic exchange. The analyst, or psychodynamic researcher, is specifically attuned to counter-transference responses. Eriksen (2004) held that "anthropology is concerned with that which takes place between people, not their innermost feelings and thoughts" (p. 140). In the psychodynamic paradigm innermost feelings are thought to be key to working out what takes place between people.

Psychoanalysis has always been interested in relationship and connection. A psychoanalytic approach to ethnography can offer a deeper understanding of the unconscious emotional dynamics between researcher and researched. This accesses what is unsayable, unknown and unrepresentable in any ethnographic encounter. Some ethnographers have commented on a certain lack of theory in anthropology: Geertz said outright that "anthropological theory is not that impressive, in my view" (Olson, 1991, p. 192). Aunger (2004) noted that "the irony is, therefore, that while there has been great sophistication in ethnographic descriptions of social behaviour, there has been little concern for the intricacies of human interaction during data collection in either ethnographic theory or practice" (p. 44). In other words, anthropology may lack the tools with which to theorise more deeply, in a postmodern sense, about the complex power play that is inevitably a part of any ethnographic endeavour. In this way psychoanalysis has a great deal to offer the reflexivity that postmodern ethnographers call for. It involves complex theorising, and is always interested in developing its theories, as laid out in previous chapters.

Ainslie and Brabeck (2003), writing in the United States from a position straddling these two paradigms, defined psychoanalysis as a framework that requires a particular kind of engagement, and hence, a particular kind of method. It can be argued that analysis has always been a playful field (some of Freud's early accounts and Winnicott's work attest to this). Psychoanalysis is contented to take its time, to reflect deeply, to wonder and to muse. Ainslie and Brabeck (2003) highlighted the way in which psychoanalysis is comfortable with uncertainty and ambiguity, and the way in which this can be an asset for the ethnographer who enters a community, being unsure about what it is that will be found there. They claimed that this is familiar and not unsettling to the analyst, being the very essence of a psychoanalytic approach to patients' stories or lives, as they are learnt about in the consulting room. They noted that this unstructured, open-ended attitude or orientation leads to extended engagements. In utilising this framework to approach three community studies, then, it followed that in each case the projects revolved around a core of long-term relationships: "Meaningful engagements take time to develop. Anthropologists and psychoanalysts know this well" (Ainslie & Brabeck, 2003, p. 43).

Interpretation of the unconscious thus seems the single most important contribution that psychoanalysis can make

to ethnography, and it is argued that this can add depth and detail to ethnographic projects. The interpretive process will emphasise subjectivity, emotion and relationship. Technically, reflection, uncertainty and playfulness are highlighted. In sum, psychoanalysis offers a way to theorise about the complexity of internal lives and human meetings.

4.4.2 Empirical examples

Internationally, there have been some interesting projects in the field of psychoanalytic ethnography. For example, for the past decade Ainslie, working in the Department of Educational Psychology at the University of Texas, has written about psychoanalytic ways of understanding ethnographic phenomena (Ainslie & Brabeck, 2003), as well as producing a documentary film and a photographic exhibit on community subjects such as school desegregation and race murder. His use of multiple modes of investigation and representation is relevant in the light of the current discussion, because it suggests that ethnography could lend new forms and techniques to a psychodynamic community psychology paradigm.

Ainslie and Brabeck (2003) called their approach a psychoanalytic ethnographic one, by which they meant that their work in specific Texan communities drew from both disciplines "to frame an understanding of the work and the processes observed, as well as using them as a methodological guide in approaching these communities and those who live within them" (p. 42). In other words, psychoanalysis influenced both their theorising and their methods. Their work, however, was about understanding and documenting certain community phenomena. They held that the concepts and assumptions of psychoanalysis about how the mind works, including unconscious dimensions, can also be a resource for attempts to understand community conflicts and group processes. For example, a psychoanalytic understanding of symptoms and their function as symbolic reference points to underlying conflicts, tensions, and anxieties within a community was used. This is not a new idea (it originated with Freud) but its application specifically to an ethnographic study is novel, and even contentious. Ainslie and Brabeck (2003) noted, for example, that Geertz had "sharp reservations" about psychoanalysis (p. 42). Nevertheless, these authors held that his ideas about symbolic interactionism fitted well with the emphasis in psychoanalysis on the symbolic. Ainslie (1995) used a psychoanalytic understanding of the restorative function of making what was once unconscious conscious, "that is, reintegrating into the public memory crucial elements of a largely disavowed or heretofore unspeakable history" (Ainslie & Brabeck, 2003, p. 42). Ainslie and Brabeck (2003) also made use of the psychoanalytic understanding of trauma, as well as the psychodynamics of defence, to understand how a community managed to absorb a profoundly disturbing racial murder.

Of the articulation between these fields, Ainslie and Brabeck (2003) have written:

> Both disciplines work with the ambiguities of transference and countertransference manifestations and the complexities of establishing and maintaining working alliances, that is to say, the management of the psychodynamics of the interpersonal field. Both disciplines also require the practitioners to reflect on what it means to be entrusted with highly sensitive or confidential information. Of special importance is the fact that both disciplines share a similar sensibility, one that trusts the "material" to be guided by the lives engaged and to evolve in meaningful and unanticipated ways that can be grasped, understood. Both also require vigilance against the imposition of predigested frameworks and understandings, even if not always successful in their efforts to

ward off such. (p. 42)

The psychoanalytic emphasis on cure also lends a particular angle to psychoanalytic ethnographic projects. Ainslie and Brabeck (2003) incorporated psychoanalytically informed community interventions as part of their ethnographic work. They noted that what to do with what they learn from their ethnographies, namely "how we utilize our insights into people and communities to engage the issues that trouble them", is an important question (p. 43). Ainslie's documentary film was felt to provide a means to tell a story that had been repressed. His photographic exhibition specifically narrated the community's response to a murder in their midst, which had perhaps not been the focus in media representations of the event. Ainslie and Brabeck (2003) acknowledged, through these "interventions", that communities have powerful emotions. Both the film and the exhibit drew directly from the relationships and interviews developed over the course of the ethnographic work in each community. Their projects seemed to have significant impact. They concluded: "We believe, in other words, that what one learns in the course of doing ethnographies can lend itself to, or become the basis for, meaningful representation of a community's experience. Ethnography can be a form of therapeutic praxis" (Ainslie & Brabeck, 2003, p. 43).

Further authors have been interested in using psychodynamic constructs to analyse the relationship between ethnographers and their participants (Wengle, 1988). In an article entitled "What takes place in the dark", Cornell (1992) held that psychoanalysis must play a role in Geertz's science of "imagining difference" (p. 45). Anthropology, she noted, helps us to engage with difference without "the complacent superiority of ethnocentrism" (Cornell, 1992, p. 45).

4.4.3 The application of psychoanalytic ethnography in South African community work

In South African case studies using principles from ethnography, psychoanalysis and community work, the emphasis has been on observation and writing up in a way that is probing, exploratory and innovative. Practitioners have engaged with notions of difference, representation and power. The articulation of the two paradigms provides challenges to psychoanalytic ideas, which may help refine them for South African use.

Attempts at descriptive research into multicultural childcare practices have been problematised (Tomlinson, 2003). Who can speak for whom, and appropriate a voice on infancy (or culture)? (Tomlinson & L. Swartz, 2003b). Secondly, how do we "capture" or define "culture"? Tomlinson (2003) held that

> …any analysis of practice or belief about infancy must locate its descriptions politically, socially and economically (and not simply individually) if it is to avoid becoming what Lewis (1999) aptly refers to as a fashionable literary pursuit, a dilettante traveller's *belles lettres*. (p. 45)

Tomlinson (2003) warned that asocial and apolitical cultural studies of infant care ignore the crucial interplay between culture and society. Descriptions need to work with intracultural variation, which at times can exceed intercultural differences: "unless this is factored in and acknowledged then the description of the care practice has no validity in the lived world" (p. 47). In other words, when we attempt ethnographic description, we must keep an

eye open for that which is unique and individual.

Tomlinson and L. Swartz (2003b) held that, when we try to describe culture, there are "important debates that must be entered into about power, control, and the construction of the other" (p. 495) in any attempt at increasing our knowledge about infancy and culture. Such debates are silenced at times. Tomlinson and L. Swartz (2003b) noted that diversity has been obscured and at times appropriated into a powerful and more familiar north American genre. This might be part of a defensive process, because "diversity feels dangerous for many people" (L. Swartz, 2002, p. iv):

> Multiculturalism as an ideological position is quite easy to maintain from a position of strength and security in a society where there is enough to go around. When there is perceived threat and danger, however, the 'other', which the relativist enterprise in the social sciences has worked so hard to demythologise and to normalise, becomes the terrifying and frightening beast to be destroyed or to be kept out. And safety and security, of course, are to some extent in the eye of the beholder. (p. iv)

Multiculturalist ideas are tested, he maintained, when the other stops being "clearly far away or disempowered" (p. iv). When the boundaries become permeable between "us" and "them", a real or imagined threat to our own lives exists, and begins to test our tolerance (L. Swartz, 2002, p. iv). L. Swartz (2002) concluded with a call for psychologists who "understand pain, fear and intergenerational suffering, to contribute to thinking and action about diversity, and to link what we know about the personal with what we must learn about the collective and the global" (p. iv).

Using an ethnographic lens, Tomlinson and L. Swartz (2003b) argued for "detailed contextual interpretation of what may at first glance seem bizarre" (p. 489). Postmodern ethnography, they noted, is as much about transactions of power as it is about description (the gaze has turned). They urged practitioners not to obscure their own cultural positioning: "the act of making ethnography is not simply an act of recording the exotic - it is equally an act of presentation and of definition, by contrast, of the role of the ethnographer" (2003b, p. 491). These authors held that it is essential to problematise the extent to which we impose interpretation on data (the hidden authorial voice) as cultural outsiders. They noted a difference between the coherent account (the poetics of ethnography) and the discontinuities and contradictions of what goes on in the field. We are essentially involved in the production of knowledge about the other, and both author and reader participate in making meaning. The way in which we produce scientific knowledge about the other can involve othering, stereotyping, and the entrenching of power relations.

Tomlinson and L. Swartz (2003b) showed that in ethnographic accounts of childcare, the other can be repackaged as understandable and child-loving. Difference is neutralised and depoliticised. Fears and dangers associated with the "primitive" world are made safe and even homogenised. The strange is made to seem familiar, and the unacceptable is sanitised. Multiculturalism can give a gloss of respectability to local practices that are oppressive. The Westerner is positioned, "Dr Spock-like, as indulgently understanding the world of the 'other'" (Tomlinson & L. Swartz, 2003b, p. 495).

Tomlinson (2003) touched on the complexity inherent in trying to abstract a notion of culture when he described his abandoned intention to describe "the Xhosa infant" following a number of interviews in Khayelitsha. This work was part of the Thula Sana mother-infant project designed to improve maternal mood and thereby enhance the development of the early mother-infant relationship. An important part of this work, he noted, was "the assessment of conceptualisations of infancy and childhood" (2003, p. 46). He concluded that "the notion of 'A Xhosa infant' or 'A Xhosa mother' is simply not a tenable concept, despite the fact that much of the literature is replete with works implying a neat cultural package" (2003, p. 46). Tomlinson (2003) showed that great care must be taken when reporting an expressed belief system: other factors such as individual difference and temporality (how belief systems change over time) complicate the picture. A person might express a particular cultural belief out of deference to an older generation, and not because of his or her own conviction. It is easy to "conflate the cultural with the political and the personal" (Tomlinson, 2003, p. 46). Tomlinson (2003) argued that culture is fluid, that people actively collect specific cultural artefacts around them, and in so doing create unique, personal cultural systems around themselves. Even more care needs to be taken when someone outside the culture makes cultural statements following a process of observation. Moore (1994) noted that anthropologists have only recently begun to discuss and document the existence of multiple models and discourses within cultures. As a result, she argued, we are more aware than ever that it becomes impossible to talk of a particular culture as having one model of the person or conception of the self. Rather, dominant discourses, and discourses that are only appropriate to specific contexts, exist and what appears to be a dominant discourse on the self may turn out to be relatively divorced from everyday life and experience (Moore, 1994).

S. Swartz (2005, 2006a, 2006b) has extended this kind of thinking in a specific consideration of the role of power and difference in the South African clinical exchange: "the power between us never lies still" (2006a, p. 440). She commented that there is no easy moment of meeting with the other and that encounters across the divides in South Africa are extremely hard to bear (2005). She noted the traumatic impact of being named and of fixed identities, but suggested that in a clinical sense naming can often be an entry point and not a barrier. She concluded that we have no choice but to inhabit our subjectivity, but that by empathy, which is an act of the imagination, we are able to achieve a resonance of a likeness that can be a point of departure. True mutuality is thus achievable through some sort of process of recognition.

S. Swartz (2005) noted that what South Africa is sometimes thought to contribute to the development of international theory is the exotic concept of the "Native" or "African" mind. There is a long history of this in psychoanalysis, and it is relevant to the present study in that it indicates an attempt at describing something about an unknown (different) group of people. Maiello (1998), citing Freud (1921) and Jones (1924), reminded us that "in psychoanalytic thinking, the interest in ethology and anthropology derived initially from the wish to explore the 'archaic layers of the unconscious' for which the authors searched evidence in what they called 'primitive cultures'" (p. 16). Their objective was primarily that of a universal validation of the foundations of psychoanalytic theory. Western criteria became the yardstick for measuring mental health. In object relations theory, while interpersonal interaction did receive attention as one of the factors shaping internal worlds, cultural issues were not explicitly addressed. This is because psychoanalytic theory and practice was informed by clinical work with individuals in a shared Western cultural environment. The impact of cultural factors on both personality and theory formation,

Maiello (1998) maintained, is still a relatively neglected area in psychoanalytic discussion. The key question she raised is how Western psychoanalytic theory may need to undergo changes to become relevant in other cultural contexts, and how its practice "may have to adapt to reach patients with different cultural roots and become meaningful to them" (1998, p. 28).

Maiello (1998) cited Berenstein and Puget (1997), two authors writing in Argentina, where intercultural influences are prominent. These authors wrote of three dimensions of subjectivity in terms of an intrapsychic, an intersubjective and a trans-subjective level, the latter referring to the relations of an individual with the shared social environment. "The trans-subjective dimension", Maiello (1998) noted, "becomes a central issue whenever individuals belonging to different cultures meet" (p. 17):

> Although we try to understand universally shared life situations and the psychic processes that underlie and accompany them, we must be alert to cultural aspects of both our own theoretical and methodological approach, and of differences in the forms of expression of psychic distress. (1998, p. 17)

Maiello (1998) cited L. Swartz (1996), who pointed out that in South Africa the notion of cultural difference has historically been synonymous with white supremacy, and that the universalist view of social phenomena that was meant to overcome apartheid ideology in past years contributed to the denial of profound cultural differences existing between ethnic groups.

K. Gibson (2002b) noted that in a long history in South Africa of using psychoanalytic ideas, Sachs's *Black Hamlet* (1937) is an early representative. Sachs was a Lithuanian psychoanalyst who trained in Europe and England, and settled in Johannesburg in 1922 (Dubow, 1996). He had a flourishing medical practice, but his pioneering spirit outran the conventions of a bourgeois existence. He became a pioneer of psychoanalysis in South Africa, becoming its first training analyst. Over a period of two and a half years Sachs "analysed" a Manyika healer-diviner (John Chavafambira), using the technique of free association. Chavafambira lived a precarious existence in the townships of Sophiatown and Orlando, and the "slumyards" of Doornfontein (Dubow, 1996). Sachs was interested in investigating whether Freudian psychoanalytic theory was applicable across different cultures. He became increasingly absorbed, however, by the psychological techniques employed in African traditional medicine.

This case study, which is essentially an early example of a pseudo-analysis in South Africa, is relevant to the present study in that it documents early cross-cultural contact within the framework of a psychoanalytic understanding. It can be seen as an ethnographic endeavour and a kind of observation (unusually, Sachs went into the subject's home). Sachs's study did not particularly aim at capturing cultural data about his subject in the respectful terms that postmodern ethnographers advocate. Rather, in the light of S. Swartz's (2005) comments, his aim was to ascertain how the "Native Mind" worked - specifically, whether it worked in the same way as the Western mind, or not. The issues that Sachs's study throws up, some nearly 60 years prior to the infant observation process that will be described here, are still resonant. Both studies represent, in retrospect, an attempt at coming to grips with the mental life of a proximal but unknown culture. It is telling that the same problems (and more) are still in evidence half a century later, and that so few cross-cultural studies of this nature lie between these two.

Sachs's study provides interesting points of comparison with the present one. Sachs studied a man living in poverty in segregationist South Africa, and he noted many aspects of Chavafambira's life and customs. His involvement with his subject was more than was traditionally advocated by the psychoanalytic framework of the time; these boundary-breaks included interventions in the subject's life and interviews with his associates. Sachs claimed that there were no therapeutic aims to the project, and no money changed hands. Instead, he framed his endeavour as an interchange in knowledge "in an atmosphere of friendliness and mutual interest" (Sachs, 1937, p. 74). As Dubow (1996) pointed out, it was in fact impossible to meet on a truly equal basis. Sachs (1937) claimed to record Chavafambira's story "unaltered in its essence" (p. 75), but wrote it in "standard" English as opposed to the broken English Chavafambira used. Sachs and Chavafambira had an "intriguing but fraught collaboration" (Dubow, 1996). Dubow (1996) also commented on the way the analytic situation invested Sachs with an enormous amount of power over Chavafambira.

What the two studies also share is a focus on methodology: what happens when we try to use a proven Western technique in Africa, and what does it tell us about the subjects it is used on? Sachs's great discovery was that the "native" thinks like us. His excitement at the time was fuelled by a liberal, humanistic stance, but can retrospectively be seen as another instance of racism that studied indigenous peoples like animal species. To some extent, it can be argued that this dynamic also exists in the present study, and that it testifies to the intractable power relations which had their origin in colonial times, and have since become entrenched and exacerbated by apartheid. However, Sachs also underwent a degree of change through his study. He was enriched by the contact (a contact which was very rare in his day). From his somewhat racist point of departure, and in an age where customary segregation would fast become law, Sachs's own political consciousness developed (Dubow, 1996). Dubow (1996) commented on Sachs's editorial changes between the first and second publications of the study. They indicate an increasing measure of respect and acceptance. For example, in the second version Sachs immediately refers to Chavafambira by his surname instead of calling him "John".

The differences between the two studies are also revealing, and speak about the socio-political and economic effects of the intervening apartheid era. Pure psychoanalysis has not been used much in community settings, as described in Chapter Three. "Community psychology" is, of course, a new concept that has come into being since Sachs's day, denoting an area of psychology that often deals with tremendous need, and warranting a particular approach that may use psychodynamic concepts, but cannot rely solely on techniques such as psychoanalysis. Therefore a modern South African practitioner or researcher in this area may not make the same assumption Sachs did, namely that psychoanalysis can be transported wholesale "to the colonies". In this sense the analogy with a canonical text such as *Hamlet* is itself very revealing (E. Hees, personal communication, June 25, 2007).

The present dissertation argues for flexibility and the development of the infant observation technique in an interdisciplinary way. There are several examples, both local and international, of informal "urban anthropology" projects that use visual means such as photography. Broadly speaking, such photographic essays, which are art, can also be seen as a kind of visual anthropology. They are often photographs of the ordinary, local or mundane. Yet they provide a deeper engagement with and understanding of what is being seen. There are interesting parallels between these photographic projects and the possible study of poverty, culture and race by means of infant

observation in South Africa. For example, in his book *Jo'burg*, photographer Guy Tillim spent several months, in the city's oldest block of flats, documenting life in the area of Joubert Park: "He rented a flat on Plein Street and moved into a place where most white people only end up if they get lost while driving through the city" (Hogg, 2005, p. 1). He observed prime areas that had become more like ghettoes, inhabited by people whose only option was to live close to their employment. Tillim said that in entering these ghettoes "there were a couple of scary moments, but nothing to write home about" (Hogg, 2005, p. 2). Hogg (2005) described Tillim meeting a tenant who showed him around so that he could tell people what he wanted to do:

> The response was varied, with many dead ends, and he was often turned away. Some accepted his motives, others wanted an opinion of their lot. It took time and it took patience. His approach was low-key. He used a camera on a tripod, with a bit of distance, in gloomy enclaves and, at times, over a shared quart of beer, which resulted in this gently photographed essay of living on edge in the city. (p. 1)

Tillim said that some might regard his approach as intrusive, but "considering the hardships these people suffer, a wandering photographer is a benign interloper" (Hogg, 2005, p. 1). These were photographs of the ordinary, and Tillim purposefully avoided waiting for "iconic moments" or obvious ways of looking at people in poverty, instead letting "the environment speak for itself" (Hogg, 2005, pp. 1-2) Hogg (2005) noted that Tillim's aim was not do a portrait of the whole city, but to narrow the focus. Hogg (2005) pointed out that, while the *Jo'burg* photographs at times appear simple, the issues and solutions are not. Tillim held that his project helped to expand visual vocabulary - that we have become more articulate as image-makers. At the same time, viewers have also become more articulate. The project was described as "looking towards the inner city and coming out with a book" (Hogg, 2005, p. 3). The book was modest in size, but unusual in form - large foldout images, with what little text there was, at the back, and with thumbnails and captions:

> It opens with a view of a darkly clouded skyline, looking towards Hillbrow, showing rooftops and the facades of buildings, then ventures inside to show that there are indeed people living there. Living in the most dire conditions, but allowing Tillim in to view and record…Tillim's approach to his subjects and their acceptance of him is evident, with pictures showing people in bed, their hopes, dreams and memories pasted erratically on the walls. Shebeen scenes, a card game, nothing raucous, just ordinary people waiting for a bit of certainty in life. (Hogg, 2005, pp. 2-3)

As in any new development, a South African infant observer who embraces previously neglected aspects of her observation may be called upon, like Tillim, to use creative ways of conveying her and others' experience.

4.5 Conclusion and key terms

Psychoanalysis offers a deeper way of considering ethnographic data, because of its ability to interpret the unconscious. By contrast, anthropological observations have been described by some as by their very nature rather atheoretical. The argument here has not been for an ethnographic lens instead of a psychoanalytic one, or vice versa, but for the enrichment of the one by the other. A postmodern psychoanalysis better equips us to investigate the relational aspects of any ethnographic study, using the tool of the unconscious. On the other hand, postmodern ethnography increases our tools for thinking about power in the anthropological space. It also lends a spirit of innovation, creativity and possibility.

In overview, contemporary ethnography has thoroughly operationalised postmodern ideas. It has grappled with the issue of subjectivity, and how that shapes what and how we write about "culture". Culture has been unmasked as a construction from a particular perspective. The concept of thick description urges us to think about observed behaviour as linked to a particular context, and to think about what meaning behaviour might have for the participant, rather than for the ethnographer who is describing what she sees from an outsider's position. This seems an important dictum when one sets out to assess needs in a community in order to empower. It has been shown that it is vital to consider power dynamics in community work, and postmodern ethnographers have done this in their contact with unknown communities. Concerns with practitioner reflexivity and subjectivity in postmodern ethnography also dovetail with the intersubjective focus delineated in Chapter Two. The postmodern ethnographic paradigm creates a platform from which I will critique the traditional practice of infant observation, which has not always engaged with these salient issues (see Chapter Five).

Ethnographic research has many tools, some of which have been subsumed into the practice of community psychology, such as fieldwork, participant observation and the single case study. A further area of overlap is psychoanalysis's extensive use of the single case study. These methods will be discussed as relevant ethnographic and psychoanalytic contributions to the methods of the present study in Chapter Six.

CHAPTER FIVE: Psychoanalytic infant observation

5.1 Introduction

In this chapter infant observation will be considered in terms of its history, basic tenets and new developments, including the role it has played in South Africa to date. The goal is to consider how it has developed since its inception, but also to argue that as a method it possesses potential that could still be developed further for use in new South African contexts. Any theory opens some aspects up and limits others. Reid (1997a) referred to the "limitless source of ideas" that infant observation provides (p. x). Its drawbacks could be said to have arisen out of its origins. In this chapter there will be an emphasis both on the potential of infant observation as well as a social constructionist critique of infant observation theory and practice.

The very rich literature on infant observation spans more than 40 years. Two traditions can be discerned in this field to date. The first most formal concept of the procedure came out of the Tavistock Clinic and was devised as a training tool. A review of this literature reveals published accounts that are full of detailed descriptions of mother and infant behaviour. The potential to describe wider phenomena in new kinds of contexts has not been fulfilled, however, because historically this form of infant observation focused on training. I will argue that the more classical model in fact blinds us to certain important issues, such as how power and subjectivity operate in observation. More recently, there have been some new developments in the field that are about using observation in more active, participatory ways. These developments suggest that infant observation has the potential to a) contribute a felt experience of a community's difficulties; b) reveal more about community needs; c) make conscious that which is unknown, unspoken, unexpected, or hidden, and that cannot be planned for or anticipated in community work; and d) provide cultural information.

While it has at times been likened to ethnographic study, infant observation has not explicitly been used to date to find out more about a group of people in an ethnographic sense. It will be shown here that infant observation has recently begun to focus tentatively on the social world, at times moving away from the dyad. This development can be extended. My argument is that a dialectic between psychodynamic community psychology, postmodern ethnography and psychoanalytic infant observation can lead to a deeper consideration of culture, poverty and difference in South African community work. This chapter presents the core of my argument and therefore I have tried to be comprehensive in my discussion of the literature.

5.2 A concise history of infant observation

There has been a volume devoted entirely to exploring observation in history and literature in *The International Journal of Infant Observation and its Applications* [(6)3; 2002]. Piontelli (1992) noted that Darwin published the first careful observation of an infant (his son, Doddy) in 1877, and Preyer, who initiated foetal studies, conducted a study on his son in 1882. Initially, then, infant observation was pursued as a way of gaining knowledge about humans. Observational accounts of children have done much for the growth of psychoanalysis. Conversely, it can be said that an observational stance by early analysts led to the development of more formal infant observation

practice. Freud (1920) observed his grandson playing (the "fort-da" game) and produced accounts of children's behaviour such as that of Little Hans (1909). Klein's observation of her own and other people's children (see, for example, 1932, 1952) are thought to have led to her revolutionary amplifications of psychoanalytic theory, and brought the woman's dimension into psychoanalytic theory and practice (L. Miller et al., 1997). In 1941 Winnicott noted that he had been observing infants in his clinic for twenty years. His *Piggle* (1977) recorded the psychoanalytic treatment of a little girl in narrative form, including dialogue. These theorists made careful records of how particular children behaved in case studies in order to advance both the theory and practice of psychoanalysis.

5.2.1 Traditional infant observation

The Tavistock Clinic pioneered the practice of infant observation when the child analyst Esther Bick first formally introduced it in 1948 as part of the training course she developed for child psychotherapists in the post-war period (A. Briggs, 2002; S. Miller, 1997). Later Martha Harris, her student, carried on Bick's work in the field of observation and also became one of its leading proponents (Covington, 1991). In the development of the most traditional form of the infant observation procedure, we can see two parallel concerns, namely an interest in studying infants and a concomitant interest in doing this in order to train psychoanalysts. Bick (1964) originally described infant observation as a way to help students "conceive vividly the infantile experience of their child patients" (p. 558). Recognition of infant mental functioning was central to this. S. Miller (1997) pointed out that Bick was influenced by Klein's view that object relations and an inner world begin from birth, that babies have greater capacities than originally thought, and that early infancy is crucial to later development. Klein supervised Bick's first child case and was also her analyst (A. Briggs, 2002). We can detect here a strong theoretical basis for Bick's idea that the infant is interesting to observe. In Bick's account we can see a desire to increase students' knowledge of how infants operate; she referred to the observation as a chance for students to gain "some practical experience of infants" (1964, p. 558). Bick (1964) stated that observation was meant to increase students' understanding of non-verbal behaviour and play, and of the mother's account of the child's history. The development of the child in the home was observed in relation to the family, as a learning experience, and compared to observations in other families via seminar groups. In this way individual differences, also in infant and parent temperament, could be noted (Harris, 1976).

This emphasis on training represents a shift from the research perspective pursued outside the Tavistock before 1948. Authors who described Bick's innovation as a way of learning something about the infant all made it clear that from the first she tied this kind of knowledge explicitly to the purpose of training (S. Miller, 1997; Reid, 1997a). Infant observation, Bick (1964) stated clearly, was "planned as an adjunct to the teaching of psychoanalysis and child therapy, rather than as a research instrument" (p. 558). Piontelli, who was supervised by Bick between 1975 and 1982, remembered that "research was not her main concern" (A. Briggs & Piontelli, 2006, p. 201). Hence the focus was from the first on increasing the understanding of clinicians who would be working with children. Later the method was also used in the training of adult psychotherapists (L. Miller et al., 1989; S. Miller, 1997). This represents a third shift, albeit a subtle one. S. Miller (1997) held that adult therapists could better understand the "child in the adult" when they studied infant observation (p. 166). Implicit here is the idea that the focus is not

so much on increasing one's knowledge of infantile life, but of recognising and learning to bear (in the sense of tolerate) infantile states in adult clients. Harris (1976) made explicit links about this in a way that Bick did not. Eventually, infant observation became a way of assisting in the development of an analytic attitude more generally (Covington, 1991). Bick (1964) had paved the way by pointing out that, in conjunction with clinical experience, infant observation could convince students "of the importance of observing patients' overall behaviour as part of the data of the analytic situation" (p. 566). Later, young child observation was introduced, in which a child between the ages of 2 and 5 is observed, either in the family or in day care (Fawcett, 1996; L. Miller et al., 1997). It was felt that there were particular developmental achievements (such as separating from parents and acquiring language) that would be of interest to observers.

In overview, infant observation has always been thought of as a useful method for learning about infants, but it explicitly became a tool for training, first for child therapists and then for all psychotherapists, in the 1940s. Below, the basic tenets of the classical Tavistock infant observation module will be described. Bick's most stringent recommendations will be noted, as well as the way in which there have been slight shifts in the more recent practice of observation. However, at the Tavistock and other psychoanalytic institutions, infant observation for training purposes is still based on Bick's model. Thus this procedure forms a kind of "gold standard" or "classical" form of infant observation (S. Miller, 1997, p. 165) with which more radical recent developments and applications in the field can be compared.

5.2.1.1 The "classical" Tavistock procedure: A description

5.2.1.1.1 The observations

Bick's (1964) original paper describing the method of psychoanalytic infant observation noted that it had in fact been refined over some years. As she described it, students are asked to make arrangements to visit a family in their home once a week up to about the end of the second year of the child's life, each observation normally lasting about an hour. Bick (1964) noted that some training observations end after the first year. Students leave their offices in a form of fieldwork, and Bick has been called a "naturalist" as a result (Waddell, 2006, p. 1105). Possibly through trial and error, it was thought best to give a simple explanation of the observation's purpose to parents; something such as the observer wanting to have some direct experience of babies as part of her professional development (Bick, 1964). Note-taking during sessions was dispensed with, as it was felt to interfere with the observer's free-floating attention and, interestingly, "prevented the student from responding easily to the emotional demands of the mother" (Bick, 1964, p. 558). By this was meant that the student had to be able to register the emotions (or the internal states) arising during the observation (Piontelli, 1992). From Bick's comment it also seems that from the first there was some recognition of the potentially beneficial effect of infant observation on participants, and implicitly that this could create quite a challenging situation for the observer.

The observer's attention in the classical form of infant observation is focused primarily on the infant within the nursing dyad. M.J. Rustin (1989) noted that "the intention is in the first instance to study the interaction of mother and baby as a whole, around the normal occasions and circumstances in which it occurs" (p. 54). The natural

setting is felt to be important: "Mothers are encouraged to make as little adaptation to their routine as possible…The observations seek to follow the natural development of an infant over time, and in its normal domestic surroundings" (M.J. Rustin, 1989, pp. 53-54). Observers record afterwards, in as much detail as possible and as soon after the observation as they can, what they have observed (M.E. Rustin, 1989). Recent authors from the Tavistock added that, as far as possible, the hourly visits are on the same day every week (Henry, 1984) and at the same time of day (Reid, 1997b). The regularity of the meeting time and the predictable framework are meant to convey respect for the family unit; the observer tries to behave in a considerate and thought-through way (M.E. Rustin, 1989). This is not an attempt to simulate clinical conditions (M.E. Rustin, 1989), but the parallel with a psychoanalytic framework does exist, and is certainly partly responsible for the way in which this procedure can potentially create a containing environment.

The role of the observer, Bick (1964) noted, initially had to be given much thought; in fact this was described as a "central problem" (p. 558). Being in the home with a new baby was bound, Bick (1964) noted, to have an intense emotional impact, intensified by projections from members of the family. Here the difficult question of objectivity/subjectivity in observation procedures is seen to arise for the first time in a written account. Bick (1964) claimed that the observer had to straddle a delicate divide: she needed to feel sufficiently inside the family to experience its emotional impact, but not committed to act out roles thrust upon her, such as giving advice or registering approval or disapproval. Being basically "helpful" as situations arose (holding the baby, bringing a gift) was not excluded. "In other words," she said, "he (*sic*) would be a privileged and therefore grateful participant observer" (Bick, 1964, p. 558). This is the first time the concept of participant observation was used in the infant observation literature. In order to observe, Bick (1964) held that the observer had to, and indeed that it was possible to, "attain detachment from what is going on" (p. 559). While the observer was clearly not uninvolved, getting *too* involved could result in the tensions of the situation "dominating" and "invading" the observer, especially in situations where childcare was inadequate (Bick, 1964, p. 559). Ultimately, it was stated that the goal of observations was to be more "objective" than familial accounts of an infant might be (Bick, 1964, p. 559).

Closely linked to this issue of role, Bick (1964) introduced the issue of the observer's personhood, noting that her conscious and unconscious attitudes were also problematic. The observer was bound to have her own "internal conflicts" (Bick, 1964, p. 559). The pervasive impact of her own personality, positioning and history were not overtly considered, however. Bick (1964) recommended that the observer "find a position that will introduce as little distortion as possible into what is going on in the family" (p. 559). In other words, she suggested that the observer could guard against affecting the family too much, and changing what was being observed. It was recommended that the observer resist actively establishing her own personality as a new addition to the family organisation. Rather, it was felt that the parents, particularly the mother, needed to find her own way to fit the observer into the household in some way. Twenty years later Henry (1984), also writing from the Tavistock, framed the subjective element in infant observation as an "unavoidable interference" which needed to be minimised (pp. 155-156). M.J. Rustin (1989), writing more recently from the Tavistock, conceded that the presence of the observer had to have some significance for the family; she could not be ignored altogether. He emphasised, however, that feelings evoked in the family by the observer only become a feature in some, and not all, observation

accounts. A perusal of the literature shows that the strength of responses to the observer can vary, depending on the needs, defensive style and emotional make-up of the family.

Ideally the observer, after initially being unknown to the family, meets both parents before the baby is born (Reid, 1997b). The family is found through an intermediary agent or network such as a general practitioner, gynaecologist or health visitor (Henry, 1984). In this sense random assignation of the family occurs, in that the observer does not interview or choose subjects. The intermediary in effect proposes them, and the first family that agrees to the observation participates. In this there is an element of self-selection (M.J. Rustin, 1989). A telephone call and visit from the observer normally follows. At this point some families change their minds. In fact, the observation process is more or less constantly under threat, because it relies on the willingness of the parent/s to continue with the contact. Some parents want feedback or to read the observation reports, which is discouraged. Sidoli (1983) recommended actively assessing the family's emotional stability and reliability (cited in Gering, 1994). In this way a degree of selection by the observer also occurs. Generally, there is an emphasis on observing an "ordinary child in an ordinary setting" (Youell, 1999). Infant observers look for "normal" families to observe (Covington, 1991, p. 74), for training and ethical reasons (M.J. Rustin, 1997). This concept will be problematised in my discussion. Henry (1984) used the unfortunate phrase "an observable baby" (p. 29). M.J. Rustin noted that, "while observers and seminar groups are aware of the potentially catastrophic effects on the development of infants of gross failure in early relationships, these are not usually major concerns in the observation of normal families" (M.J. Rustin, 1989, p. 60). Single-parent families or "families that show a high degree of disturbance" are not usually chosen on the grounds that it would place too great a strain on the observer and the viability of conducting an observation (Covington, 1991, p. 74). For this reason infant observation has traditionally avoided extreme situations of poverty and the potential relationship failures associated with this.

Infant observation, like all psychoanalytic technique, considers unconscious communication to be central. "In silence, with no recourse to challenge or question", the observer becomes a reservoir which absorbs a multiplicity of projections (Winship, 2000, p. 554). In other words, projective processes are thought to be as prevalent in an observation setting as in a clinical one. The observer is, however, less of a presence than in a therapy process, because she cannot use interpretation to work with projections (M.E. Rustin, 1989). In psychoanalytic thinking, processes such as projective identification are generally thought to mediate understanding and communication rather than to impede it (Winship, 2000). In the same vein, because psychoanalytic observation methods are closely related to, and have been developed from, the clinical method of psychoanalysis, "the central tool is an intimate, one-to-one personal contact whose transactions are subjected to self-reflective thought of as meticulous a nature as possible" (M.J. Rustin, 1989, p. 54).

The centrality of empathy and emotion in the infant observation technique is repeatedly asserted in recent texts (see, for example, A. Briggs, 2002; Layou-Lignos, 1997; L. Miller et al., 1989, Piontelli, 1992). M.J. Rustin (1989) held that "the primary contribution of psychoanalytic observation to the understanding of children lies in its sensitivity to (the emotional) dimension of experience, on which so much else depends" (p. 75). Therefore the subjective experience of the observer is thought to be a tool for considering what is being seen more deeply. However, Piontelli remembered that in the most traditional version of the model, counter-transference phenomena

were not that central: "[Bick] wanted facts to speak for themselves and did not want the observer to charge facts with too much personal meaning" (A. Briggs & Piontelli, 2006, p. 202). Renton, who was also supervised by Bick, thought that Bick was implicitly interested in the observer's experience, but did not call it counter-transference (M. Renton, personal communication, January 30, 2007). By 1989 L. Miller asserted that "emotions aroused in the observer are important, and should not be regarded as 'a distraction or contaminant' but rather 'an indispensable tool to be used in the service of greater understanding'" (quoted in McFadyen, 1991, p. 10). McFadyen (1991) concluded that nowadays "feelings stirred up in the observer [are] regarded as important and relevant data as is the counter-transference in therapy" (p. 11).

The nature of infant observation is that it requires considerable commitment from both observer and family (Covington, 1991; Reid 1997b). It is possible that the collaborative nature of the enterprise contributes to the bond that is established. Strong attachments can form (Piontelli, 1992). Gering (1994) pointed out that people's homes are an intimate space, especially at the time of a new baby's arrival. She quoted Shuttleworth (1989), saying that "watching the feeding, bathing, holding and total responses of a mother to her new infant takes the observer to some of the most vulnerable moments in the lives of them both" (p. 31). S. Miller (1997) and M.E. Rustin (1989) pointed out that many observers worry initially that the family will find the visits intrusive. Despite this widespread concern, the classical observation procedure was described as "non-intrusive" (Henry, 1984, p. 155) and also "non-interventionist" (S. Miller, 1997, p. 165). Apparently Bick taught observers to avoid direct questioning; waiting for mothers to volunteer whatever information they wanted to (Piontelli, 1992). However, M.E. Rustin (1989) described the observation stance not as passive, but as a mode of receptive listening.

Thus far, it has been demonstrated that certain prescriptions have historically come out of the Tavistock about who observes and who is observed, what the observation should focus on, where observations typically take place and how they are to be conducted. Implicitly, observation was initially seen as the prerogative of analysts-in-training, rather than sociologists or other researchers, although there is some current debate about this. Observation subjects who were very different from the observer or some "norm" (poor, black, sick, unmarried, pathological, or simply "other") were effectively excluded. Observation occurred in middle-class homes where social and economic stresses were limited. The dyad, and specifically the baby, was felt to be the central focus. Wider observation of the environment, the observer, the infant observation seminar, or the seminar leader, was not a central theme. It was felt that observation could occur by unobtrusively sitting and watching the baby. By watching, as Geertz (Olson, 1991) put it, from the moon in this way, it was assumed that one could capture the baby's feelings, which existed in a world unmediated by the observer's presence. These principles will also be seen to exist in the prescriptions regarding the reports and seminars, discussed below. These gaps and limitations in the more traditional model of observation are, however, potential sites for new development.

5.2.1.1.2 The reports

Observations are presented descriptively in reports (M.J. Rustin, 1989). **Addendum B** contains an example of a standard infant observation report. Bick apparently gave clear prescriptions about the use of words in write-ups, and their elaboration and discussion in seminar groups, namely "just stick to facts" (A. Briggs & Piontelli, 2006, p.

203) - in other words, observable events. M.J. Rustin (1989) held that we are able to make and record observations in "everyday language, close to the immediate realities of the situation" (p. 52). Theoretical interpretations and categories are to be kept out of the reports: "Making and writing up observations is separated as far as possible from the later consideration of how they might be interpreted in more abstract terms" (M.J. Rustin, 1989, p. 52). In this way, it was felt that "the experience and evidence" could be made "directly available" to the supervisory seminar in which the observations are discussed (M.J. Rustin, 1989, p. 52).

M.J. Rustin (1989) held that the most useful reports are those that provide accounts of the baby's activity, records of conversation, and other transactions in the home. Observation reports do not focus in a central way on family or community dynamics unrelated to the baby, or on the personhood of the observer: "Inferences, speculations, and [students'] own personal reactions usually are not part of the recorded material" (M.E. Rustin, 1989, p. 7). Because of the injunction to observe the baby, traditional infant observation accounts do not dwell on details of physical, social, political and economic context. Even so, M.E. Rustin recently suggested that such perceptions must implicitly be a part of every observation undertaken (M.E. Rustin, personal communication, February 7, 2007).

Bick apparently insisted on very detailed, verbatim written observations for newly qualified or experienced colleagues alike (A. Briggs, 2002). The accounts that result typically constitute very rich material. The observer's interest in the minute details of physical movements, which is noticeable in many reports, is due to the holistic view of the links between mental and physical development from an early age (M.E. Rustin, 1989). Subtle and delicate representations of emotional and mental states can result (M.E. Rustin, 1989). Apparently Bick paid great attention to moment-to-moment interactions and sequences; "in this sense she wanted an analytic session or an infant observation to be photographed carefully" (A. Briggs & Piontelli, 2006, p. 201).

The fact that notes are taken after observations is felt to avoid interfering with the spontaneity of the interchanges (Piontelli, 1992). Reid (1997b) pointed out that the delayed making of notes parallels psychoanalytic technique. Referring to young child observation, Brenner (1992) spoke of recording the observations in writing as an opportunity for the observer and the child to have "a private visit" which enables the deepening of their ongoing relationship (quoted in Adamo & Magagna, 1998).

Although the practice and expansion of infant observation has produced "thousands" of observations (Reid, 1997b, p. 8), reports have not traditionally been used for any purpose other than consideration in seminars, inclusion in students' essays on their observations and, on occasion, publication.

5.2.1.1.3 The seminars

All infant observers meet weekly, mostly for an hour and a half, for mandatory group supervision. The seminars run concomitantly with the entire observation process. The origins of these seminars were in Bick's classes at the Tavistock. A group format is preferred for reasons of comparison between observations. Typically, the seminar comprises about five members and a seminar leader (S. Miller, 1997). Students in the seminar group take turns to present their most recent observation, by reading it out aloud. Photocopies of the report are distributed so that

everyone can read along. Discussion, led by the seminar leader, follows. M.E. Rustin (1989) stated that the seminars explore, on the basis of the available evidence, the emotional events between infant and mother and the other members of the family present during observations. The aim is "to describe the development of the relationship between infant and others, including the observer" (M.E. Rustin, 1989, p. 7).

The presented observations are looked at closely to generate thoughts and ideas, and to take note of themes, such as infantile reactions to changes, separations and loss (M.E. Rustin, 1989). The observation seminar thus provides a space in which reflection on the material can occur over time. This longitudinal view is thought to test tentative hypotheses about how the infant's internal world and characteristic way of being in the external world are developing. If the observer's function is to record factual information about what occurred in a time sequence, then the seminar's task is to "support the free associations, ruminations and speculations of the observer and seminar members, to see what other dimensions remain to be discovered" (Reid, 1997b, p. 4). In other words, the more "unconscious aspects of behavior and patterns of communication" are entertained in seminars (M.E. Rustin, 1989, p. 7).

Like the reports, the seminars are thought to deepen reflective practice in the training student. Adamo and Magagna (1998) held that the seminar "provides the observer with a private space which enables her to fulfil the dual task of observing the child's interactions with the family as well as understanding the depth and complexity of unconscious processes elicited in her" (p. 22). In other words, this is a space in which the observer's subjective responses can be examined more fully and explanations for it found. Nowadays, difficult and confusing emotions arising out of observations are reflected on and processed so that they can be used as additional data (Canham, McFadyen & Youell, 1997). This also helps to contain anxieties that are often evoked in the observation process. In other words, a well-functioning seminar group may act as a "container" for the observer's experiences (Shuttleworth, 1989, quoted in McFadyen, 1991, p. 13). For example, the seminar can help the observer to negotiate difficult events in the observations, such as when there is a great deal of projection from the mother (Adamo & Magagna, 1998). The seminar can help the observer to "make her voice heard, even in the absence of an interpretative function and to find a way of responding to what [is] being communicated to her" (Adamo & Magagna, 1998, p. 22).

The seminar group provides ethical support in that peer consultation ensures protection for the observed family (S. Miller, 1997). Because several different babies are being discussed in turn, cultural and other differences between families could theoretically be highlighted (King, 2002). More latterly, it has been noted that the development of and dynamics in the seminar group can parallel that of the infant observation process itself (Emanuel, 1997; Sternberg, 1998; Wittenberg, 1997). Like any group, it has a nature and task that needs to be defined over time (Bion, 1961). Yet it should be noted that in the most traditional form of observation, such group counter-transference effects were not focused on.

Bick's approach in seminar was intuitive and introspective, to the point that "her conclusions appeared as groundless, hanging by mid-air by threads of conviction" (Meltzer, 2002, p. xvi). A student who was in her class noted that Bick would savour what she heard, visibly think about it, and give her opinion in very carefully chosen, vivid words (A. Briggs, 2002, p. xxviii). Typically, she would interrupt the observer who was reading her report

aloud in order to ask questions, searching to find out more detail in particular scenarios (A. Briggs, 2002). According to some students, she had an extremely dogmatic approach:

> Esther Bick was very convinced of her own views, and in her seminars students were not encouraged to have their own associations to the material presented. Indeed, those who tried did not meet with a good reception by her. (A. Briggs, 2002, p. xxvii)

Renton felt that Bick "did not tolerate fools easily" (M. Renton, personal communication, January 30, 2007) and Piontelli's description of her experience of Bick as a supervisor suggest someone with innovative ideas and a character strong enough to withstand criticism about them (A. Briggs & Piontelli, 2006).

In overview, it can be seen that clear prescriptions have also existed for what happens to observation material. It is written up "factually" and analysed as little as possible before the seminars. Underlying these procedures is a positivist assumption that it is possible to objectively observe an untheorised baby. Resultant observation reports are primarily employed as a record for discussion, but publication of these accounts also occurs.

5.2.2 The traditional functions of infant observation

As has been described, the most fundamental use of infant observation was as a training tool. Today, both infant and child observation modules are part of the training of all child psychotherapists in the United Kingdom (S. Miller, 1997). In other countries, the observation course model has been used in varying forms (M.E. Rustin, 1999). Predominantly, it has become a well-established method in psychoanalytic and psychodynamic psychotherapy trainings (M.J. Rustin, 1997). In South Africa infant observation is a supplementary exercise: post-qualification, psychologists and other professionals like social workers, physiotherapists and nurses, may undertake an observation course in order to enhance their understanding and/or psychodynamic practice.

5.2.2.1 Another kind of learning

Observation is thought to be a pragmatic method of learning that is the opposite of the reading of texts. It is a way to use experience for learning, instead of trying to apply theory to what one sees (Reid, 1997b). Infants are observed, not in order to find empirical proof for hypotheses, but in order to work from the particular to the general (L. Miller, 1989). The focus is on the impact of the experience and description itself, "setting aside background knowledge and theories about babies" (L. Miller, 1989). This renders it useful for producing what Geertz (1973) has called, in an ethnographic sense, experience-near accounts of human behaviour. While this is not a term that practitioners in the field of infant observation use explicitly, some do refer to "thick description" (M.J. Rustin, 1997, p. 100).

M.E. Rustin (1989) described how a form of knowledge imbued with emotional depth develops, after Bion's learning from experience (1961). She contrasted "learning about", which is the result of an intellectual activity, with the notion of "knowing" (p. 8). The procedure of weekly observation, written record-keeping and regular presentation and discussion is said to enable the observer to *think* about the development of the baby and mother

over the year. Infant observation results in a kind of knowing that is established over time, akin to the lengthy process of really getting to know someone (Covington, 1991).

The observing student tunes in to unconscious, non-verbal communications about the person being observed (Harris, 1976). As touched on, practitioners after Bick soon noted that this involves *both* transference and counter-transference phenomena, and they felt that in this way infant observation can give the training therapist valuable experience of these (Harris, 1976). Sensitivity to infant modes of communication develops, which is useful for work with silent, psychosomatic and very young patients (Harris, 1976; M.E. Rustin, 1989), and particularly in cases of emotional damage or deprivation (L. Miller, 1989). Bick (1964) has said that infant observation can increase our understanding of the behaviour of the child "who never speaks or plays" (quoted in Pozzi, 2003, p. 1333). Ultimately, infant observation teaches us to find more meaning in behaviour, and to read between the lines where meanings seem obscure.

5.2.2.2 The content of the new knowledge

Through the process of observation, extensive knowledge develops about a particular mother and baby couple (M.J. Rustin, 1989). Since its inception, the implicit idea of infant observation as providing substantial knowledge about children has taken on a life of its own and has sometimes been referred to somewhat independently of its training roots. For example, in 1975 Harris wrote a book aimed at new parents that drew on infant observation in order to discuss the first year of life, address parents' concerns, and increase their theoretical understanding of how the infant functions. Because the setting provides a degree of intimacy, observers are exposed to a new level of perception of human relationships – both disturbing and exciting (Reid, 1997b). The information produced will be very detailed but also specific to that particular dyad. At the same time, the study of babies and young children is thought to be revealing of human relationships in general (Copley & Forryan, 1987). The question has therefore arisen, from a research perspective, whether this information can be generalised in the development of theories about humans.

5.2.2.3 The skills of the observer

As indicated, Bick (1964) asserted that infant observation teaches therapeutic skills. Where infant observation is presented on non-clinical courses, it is often framed as a way for the student who is thinking of training to get a feel of whether she would enjoy or even be able to do analytic work with patients. This was the case in the M16 course I completed in 2002. Covington (1991) held that the most comprehensive statement concerning the contribution of infant observation to training could be found in Harris's (1976) paper. More recently, Sternberg (2005) has published detailed research in this field. Among the aspects Harris (1976) commented on was the value of learning that the thoughtful presence of the observer can be of considerable benefit of itself. It has also been asserted that such training teaches the practitioner to suspend judgement (Harris, 1976; S. Miller, 1997). Harris (1976) made explicit links about the way in which observing can help to develop the trainee's analytic attitude (defined in Chapter Two). She stated that the analyst is exposed to uncertainty, confusion and anxiety "when bombarded at close quarters by the emotional experience of another person, as a mother is bombarded by the emotional state of

the infant" (1976, p. 226). She noted that the observer looks closely and waits, trying to suspend action, thereby creating the kind of "negative capability" (1976, p. 227) that Bion spoke of, and which is thought to be core to psychoanalytic technique:

> The infant-observer attitude helps the aspiring analyst to take not only the words, but also the details of the patient's total demeanour and behaviour into account: to read between the words and to discern the nature of the experience which is being conveyed or avoided. It can help him (*sic*) to wait until he gathers from his own response to the patient some intuition of what may be happening. If he cannot bear this period of uncertainty and confusion he is likely to pre-empt the emergence of the emotional experience in the patient by explaining it first. (Harris, 1976, pp. 229 -230)

Infant observation is thought to allow the training clinician to come into contact with the considerable force of primitive anxieties, sometimes for the first time, and to learn to abstain from reassurance (M.E. Rustin, 1989). One of the central principles in psychodynamic therapy is this capacity for bearing pain through thinking (Shuttleworth, 1989). Covington (1991) said that in infant observation one is close enough to feel impact of the relationship, and yet one has to restrain "therapeutic zeal" (Harris, 1976, p. 227) and bear projections. McFadyen (1991) noted that observing without intervention is crucial in the development of clinical skills. In this way infant observation is thought to develop reflective practice (S. Briggs, 1999). The frame of mind of the observer is thought to be close to the free-floating attention recommended by Freud (Piontelli, 1992).

Covington (1991) held that witnessing change in the dyad allows the student to trust in the possibility of change in the absence of her own active part in it. The valuable lesson for psychotherapists here is that there is power in the unconscious transference/counter-transference dynamic that is at work in any treatment. Coll (2000) also made a list of reasons why infant observation is an invaluable training experience. Beyond those already discussed, he mentioned that it assists trainees to have a clearer understanding of parents' accounts of their child's early history, and gives a clear focus on the baby and family, thereby asserting the centrality of the client. Additional skills highlighted by Sternberg (2005) were processing through note-writing, using supervision space, and an awareness of multiple perspectives within families.

In conclusion, the literature that discusses the inception of infant observation is a solid one that contains valuable ideas. As a training tool, it is a remarkable way to gain experience-near knowledge about child development, human functioning, and relationships in general. It offers the psychotherapy student a practical experience of engaging with another person in a non-judgemental way that demands she tolerate uncertainty. However, infant observation clearly has the potential to be more than a training tool for psychotherapists. The ways in which infant observation has developed beyond its original use, and been applied in wider settings, will be considered below. Some of this more recent infant observation literature, most notably from the field of social work, has begun to engage with the complex issues arising out of this expansion. The review below will form a background for a detailed critique of infant observation at the end of this chapter.

5.3 Empirical infant observation

Over the last forty years the direct observation of infants has become a flourishing science in laboratory settings, as psychologists set out to prove hypotheses about human development by watching children closely (see, for example, the work of Brazelton, Koslowski & Main, 1974; Stern, 1974; Trevarthen, 1979). Developmental observation is a parallel tradition but quite separate from psychoanalytic infant observation in natural settings, and their purposes are different. Empirical observation explicitly aims at the production of testable, verifiable knowledge about how babies function in the world (Jacobson, 1993; M.J. Rustin, 1989). Psychoanalytic observation, as explained, was primarily developed as a training tool in which practitioners could learn to watch and wait, but also deepen their understanding of infants and the infant in the adult.

In the child study laboratory specific attributes of behaviour (for example, perceptual or cognitive skills) are selected for discrete study under rigorous conditions (M.J. Rustin, 1989). Psychoanalytic infant observation by comparison seeks to follow the natural development of an infant over time, without selecting predetermined areas of focus (M.J. Rustin, 1989). Observation procedures in laboratories are routinised and less dependent on subjective interpretation than psychoanalytic observations (M.J. Rustin, 1989). The two paradigms also represent a contrast between relatively public methods of observation and "the notably private and observer-dependent settings of the methods derived from psychoanalysis" (M.J. Rustin, 1989, p. 54).

The procedure in laboratories stands in contrast to psychoanalytic theory building, which initially developed out of clinical contact with adults (Jacobson, 1993). Psychoanalytic constructs such as drives, the ego and internal objects were inferred from developmental histories that unfolded in their "analytic version" in the transference (Jacobson, 1993, p. 527). Infant and child researchers have discovered surprising phenomena, such as the discriminatory capacities of neonates and infants (Brazelton, 1962). In this sense the psychoanalytic conception of the child, retrospectively constructed from clinical contact with adults, is challenged and at times supported by empirical work (Jacobson, 1993). For example, Jacobson (1993) noted that Winnicott's (1960) metaphor of the holding environment is supported by the concept of attunement as developed by Stern (1985). Other newer conceptualisations used to analyse caretaker-infant interactions include reciprocity, entrainment, and validation (Jacobson, 1993). Some of the well-known studies are the observation of social referencing responses in infants (Emde & Sorce, 1983) and experimental presentation by the mother of a "still-face" response to her infant's smile (Tronick et al., 1978, cited in Jacobson, 1993). The recorded catastrophic consequences of the still-face for infants led to evidence for the deleterious effects in the long-run of mothers who are consistently preoccupied or withdrawn due to depression, substance abuse or narcissistic preoccupation (Jacobson, 1993).

Piontelli (1992) held that the field of psychoanalytic observation has been enriched by the more structured observations of developmental psychologists. It can be argued that the idea of observation originated in the field of psychoanalysis and, as a principle, has informed the empirical study of infant development ever since. The hypotheses examined in developmental studies have, however, not been based on the observations of psychoanalysts (Piontelli, 1992). The two fields have been called complementary (Reid, 1997b; M.J. Rustin, 1998, 2002). Some authors have argued for a firmer distinction between them (S. Briggs, 2002), while others have

commented that there is at times an "overdrawn contrast" between experimentalists and psychoanalysts (Trevarthen, 1998, p. 110). Both have an interest in the emotional life of the baby and the mother, and the interaction between them. M.J. Rustin (1989) pointed out that attachment research, development studies and infant observation all agree on the significance of the intensity of care provided in the first months of life. Daniel Stern, a psychoanalyst and researcher in child development, is perhaps best known for the integration of these two fields (1977, 1985). The relevance of empirical observation for the present study is that it foreshadows psychoanalytic observation's potential for research.

5.4 Recent developments in infant observation

5.4.1 Background

While Bick's method was not always well known outside British psychoanalytic circles (Piontelli, 1992), the practice of infant observation has spread widely and rapidly over the past decade. It has been adopted for various uses by other professionals beyond psychotherapists all over the world, and is the subject of many academic studies (Reid, 1997b). There is a great deal of published observation material in existence, from a wide range of countries, including the United States, Russia, Europe, South America and South Africa. The extension of infant observation beyond its initial inception as a training tool has been ongoing for nearly thirty years (Reid, 1997b). Its development as a method has been a focal point since the first international conference at the Tavistock on infant observation (1993) and the first edition of the first journal on the subject (1997). *The International Journal of Infant Observation and its Applications* suggested by its title that its interest was in part in the broader uses for infant observation worldwide. It will be argued, however, that this initial promise has not yet been fully realised.

Some of the new uses and settings of infant observation will be considered below. What the practitioners in this "new wave" of observers have in common is a more active approach in which both participation and change are important. Observation is being used to support professionals, for clinical assessment and intervention, and as a tool specifically for research. These new developments begin to make use of some of the neglected potential of the method. They are open to experimenting with its forms, and considering that these forms may need to change in practical ways to realise their potential in new contexts.

5.4.2 Infant observation as a form of action

5.4.2.1 Participant observation in work discussion groups

In the 1970s infant observation became part of a course of wider observational studies for many other professionals besides psychotherapists (Reid, 1997b). Observation seemed to offer an understanding of internal infant life that was useful in enlarging and enriching the work of a variety of practitioners worldwide, including paediatricians (Berta & Torchia, 1998), child psychiatrists (Sorenson et al., 1997), social workers (King, 2002), nurses (Nhlapo, 1990) and teachers (S. Briggs & Ingall, 2005), among others. Part of this development has been the formation of work discussion seminars, also originating at the Tavistock, in which professionals from many avenues meet to

discuss participant "observations" of their own work settings, in order to think more deeply about what is going on and so to contain anxieties (Klauber, 1999; L. Miller, 2002). Inherent in this is the idea that observation offers a space for thinking about unconscious processes in any setting, including the workplace. This represents a shift away from training to a stance of "helping professionals to help others" by attending to their own containment in groups. Here a kind of "observation in role" occurs (S. Briggs & Ingall, 2005, p. 1) because the observer in her workplace is not just watching, but working too.

The concept of a participant observational approach has steadily gained ground in the infant observation literature. It offers a way to observe in a less passive capacity, as well as opening up possibilities for intervention. Work discussion was found to be an immensely supportive exercise, for example, for social workers in an adoption team who needed to support adoptive parents in building attachments with their children (Loader, 2002). Classroom assistants and teachers discussed difficult pupils and school counsellors presented on the therapeutic playgroups they were running (S. Briggs & Ingall, 2005). Thus observation has moved out into settings like the educational one. It is noteworthy that these observations also began to work with the less usual and perhaps more anxiety-provoking subjects traditionally avoided by infant observation, such as adopted children and children with behavioural difficulties.

5.4.2.2 Assessment

It can be argued that all assessments by psychodynamic psychologists rely on the clinician's ability to observe the child and family acutely and reflect deeply on what she sees. The cognitive and emotional development of a particular child can be sensitively assessed using infant observation, and this has been capitalised on. For example, Berta and Torchia (1998) showed how infant observation could assist in getting to the root of feeding difficulties when paediatrics could find no organic cause. In the arena of social work observation has played a role in risk assessments with families and young children (S. Briggs, 1999; S. Briggs & Canham, 1999). For example, observation has been used in assessments for court (Trowell, 1999) as well as to carefully consider the question of whether supervised contact should occur in families where there is ambiguity or uncertainty about child-protection issues (Mack, 1999). Therefore it can be said that infant observation has been used to date to assess the psychological health of individuals and the extent of the problems they may be experiencing as a result of social factors. Infant observation has not yet been used as a way to help assess the difficulties of a community as a whole. Some interesting work on observing groups points in this direction, however, and will thus be reviewed in this chapter.

5.4.2.3 Therapeutic benefit

As touched on, it has been found that the mere presence of the observer can play a therapeutic role in the family's life. M.E. Rustin (2002) maintained, after working therapeutically with a teenage mother, that it is worth considering whether providing regular observations to mother-baby couples in difficulty might not be a most helpful intervention in itself. Experiments using this methodology are underway in France and England: Houzel (1999) and Delion (2000) reported on teams of infant observers visiting severely at-risk mother-infant couples. This

represents the therapeutic application of "pure" infant observation in such fields as child psychiatry. Here, there are no adjustments or additions to the method. Observation occurs and is not discussed with parents. This is exciting work that suggests that any observation, when thoughtfully conducted, could be beneficial, even if its main purpose is research.

This has led to the development of the concept of "therapeutic infant observation" (Reid, 1997b, p. 11). It has been noted that consistent sympathetic observations can assist in situations where there are particular difficulties, for example, in separating (Maiello, 1997). In the latter case, the dyad was able to use the containing function of the experience of being thought about to make its own attempts at separation. Morra (1998) observed children in a nursery school with serious feeding difficulties and, while she did not set out to fulfil a participant role, she thought that her presence had a facilitating function in helping the children struggle with their conflicts and in one case temporarily overcome them.

Where observation is used with the active intention of producing benefit, it is also referred to as participant observation. These observation subjects are known to be in need or at risk before the observation process begins. Participant observations in a Russian orphanage (Bardyshevsky, 1998) showed that thoughtful attention permitted the child to progress, to the extent that autistic features receded. In this way, it could be said that autism was treated with relationship. Tarsoly (1998) observed in a Hungarian orphanage but noted that the limited length of observation "meant no marked improvement was brought about in the babies" (p. 3). At times, after a difficult classical observation process in which the mother seemed to have difficulties relating to the baby, the question has been posed whether a "participant therapeutic observation" might have been more helpful (S. Miller, 1998, p. 17).

Lazar, Roepke and Ermann (1998) referred to their study of premature infants in the specialist unit of a hospital as "a project in participant observational research into prematurity" (p. 22). They used counter-transference experience to understand and convey the world of premature babies. These were such unusual observations of unusual subjects that they were called "proto-observations" (1998, p. 22) and there was some resistance to the idea at first. For example, Lazar et al. (1998) were criticised for breaking the "cardinal rule" of observing both mother and baby from the start (p. 36). Their experience was also quite different from normal infant observation. It was said that nothing could be taken for granted - for example, breathing was a physical cataclysm in the infant, which resonated emotionally in the observer. The observer noted an inability to write notes from memory until the baby had reached a certain level of viability, relating to survival. Mendelsohn (2005), who supervised my first observation at the Tavistock in 2001, similarly worked in a hospital setting in London, where she observed premature neonates in intensive care. She found that her function was to provide an emotional connection to the premature baby's experience, facilitating its first attempts at communicating and participating in the world. In this sense, it could be argued that she indirectly served as a buffer and may have minimised the long-term effects of such early trauma. It is interesting to note that neonatal observations can be effective in this way even in the absence of parents. The possibility that this opens up is that observations could be therapeutic in situations where there are no parents.

The understanding gleaned from observations can also be fruitfully shared for therapeutic purposes. This can enhance caregivers' ability to give the baby what she needs, by sensitising them to the inner life of the infant, and

can also be immensely supportive. In this way, Tarsoly (1998) used her observations in a Hungarian orphanage to help carers build more meaningful relationships with the infants by acting and communicating more actively. This furthermore provided support for the carers. Infant observation processes can also be followed by feedback to parents. For example, Cardenal (1998) used infant observation for the treatment of clinically ill babies. She observed a baby at risk for retinal cancer. Her therapeutic objective was to contain the anxieties the parents could not bear thinking about. When these were addressed, there were remarkable transformations in the baby. An addition to the infant observation approach in this case was meetings with the parents for the purpose of discussing the observations and increasing their awareness of the baby's needs. This account showed that the observation of a child can be a way to help parents in ongoing distress, who might be defensive or despairing of other modes of intervention. It may provide a less threatening mode of intervention than advice-giving or even psychotherapy. These parents were able to transform or digest difficult feelings around the suffering of their baby. At the same time, the baby made progress.

Infant observation principles have also indirectly informed other more traditional psychotherapeutic encounters, either in terms of the practitioner's understanding, or technique. Carling (2003) used Piontelli's (1992) observations in utero (using ultrasound) as a way to understand a premature child client's difficulties at the age of 3 following birth trauma. Piontelli's (1992) vivid descriptions of observed life in utero helped the clinician to understand that the client had had his own consciousness through a forceps delivery and 6 weeks in a neonatal intensive care unit, and what the scale of the effect of this was on him. Observation principles have also been used to modify therapeutic technique in order to allow practitioners to work more innovatively with difficult clients: Pozzi (1999) created a modified psychotherapeutic technique in order to communicate emotionally with a 12-year-old boy diagnosed with Asperger's syndrome. She made the point that all analytic work is of course based on careful observation and awareness of the patient's behaviour, play and associations, and the therapist's emotional and mental state while receiving the patient's communication. In this case, where the child client spent long periods of his sessions without talking or playing at all, Pozzi verbalised her speculations and observations. The child rejected interpretations (made on the basis of observed material) but responded well to her thinking aloud and hypothetically linking something less structured, "such as a noise, a movement or a twitch, to which could be attributed many meanings" (1999, p. 1335). She found that this made a degree of contact with his infantile needs and lessened his sense of persecution. Pozzi (1999) also found this adapted technique useful in treating elective mutism. Alvarez (2004) similarly used a kind of observational receptiveness in her work with autism. In this way, infant observation provides a way to connect with more difficult or hard to reach clients, which is an important consideration when working with deprivation (Boston & Szur, 1983).

Infant observation principles have also been used to inform direct interventions with mothers and children. Murray (1997) cited Winnicott when she maintained that you cannot teach a mother to hold a baby, but a holding environment can facilitate parents' capacity to care for their infants. In an Under Fives centre in Virginia, Sorenson et al. (1997) sought to "expand parents' capacities for observation and reflection, helping them to bear their own and their children's anxieties long enough to work towards new and creative responses to the problems which trouble them" (p. 9). Ordinary, diverse problems were treated in a preventative way so that enduring relationship, behavioural and other developmental difficulties did not develop. Working in Oxford, Tucker (2006) described an

infant-led psychotherapy that invited the parents to become involved observers of, and responders to, their infant's play. The programme, called *Watch, Wait and Wonder*, allowed the child to initiate play activities and helped the mother find meaning in her infant's play - thus enabling change to come about in their relationship. Woodhead (2004) showed how the therapist's powers of observation were used to help a mother notice her little boy's communications to her regarding the loss of his father.

In 2003 Urwin showed that both the therapist's and the parents' "capacity to think rather than react when under pressure of anxiety" was particularly useful in an under-fours' counselling and parent support service run in a highly deprived and ethnically diverse neighbourhood in the United Kingdom (p. 391). The *Sure Start* programme was developed to promote developmental opportunities and parenting support, with the overall aim of eventually breaking cycles of deprivation and poverty. Reynolds (2003) similarly used applied infant observation in a therapeutic parent-infant group run from a community mental health agency in the United States. The *Mindful Parenting* programme aimed at enhancing reflective capacity in parents and infants, based on the premise that secure attachment is the foundation for adaptive infant mental health (Score, 2001, cited in Reynolds, 2003) and that the security of a child's attachment is predicated by the mother's capacity to reflect on her child's affective experience. Group members were primarily low to moderate risk.

Therefore it could be said that practitioners abroad have used infant observation in a variety of innovative ways to date to assist parents, caregivers and children, both by the actual practice of observing (and sometimes actively sharing an understanding), and by using observation principles to inform and structure interventions. It is noteworthy that the use of the counter-transference, which was initially minimised by Bick, has become an increasingly important tool in this endeavour.

5.4.2.4 Infant observation as research

There is a "valuable archive" of infant observation material from seminars, papers and dissertations (Emanuel, 1997, p. 166). Reid (1997b) has argued that there is a shortfall of research output compared to the amount of observation work carried out. In some ways, infant observation has failed to co-opt the research discipline of other academic courses. Psychoanalytic observation may seem to produce "non-scientific" conclusions because it is lacking in asepticity and is emotionally stirring (Piontelli, 1992). The question has arisen how to use it more formally for research purposes.

One of the most active and pragmatic contributors to this debate is M.J. Rustin, who taught me a module on the application of psychoanalytic theory at the Tavistock in 2001. It is interesting to note that he is a sociologist. M.J. Rustin (1989, 1997) discussed the drawback and benefits of the method for research, as well as making some suggestions about how to develop it. He noted that infant observation remains a naturalistic, open-ended approach and therefore foresaw an adaptation of the psychoanalytic method rather than an attempt to approximate laboratory conditions (M.J. Rustin, 1997). Because observations published from the Tavistock were produced as part of a training course in work with children, he argued, they were not designed for purpose of comparative study (M.J. Rustin, 1989). It is therefore not possible to make ambitious scientific claims for this material. The element of self-

selection that influences which mothers agree to be visited each week precludes any claim that families concerned are statistically representative of a larger population (M.J. Rustin, 1989). The network through which families are found provides a reasonable social range but the poorest sectors of the population will be left out - people who do not have access to general practitioners or gynaecologists, for example (M.J. Rustin, 1989). Observers, who are mostly middle class, tend to use sources close to them. Infant observation is an intensive process: much time and thinking is required and it also demands high levels of skill (Piontelli, 1989). Conditions cannot be pre-structured or controlled, and the observer's interests shift. Regular observation times provide a kind of sampling procedure since the same activities will be seen frequently (M.J. Rustin, 1989). The observation experience is not pre-coded or pre-sorted in any way (M.J. Rustin, 1989). Piontelli (1989) doubted whether it would ever be possible "with this type of research based on such detailed observations to gather numbers and figures comparable to those of medical or even psychological research" (p. 416). However, she felt that its detail and depth made up for its lack of breadth. M.J. Rustin (1989) held that

> All that one can do to clarify and refine methodology in these conditions is to be as explicit and self-aware as possible about the point of view of observations, and about the ideas through which they are given meaning. Making available for scrutiny both literal observation reports, and the interpretive descriptions and commentaries constructed from them allows the procedure of interpretation to be as open to inspection as possible. The weekly frequency and two-year duration of these observations, and their firm technique, aiming for maximum consistency, and minimum obtrusiveness, are intended to provide the best conditions possible in the circumstances for disciplined thought. The facility for repeated observation at close intervals, and for joint reflection on findings, is by no means always achieved in social scientific field-studies, where situations may be too fluid and rapidly changing to be easily returned to in this way. (p. 61)

Infant observation is akin to psychoanalytical research in that it offers a slow and painstaking focus on a single individual (Piontelli, 1989). It is interested in thick description and not in causal correlations between variables (M.J. Rustin, 1997). In this sense, M.J. Rustin (1989) argued that it is a method well suited to discovery which can "take up whatever seems most important in [the] experience of the family" (p. 59). Case study methods such as this may be complementary to large-scale behavioural studies. The constant framework makes it possible to report variations in what is observed (M.J. Rustin, 1997). Reporting in untheorised language makes for ease of communication of findings. There is some independent measure of the accuracy of written records in discussion by the seminar and this also provides an opportunity to give repeated scrutiny to sequences of interaction.

Possible ways forward, M.J. Rustin (1989, 1997) suggested, include pre-selecting dyads sharing characteristics, undertaking concurrent and collaborative observations, and more standardised reporting formats. He also suggested more standardised data on social circumstances and follow-up later in childhood. He saw significant scope for greater codification and systematisation at the point of data analysis, such as rating procedures. Emanuel (1997) wondered whether using and describing infant observation reports in a more systematic way might lose the essential qualities. M.J. Rustin (1997) considered triangulating observations with assessments of the same infants made by laboratory-setting measures such as the Strange Situation Test (a tool for ascertaining attachment style).

In the same vein Winship (2001), also writing from the Tavistock, suggested that one way to supplement psychoanalytic infant observation was "a type of paradigm pluralism" (p. 254) such as the attachment theorists have used (drawing from ethology to develop standardised tests and measures). Like M.J. Rustin (1989, 1997), Winship (2000) suggested that we should process and draw inferences from observational material via a thematic analysis

that compares them to locate discernible patterns. He suggested the analysis of each on its own merits as a starting point. He advocated that the group forum of seminars could be structured more formally for research, in order to get collaborative data. Group members might be asked to read a report and make a note of their own responses to the data before discussion with the observer.

In 1997 Canham et al. attempted to rate a single infant observation in a pilot project. They worked as a sub-group of the Tavistock/University of East London Infant Observation Research Seminar, which aimed at discussing the possibilities of infant observation for research in an ongoing way. Canham et al. (1997) aimed at involving groups in looking at the same material to see what consensus might be achieved. In other words, they wanted to test the reliability of the judgements made about the content of the observational material by a number of different people. They worked both qualitatively, by designing a questionnaire for readers of the observation, and quantitatively, by producing a five-point rating scale. There was a high degree of agreement among respondents. They felt that this raised the level of confidence with which one might make useful predictions.

Barnett (2006), an anthropologist affiliated with the Tavistock, videoed the observation of a baby's development to show students who were unable to undertake their own observations (the *Sunday's Child* video series). She then went on to produce a series of videos about babies in Nepal, Finland and Western India in order to question "the rather mono-cultural theory we learned" (*Monday's, Tuesday's and Saturday's Child*) (Barnett, 2006, p. 182). Piontelli worked with immigrant populations such as gypsies and Nigerian prostitutes in Italy, working as a doctor and simultaneously studying behaviour using dialogue, photography and video (A. Briggs & Piontelli, 2006). She felt that her training in psychoanalysis and infant observation helped her to approach many people of different backgrounds.

The different kinds of knowledge produced by infant observation to date will be considered below. From a research perspective infant observation has primarily been interested in corroborating psychoanalytic theory and technique. Some exciting studies in the social realm have also been conducted.

5.4.2.4.1 Supporting theory

Beyond its initial training purpose, infant observation soon became a method of research for testing and formulating developmental theory (Covington, 1991). Some infant observation accounts are thus used as a way to provide legitimacy or proof for psychoanalytic theory, and much has been written about this possibility (see, for example, Covington, 1991; Seligman, 1993; Urban, 2003; Zuriff, 1992). While Seligman (1993) argued that observationally based and traditional views could be comfortably synthesised, Covington (1991) remained unconvinced about observation as a research tool, stating that infant observation does not provide supporting evidence, but merely evidence that corresponds with psychoanalytic theory: "In short, the findings reflect the method" (p. 69). While the effort to bring infant observation to bear on psychoanalytic knowledge has been criticised because of its speculative nature (Zuriff, 1992), Seligman (1993) pointed out that inferences about preverbal experience have always been used to establish fundamental psychoanalytic concepts (Freud's "fort-da"

vignette was seen as evidence for the repetition compulsion, for example). Observation has been a part of developing psychoanalytic theory from its inception.

Many theoretical papers have been produced and make up the bulk of infant observation literature. Specifically, infant observation has enhanced our understanding of the development of the mind and of early relationships, and has recorded and speculated about the emergence of early difficulties. In overview, one of the main themes is feeding difficulties (see, for example, S. Briggs, 1998; Magagna, 2002; Morra, 1998; Tarsoly, 1998), and in fact the first volume of the *International Journal of Infant Observation* dedicated to a specific theme chose this as a topic [1(3); 1998]. This is perhaps to be expected, considering the psychic importance of the breast and early feeding experiences in Kleinian thinking. Maternal depression and concomitant failures in containment comprise another dominant theme in the literature (Sorensen et al., 1997), as does the function of psychic skin, after Bick's (1968) seminal paper (Jackson & Nowers, 2002). Bick's (1968) paper, M.J. Rustin (1997) noted, is a classic example of a psychoanalytic discovery in infant observation. It relates an observable adaptation, namely of infantile pseudo-independence, to a deficit in mothering: Bick (1968) described how a "second skin" formation, manifesting either as a type of muscular shell or verbal muscularity, serves to hold the infant together in "transitory states of unintegration" (p. 486). Another common theme is failures in linking[1] (Alvarez, 2002), after Bion's (1967) work. One can thus see how published accounts use psychoanalytic concepts to orientate themselves, even though initially reports are said to be written free of theory.

A vast amount of observational data has been informally produced by infant observation accounts (M.J. Rustin, 1989, 1997). For example, as previous examples have shown, we have a better understanding of premature babies (Lazar et al., 1998), autistic children (Reid, 1997c), emotional deprivation in an orphanage (Tarsoly, 1998), and children's adjustment to school (Sorensen et al., 1997), among many other topics.

5.4.2.4.2 Fostering technique

Secondly, infant observation has been thought useful in supporting psychoanalytic technique, in other words, using increased knowledge about the worlds of infants in order to work more effectively in clinical settings, both with children and adults (Jacobson, 1993). Infant observation vignettes are often used to illuminate clinical moments: for example, "What for the infant was being cross, for the boy was being furious and humiliated, and for the man, furious, envious and doubly shamed" (Urban, 2003, p. 187).

The present study's aim was not, as is the case in many other recent infant observation accounts, to develop either psychotherapeutic practice or our knowledge of infants per se. Rather, it points out that other studies neglect broader contexts, and tries to use infant observation to engage and consider context in a new way. Otherwise, it will be argued, reified accounts of infant behaviour result. In this case, it is not so much a question of confirming psychoanalytic theory and practice with observationally based accounts (Seligman, 1993) as it is of asking what *else* infant observation would be able to tell us, if it were allowed to dwell more broadly on what is present in any observation.

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[1] A defensive inability to convert raw data into meaningfully integrated experiences (Rycroft, 1995).

5.4.2.4.3 Exploring the social realm

Infant observation has much to offer research into the social realm, because it can be seen as an interactive method, with a focus on relationship and the internalisation of experience. Analysts have, to an extent, made forays into this realm in the observation of organisational dynamics and the study of the foetus in its first environment. However, it is social work practitioners who have chiefly used infant observation as a way to engage with the complexity of group processes in low-income and cross-cultural settings. This is perhaps unsurprising, considering that the nature of social work consistently brings the practitioner in contact with such settings. Infant observation in the social work field is in its early stages. The need to begin observing new kinds of subjects is advocated by social work practice and will be supported here. Some of the major contributions of infant observation to investigating the social realm will be considered below.

In analytic circles infant observation principles have been used to investigate organisations, often in order to facilitate their support, in turn, of the client body (see, for example, Hinshelwood & Skogstad, 2000). In Tarsoly's (1998) observation of babies in an orphanage it was shown that the infants taught the practitioner something about the organisation. Its structure was shown to undermine carers' intuition, capacity for reverie[2] and sense of initiative despite the well-intentioned thought that went into establishing routines. Training in organisational observation is offered at the Tavistock. It was shown in Chapter Three that South African community psychology has embraced these ideas in order to provide more containing and empowering consultative experiences when supporting organisations that work with children (K. Gibson, 2002b; Maw, 1996).

A second way in which observation has moved into the social realm is in the accounts produced by work discussion groups. As mentioned, these groups often try to make sense of tensions that arise in the workplace, such as between pupils and teachers or among staff members (S. Briggs & Ingall, 2005). Because the members are active participants in what they are observing, their accounts admit more readily to the subjectivity of the observer, who cannot be described as passive or neutral in this case. Such accounts also focus more on the relating between several members of a group. Work discussion groups could therefore be said to have resulted in observation accounts that are less about observing infants, and more about observing social and group processes.

There has never been an explicit drive to use infant observation as a way to discover what life is like in a very deprived and unknown community. In fact, in the previously mentioned Infant Observation Research Seminar at the Tavistock, seminar members decided that observing an infant in foster care as it made the transition to a new foster family constituted too sensitive a setting (Emanuel, 1997). Similarly, the suggestion to observe infants whose mothers are HIV positive was felt too be too fraught and so not viable either. Unfortunately, by marginalising subjects in need, what is also lost is the kind of information that could assist them by targeting their environment. For example, Kelly-Noel (1998) described the impact of observing in a neo-natal intensive care unit in the United States as leading to changes in the culture of infant care within neo-natal intensive care units. M.E. Rustin (1998)

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[2] A concept used by Bion (1967) to describe the unstructured mental state of the mother that enables the infant to make sense of and tolerate states of anxiety (Reber, 1995; Rycroft, 1995).

noted that this was "a type of action research[3] which seems to draw on the tradition of Infant Observation as an observation of the infant in its setting in a most fruitful way" (p. 4). An observation of an HIV positive mother in South Africa, for example, could assist in thinking about ways in which her environment needs to change, or be supported itself, in order to support her.

Below, contributions by leading innovators in the field of observation will be reviewed. What these authors have in common is that they all utilised observation as research. Secondly, they were all interested in the wider social milieu in different ways: from that which surrounds the infant, including situations that place the infant at risk, to that beyond the infants entirely. Thirdly, they all used slightly modified, applied versions of the "pure" infant observation procedure.

5.4.2.4.3.1 Piontelli

Piontelli (1992) pioneered a new field of observation, namely the observation of the unborn foetus by means of ultrasound. She linked this both with child observation (by observing the same children later) and psychoanalytic thinking. Piontelli's (1992) study is interesting because it adhered to research guidelines. It was submitted to an ethics committee, obtained informed consent, and mothers were told they were free to withdraw from the study at any point. There were no criteria for selection - the first mothers who were approached at the obstetric clinic and agreed to participate were selected. Of importance to the present study is the fact that Piontelli (1992) used a more systematic approach, and that the pre-birth observations necessarily meant more of a focus on what the baby "was being born into". As Piontelli put it, she knew more about the "material reality" of the individual pre-natal experience than in other observations (1992, p. 8). She recorded the parents' responses to the ultrasounds, and in this way one could say that there was substantial focus on the parents. Secondly, she used a very time-consuming, detailed, longitudinal study of individuals in order to say more about the link between intrauterine and infantile life. While her focus was on the mother-infant, her purpose was specifically investigative, in a very open-ended sense. She noted that she conducted the study with little idea of what she was looking for, and no idea of what she could expect to observe or find. Her previous, somewhat stereotyped vision of foetuses changed into one of increasing differentiation and personalisation. Therefore a further value of her study to the present one is that it demonstrated that infant observation can be used to investigate unknown territory, in an exploratory way that is not about testing hypotheses or confirming preconceptions.

Piontelli's fascinating twin studies (1989, 2002) considered the intrauterine environment as a place populated by a second person, with whom a relationship exists before birth. She also considered the impact of the "maternal fantasies, emotions and states of mind" on the foetuses (1989, p. 425) and how the capacity to live in the outside world could be correlated with their experience in the womb. In other words, she again gave due consideration to the impact of "intra-uterine environmental conditions" on the developing infant (1989, p. 416). This involved thinking about how sensations such as noises, sounds, pulsations and touch might influence the baby from early on. In summary, Piontelli explored the use of observation with previously neglected subjects, and considered them in a holistic way that took multiple levels of the environment into account.

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[3] An approach used in the community psychology paradigm as a way "to study things through changing them" (Banister et al., 1994, quoted in Willig, 1999, p. 6).

5.4.2.4.3.2 S. Briggs

S. Briggs (1996, 1997a, 1997b), who trained as a social worker, has been a pioneer in developing infant observation for research. His aim, as part of his PhD studies at the Tavistock, was to observe a small sample of infants at potential risk to see what this could tell us about the development of infants in such circumstances, and secondly, about the role of observation as a research tool (1996). He pre-selected a particular group to study (namely at-risk infants). Most broadly, it was difficulty with containment that S. Briggs conceptualised as constituting an "at-risk" situation for the infant. In each case parental response was less than optimal for different reasons. The sample came from a range of social class and cultural backgrounds, and thereby some cross-cultural study also resulted. Therefore S. Briggs's PhD can be seen as a precursor of the present study, which also sets out, on a smaller scale, to think about need more deeply, using psychoanalytic tools.

S. Briggs's comparative study is thought to be the most systematic and substantial research using the infant observation method that has been published to date (M.J. Rustin, 1997). S. Briggs simultaneously observed five infants from birth to two years, involving some 400 observations. His methodological work is summarised in *Growth and risk in infancy* (1997a). He assessed the nature of the fit between infant and mother, and the quality of the relationship in terms of "sensitivity, attentiveness, conflict, intimacy and understanding" (quoted in Trevarthen, 1998, p. 109). One of the areas of comparison he documented (1997b) was the mothers' capacity for reverie under stressful circumstances, and how infants responded to the quality of the parents' containment. Of importance to the present study is that in each case S. Briggs specifically documented the nature of the mother's external resources, professional support and relations with her partner, extended family and friends. Most of the mothers in S. Briggs's study "were isolated, undersupported and had a range of difficult experiences in their backgrounds which were very much alive in them at the time of the birth of the observed baby" (1998, p. 46).

S. Briggs's study problematised the use of infant observation in settings where there is risk of different sorts for the infant (1997a, 1997b). Of enormous importance is the fact that he thought about the role of the observer in these families. It seems that the pressure of the setting demanded this. S. Briggs noted that he found himself in "many difficult situations" as the observer (1998, p. 45). As discussed, many observation accounts highlight the family's appreciation of the observer, even in cross-cultural settings. By contrast, S. Briggs's work showed what kind of difficulties are encountered when the observer is a source of anxiety or reassurance, or presumed to be an expert on infancy, or the object of difficult unconscious dependency, for a particularly isolated parent (M.J. Rustin, 1989). These are issues that can arise when there are difficulties in the family, in situations of poverty, risk and unequal power relations, and in cross-cultural settings generally. By venturing into these more fraught settings, S. Briggs was able to engage with and uncover the complexity of the relationship to the observer in ways that infant observation literature had previously not done. M.J. Rustin (1997) noted, "taking full account of perceptions of and transference reactions to the observer seems a precondition of understanding these family situations" (p. 97). He added that this discovery paralleled the centrality of the transference in the clinical analytic situation. While this is true, phrasing it in this way somewhat minimises S. Briggs's important assertion that new settings may require new emphases and responses.

S. Briggs (1997a) showed that the subjectivity of the observer may become more important in such cases. His work led authors who had previously asserted that the observer could be neutral and passive to say "It is clear that in several of the families studied the relationship to the observer became a significant element in the observation, and needed to be considered as a fact in its own right" (M.J. Rustin, 1997, p. 96). S. Briggs studied the patterns of relationship between himself, the parents and the infant. He found that where there was risk, the containing function of observer became of paramount importance, and that he often ended up supporting a parent, as "parental container" (1997a, p. 212). Both the mothers and the children needed support and used him to get it. In other cases, his role developed along the lines of an "auxiliary parent" (S. Briggs, 1997b, p. 212), where he became more involved and interventionist in approach:

> What made the task of analysis of the observer-observed relationship so difficult in this sample of infants is that the problems encountered…were so acute that, in the interests of concern for their welfare and development, I was obliged to adopt a more interventionist approach to observation than is traditionally assumed. The material generated by the observations of the infants in this sample of "at risk" infants illustrates the "containing" function performed by any observer in the task of "observing" an infant. (1997b, p. 208)

The siblings in one case (Hashmat) ganged up on the baby in the parents' absence and S. Briggs was forced at such times to actively intervene in order to physically protect either the observed baby or one of the younger siblings. The risk posed to the infant in this case was a physical threat by the siblings, who were under-supervised as the parental resources were stretched (they had nine children). He felt that "not to have responded in these ways would have been either unethical or dangerous" (1997b, p. 212). S. Briggs felt that a rigidly non-interventionist strategy within the group-style of parenting he encountered would also have been incomprehensible (1997b). His role of observer/parent figure had specific functions for the development of the baby, such as enabling Hashmat to share emotional states (especially in the second year). While the observer did not initiate interaction, a form of purposeful activity certainly emerged. I wondered what happened in the observation seminars S. Briggs attended, when all these new issues arose, only to discover that he had in fact had individual supervision for his infants at risk study (C. Urwin, personal communication, January 30, 2007).

S. Briggs used these very interesting observations to speculate about feeding difficulties (1998) as linked to the quality of containment received, and the function of the skin in psychosocial space (2002). In other words, he also used the observations for more traditional developments of psychoanalytic theory. He used Bick's (1968) seminal paper on psychic skin to suggest that her theory is an extremely important conceptual tool for thinking about observations in precarious or vulnerable social contexts. He also developed his own ideas about grip relations and flat, concave and convex parental relating (2002).

In summary, S. Briggs (1997a, 1997b) showed that divergences in his role as observer were a function of the child being at risk because of the mother being absent emotionally or physically, at least in part for social reasons, such as having many children. At times the cultural mode of parenting also played a role: shared parenting responsibilities led to sibling abuse, for example. He adjusted his role so that he could fulfil something for the child, but this was still in keeping with the traditional observational stance of a focus on the child's communications and emotional life. Poverty was implied, but not dealt with directly as a factor becoming part of internal life. The mother was still regarded as the most influential aspect of the environment. What is valuable to the present study is

that S. Briggs (1997a, 1997b) linked the differences in his role and in the observations with the setting. He concluded that it is hard to maintain the traditional observer role in an "unusual" setting.

5.4.2.4.3.3 Winship

Winship (2001) attempted to develop the infant observation module as a tool for studying social processes. As part of a Tavistock MA dissertation, Winship (1995) used the infant observation module to study children in a nursery school setting in groups. Publishing in a journal on group analysis, he proposed a provisional method of "group-as-a-whole infant observation" (2001, p. 253). He maintained that infant observation should be a way to highlight group dynamics and to deepen group and social theory. Winship argued both that psychoanalytic infant observation has been too linear, narrow and insular and that its dyadic focus reduces the scope for exploring more social or group-related dimensions of the experiences being observed. Winship's focus on family and group is of profound importance for the present study:

> Even though the early contact with the mother prevails, this contact is shaped by a subtle but crucially influencing family and cultural matrix. Even *in utero* the protomentality of the infant may be well attuned to the sounds of the world - the television, the traffic, the noises of elder siblings, the cacophony of experience surrounding the womb which already impinges on the oceanic oneness of infant and mother. Here is the fluid interchange between inside and out… (2001, p. 255)

There is a link here with Piontelli's (1992) innovative work. Winship (2001) was one of the first authors to call for the development of a "group, social or culturally based infant observation method" (p. 255). He felt dissatisfied with singular observations because they "limited my capacity to note the much wider events and how they impacted on my observee. Thus I began to wonder about a more outward-inward type of observation and the feasibility of observing several children simultaneously" (2001, p. 257). To this one could add the feasibility of observing communities. Interestingly, Winship found that when he observed groups of children, the space was perceptibly larger and unwieldy. His visual field, he discovered, was the space of the observation setting (the room) as much as the "dramatis personae" (2001, p. 258). He was able to absorb a wide range of experiences and a multiplicity of events. He attended to the atmosphere of the setting. He noticed sounds and smells, feeling that these "impacted on the intertextual experience of children in the space I was observing" (2001, p. 259). He spoke of the interaction between internality and "sensual externality" (2001, p. 259). Winship (2001) was criticised by Acquarone (2001), writing from a more traditionalist psychoanalytic perspective. She held that the baby and mother dyad supplies the first matrix of social behaviour and that the general observation is of the development of this relationship. She also argued that there is much more infant group observation than Winship acknowledged. Nevertheless, in Winship's work we can see a developing sensitivity to group, to location, to atmosphere and to the corporeal (the senses), which is very rare in infant observation accounts.

Taking his MA work further in 1997 and 2000, Winship conducted an observational study of a simulated jury deliberation. His purpose was to deconstruct the way a jury functions in order to firm up its crucial role in society. Here he argued that observational procedures could be adapted to study the phenomenon of a jury's emotionality. The observation of group processes is not new, as has been described, but in 2000 Winship took a step into the social constructionist realm when he wrote that:

My field of study was as much about the space as the people. I did not attempt to objectify events, instead I acknowledged my observation as inextricably linked to the network of social relations being studied - that is to say, observation via experiential assimilation or projective identification. (p. 549)

He did not always follow the focal encounters but remained attentive to other events. He noticed that where he sat - literally, in the corner of the room - meant that he was outside of the group. Again he considered the prevailing atmosphere. Winship (2001) also reviewed other authors who had undertaken observation studies following Bick's technique in settings beyond the mother-infant dyad: in a geriatric ward (Mackenzie-Smith, 1992), and in an acute psychiatric ward (Chiesa, 1993).

Winship (2001) sought to gain validation of his group observation technique by presenting four independent witnesses with four observations each, asking them to comment on the findings and also draw psychoanalytic inferences from the data. He found that their responses were "to greater or lesser degrees commensurate" with his interpretations. He concluded that at the very least one could say that group observation data lends itself to drawing psychoanalytic inferences. Winship (2001) found that a "multibodied" observation did not compromise the in-depth value of the standardised mother-infant observation technique. In summary, Winship (2001) expanded the use of infant observation to study interactions between members of groups and to consider group processes. In this sense his work is an important precursor of the present study.

Collectively, the "new wave" of observation innovators has shown that infant observation can be employed very usefully in novel settings and with subjects who have traditionally been labelled "difficult", or even with subjects other than mothers and infants. It is noted that at times they made subtle adjustments to the technique of observation to accommodate a more social focus. They also began to consider a range of previously neglected factors, such as issues of subjectivity, including the counter-transference. This work provides an important background for my critique of infant observation in general below.

5.5 A critique of traditional infant observation

The basic assumptions of infant observation can be challenged in conversation with the traditions of psychodynamic community psychology and postmodern ethnography. This interrogation has been prompted by the experience of observing in a cross-cultural, deprived setting for the purposes of the present study. It is proposed that the salient issues discussed below will invariably arise in new kinds of settings, and will need to be considered if infant observation is to develop for use in South African community work. In effect, this represents an extension of some of the more recent thinking about observation, reviewed above. It also constitutes a social constructionist critique of the more classical form of infant observation, which, it is argued, takes these factors into account insufficiently.

5.5.1 Controversial issues

The "controversial issues" I wish to consider here are the social constructionist concerns raised in Chapters Two and Four, namely the issues of subjectivity (versus objectivity), language and power. In community psychology

terms, I will wonder about the impact on observations of the wider context (and vice versa), and the nature of the relationship between observer and observed in the light of difference. Examples of international observations that do and do not work with these complexities will be given. Because I am conducting a critique, these accounts will be very detailed in an attempt to be comprehensive. Feminism is again absent as a lens. There is great scope for thinking about infant observation using a gendered lens, but in the interests of economy this will be explored later in other papers.

5.5.1.1 Socio-economic and cultural context

While there have been volumes of the *International Journal of Infant Observation* dedicated to specific subjects (for example, young child observation), there has only been one quite recently that focused, as a "secondary theme", on promoting cross-cultural observation, or what in the United Kingdom comprises observation involving minority ethnic groups (L. Miller, 2002, p. 3). Internationally, very little has been written on cross-cultural observation per se, and almost nothing on observations in settings of extreme poverty. An overview of the gaps in the infant observation literature related to these areas will be given below, and then accounts that are the exception to the rule will be examined. The latter have, significantly, mostly emerged from the field of social work. Again, this seems to be because social work is by its very nature forced to deal with the social, the cultural and the economic.

In most international observation accounts, it seems that the prescribed focus on the infant's developing internal life has detracted from considering relevant information about social and cultural positioning. For example, in an introductory chapter on observation methods, M.J. Rustin (1989) mentioned a particular infant's "liking (probably partly cultural) for physical forms of expression" (p. 63), but in the observation account that followed in a later chapter there was no description of what this cultural context in fact was. All we were told is that the infant's grandparents were born in a "remote rural district" and that the father had a marked accent of sorts. In terms of socio-economic status, the only information given was that the father worked in the building trade, and that the flat was small and immaculately clean. The impression created was that such details were not central to the study of the infant's inner life.

One of the few accounts to touch on some sort of cultural meaning is Yu-hua Lin's (1997) observation undertaken in Taiwan. She revealed the "astonishing potential" (L. Miller et al., 1997) of the infant observation method to explore the cultural and societal roots of the emotional experience of the mother-infant within a particular family (p. 7). Across two generations, the family was disappointed at the birth of a female, instead of a male child, and projected into the mother a sense of having given birth to the wrong child. L. Miller et al. (1997) described these "intergenerational tensions" as "familiar to readers far from Taiwan" (p. 7). In this sense, the particularity of this cultural experience was given a universal import which somewhat undercut the potential of the tool to think about specific cultural meanings. It is also ironic that, within the same volume of the *International Journal of Infant Observation*, Emanuel (1997) wrote about abandoning difficult and sensitive observation subjects, on behalf of the Infant Observation Research Seminar conducted at the Tavistock.

Social work has, however, turned our attention to considering wider context. There was a lot written on infant observation and social work in the 1990s, related to the development of infant observation courses as part of social work training at the Tavistock. The second volume of the *International Journal of Infant Observation* [2(2), 1999] was a special edition on the application of infant observation to social work. In the editorial, infant observation was proposed as one way to create a "social space" or thinking space in which reflection on psychological and social factors could occur (S. Briggs & Canham, 1999, p. 4). The capacity to tolerate uncertainty and ambiguity was highlighted as important in this proactive, problem-solving professional activity (S. Briggs, 1999).

S. Briggs (1999) noted that the literature that has developed using a participant-observational perspective has been used specifically to explore the social world in areas of social work concern, such as infants at risk (S. Briggs, 1997a) and cross-cultural relationships (S. Briggs, 1997b; Ellis, 1997). Some of his work has already been discussed. In the observation of Hashmat described earlier, S. Briggs (1998) documented cross-cultural issues that arose, and in 2002 he referred to it explicitly as an example of an inter-cultural observation in a minority ethnic family. His observation provides important points of comparison with the present cross-cultural study. Hashmat was a Bengali infant who lived in a wealthy family among eight other siblings and two adults in a four-bedroom flat on a large estate in London that consisted of a Bengali community of some 40 000 people (S. Briggs, 1997b). Briggs (1999) emphasised thinking about the emotional impact of the observation on the observer, as well as thinking about observations within a matrix of internal, interpersonal and external factors. Apart from his increased participation, S. Briggs (1998) considered the issues of power and miscommunication. He advocated relating issues of difference to the pattern of relationship, and thinking about relationships in terms of authority (1999). For example, he referred to himself as "a white male outsider" (1998, p. 45) and wondered why, in this capacity, he was at one point asked to feed the infant - perhaps in order to strip him of the role of observer. He noted that he could vividly feel the feelings of the mother for her infant, despite the fact that she spoke no English. He was able to describe each family member's role and function in terms of parenting the baby, as well as the prevalent "group culture" in the family (2002, p. 194). There was a rare intimation in his work of the fraught quality of relating cross-culturally, and the power dynamics this involves. He noted that the parents seemed to welcome the interest in their family, but that he also felt sure their motivation was more complex than this; he wondered what he might represent, or come to represent for them. Language was an issue (the initial set-up was through an interpreter) and S. Briggs (1997b) worried about the potential for misunderstandings. For example, Hashmat was born 2 months ahead of the time indicated, but was full-term. S. Briggs noted that the health visitor said they must have got their dates wrong, sounding frustrated - "as though the family had made her feel incompetent" (1997b, p. 210).

Observation accounts in the arena of social work have begun to problematise infant observation as a method for use in more challenging settings. Perhaps this is because these authors "understand and appreciate the, often harsh, realities of attempting to intervene in a poorly resourced, pressurised and politicised area of work" (Doyle, 2000, p. 413). Infant observation may have to adjust somewhat in this area, where intervention is prized. Observation has been likened to mother-like reverie (S. Briggs, 1999). On the other hand, even thoughtful social work training and practice (S. Briggs, 1999) do not exclude possibilities for action. The "social work orientation" of S. Briggs and Canham's (1999) thinking allows for active intervention in the realm of the social. There is more scope for participation. It is simply recommended that observation and thinking come first, and action last. In counterpoint to

this is the argument that infant observation should be kept in pure and separate forms as training and intervention. For example, in 1998 Rhode and Maiello illustrated issues concerning the boundaries between infant observation as a training experience and as a therapeutic tool. They noted the importance of *not* acting in response to the strong emotions evoked by infant observation, linked to transference phenomena. They claimed that understanding makes it possible to refrain from action. Action was described as giving in to the strong temptation to step out of role. It is by observing to understand, they maintained, that therapeutic interventions can later be informed. This stands in contrast to the position taken in the foregoing accounts, which is that action may sometimes be necessary in some settings, or at least might be a less simple matter than has been traditionally suggested. This is but one in a range of issues that come up. From the social work perspective, S. Briggs and Canham (1999) noted "the necessary preoccupations of the profession with issues of power, discrimination and oppression" (p. 8). Perhaps for this reason, social work has been able to begin exploring the complexity of observing cross-culturally.

King (2002) wrote an important article from within the social work field that raised several questions about infant observation. While she was not actually observing in a cross-cultural, problematic or deprived environment, she seemed to appreciate the difficulties of taking up a thinking/feeling stance because in her line of work she was used to environments where action was demanded. She wrestled with such issues as finding a "normal" child to observe, finding it difficult to decide what normal meant. She was unsure how to behave without her active professional role and struggled to find the appropriate sense of distance. She worried that she would not even be able to make sense of observation data afterwards. In other words, she found that demanding environments could curb her ability to be in a reflective mental space. She stated, "There is a difficulty about tolerating the anxiety that not knowing or conflicting interpretations of information brings, particularly where children are at some risk" (2002, p. 215). It seems that other infant observers who insisted on finding "normal" subjects were able to avoid this difficulty. King (2002) made the point that social workers sometimes found holding the child in mind, or connecting to her experience, unbearable. She cited several inquiries into child deaths in the 1980s that suggested that social workers defensively cut off from sensitivity and ambiguity in pursuit of rules and procedures, with tragic results. The argument could be made then that in deprived environments, *more* tolerance for watching closely is required, but also that the observation situation will be more painful and potentially even unbearable. At the same time, King's (2002) account suggests that the procedure itself will be challenged and questioned by the specifics of an unusual environment (for more traditional infant observers).

The same difficulties and defensive processes discussed above may come into play where psychologists in community settings apply infant observation for the purposes of needs assessment and/or intervention. For example, the potential exists, as in social work practice, to observe violence and abuse. What happens in such a case when one is instructed to be non-interventionist? These questions will be addressed in the present study.

5.5.1.2 Difference

Because of its traditional focus on training, rather than knowledge production, certain sectors of the population have been excluded by infant observation and differences between observer and observed have been minimised. Accounts where there is a great deal of difference might be painful and more complex and the observations

therefore hard to sustain. In this sense they present more "difficult" subjects than where difference is absent. Cross-cultural observations are in the minority, and observations in conditions of extreme poverty almost non-existent. Single-parent observations are uncommon and I have not yet come across an infant observation conducted in a gay parent's home. The conclusion we can draw is that these families stand outside of traditional infant observation's classification of "normal" or "ordinary" families.

If South African infant observations were more representative of the majority of the population, there would be many more cross-cultural observations and observations in conditions of poverty. The choice to observe "normal" families in infant observation effectively sidelines the greatest section of the South African population. In South Africa it could be argued that situations of poverty and neglect comprise "normality", in that they constitute the context in which the majority of children live. Were infant observations in this country to reflect the majority of children's experience, socio-economic context and its role in the child's emotional development could become a central preoccupation in infant observation accounts. These may, however, feel like more difficult observations than those where there is little difference between observer and observed.

At the Tavistock difference is often avoided - for example, a Chinese observer who speaks little English will be encouraged to observe a Chinese dyad, for practical reasons. Trowell (1999) cited an example from the Tavistock course for social work training of a black observer who chose to observe a black 3-year-old girl in a playgroup run by white volunteers. The observer deliberately chose to observe the black child, who seemed to be someone on the periphery of the group whose bids for attention were not always noticed by the adults. In time the observer questioned her own initial hypothesis that issues of race had been central to what she was seeing and considered the role of personal issues brought to assessments. Tanner (1999) held that observation is able to develop anti-discriminatory social work practice by allowing the practitioner to examine her values, beliefs and feelings about the complex issues of difference and power. Unthinkable issues such as disgust, anger and envy can conceivably be uncovered in a thinking space. She made the point that our prejudices often exist in an unconscious, unarticulated realm that can create dissonance with our more consciously held responses. While Trowell's (1999) example represents a valuable instance of reflexivity in the observation space, it seems as though issues about racial difference were eventually dismissed.

In the literature cultural, socio-economic and racial differences between observers and observed are few, and where they do exist they are mentioned in passing. Where infant observations mention race, it is insufficiently considered in terms of the observation dynamics. For example, under the promising title, *Compared to what? A family's struggle with the meaning of poverty, cultural variation and racial difference*, E. Gibson (2002/3) produced an account of observing in a "working poor" black family in the American South (p. 47). She pointed out that she herself is a Caucasian woman who grew up there and who as a child had an elderly black woman as her primary caregiver, at the time when racial segregation was law. The observation thus threw together individuals from historically divided groups, and the possibility for very interesting, and potentially conflictual situations existed. However, an early line in the account indicated the observer's choice, throughout, to smooth over difference where possible: "As the observer invited into this family, I found myself entering the familiar albeit through a different door" (2002/3, p. 48). The fact that the mother at first spoke very little was not reflected on as possibly being the

result of the observation's power dynamics, in the light of the history of slavery and racial inequalities in the Unites States. There are many other examples of difference that were also left unexplored: the mother (Linda) worried about childcare workers who "kill keeds" (p. 50), took great care about her appearance and that of her house, was hypervigilant about the observer's arrival, became an "enthusiastic informant" (p. 49), and wanted the observer to meet everyone. These were, rather superficially, taken as signs of trust and openness, and rendered sentimentally in a way that reinforces the "happy Negro" stereotype:

> Linda's discounting the knowledge of her nurses, her idealisation of her mother's knowledge and her references to Andrew's American Indian heritage suggested, from the beginning, Linda's feelings of difference between herself and the larger white culture. However, the fact that Linda so eagerly shared these thoughts with me, a southern white woman, demonstrated her capacity to transcend these differences and her deepest conviction that "peoples is peoples". (E. Gibson, 2002/3, p. 51)

The observer did not comment on the fact that the mother jokingly referred to herself and her children using the racial slur "nappy head" (p. 60), or that she saw only the front room for over a year. Children who eyed her coolly or a grandmother who called her "that nice lady" (p. 53) were also not considered to be showing deference or, beneath it, animosity. The observer noted the way that Linda spoke to all her children abruptly, but not why this might be. As the above quote indicates, she set herself apart from other white women: when a visiting nurse lectured Linda about the care of her babies, the grandmother stared straight ahead in "familiar compliant disguise":

> In the beginning, I had feared being perceived in the same category as those other representatives of the wider world of white institutions. But true to Linda's understanding of the purpose of my involvement, she, in the presence of family, instructed me in aspects of baby care. (E. Gibson, 2002/3, p. 54)

The observer did not admit that she inevitably represented the wider world of white institutions, and that by *allowing* Linda to instruct her in baby care, she was in fact replicating the nurse's condescension, in a more subtle way. Perhaps if the observer had been able to acknowledge these very painful facets of the relationship, Linda could have been too, and would have lost the need to collude with this image of herself as lacking all ambivalence or hostility. When the issue of race did enter more overtly, it was lyricised: the mother and children held up their arms against the observer's to compare skin colour "like wine glasses raised in a toast" (p. 55). The observer was invited to a birthday party and went because it was unusual for "rural Black folk" to include "middle class white folk" (p. 57) in a family celebration. No indication was given of how she was actually received at the party or more generally in the community, or how her observations affected the status of the family (negatively and/or positively) in their community, despite teasingly provocative comments by the grandmother such as, "You comin' to the party? You gonna' dance?" (p. 67). E. Gibson's (2002/3) paper did not, in the end, struggle with any sort of comparison, contrary to what its title suggested. Instead, it reads like a comforting tale of the Deep South.

The account is interesting, however, in that it provides more description than other infant observation reports of the parents' level of education, source of income, and racial history, and records accent in the dialogue. I argue that these aspects are always important, but are more noticeable when there is difference. E. Gibson (2002/3) recorded events from much earlier on than in intracultural observations, noting the drive to the family's home and also recording the physical appearance of the house and its surroundings. The weather and seasons were constantly mentioned. The observer felt that she had gained empathic insider knowledge that flew in the face of racism. This

allowed her to see another face beyond the silent, obedient disguise worn in front of white people. For example, a visiting health nurse commented that Linda ought not to be so loud, that it was unhealthy for the children. Linda's son had just split his head open and the author made the point that she saw this loudness as part of the mother's hysteria, in a way that the health visitor who was thinking in stereotypes could not. The observer seemed keen to place herself on the right side of the "Us and Them" divide - a desire that was also not reflected on.

Another example of a less than satisfying take on difference is Dollery and A. Briggs's (2002) report on the experience of teaching Traveller children, as discussed in a regional observation (work discussion) course associated with the Tavistock. This chapter, which was meant to consider culture using psychoanalytic ideas, unfortunately generalised about a culture based on contact with a single extended family. For example, it was stated that there is a "lack of individual growth and development" (2002, p. 175) leading to (all!) members of the Traveller community seeming "to develop the social appearances of a personality but without any real sense of an inner mental space and internal resources" (and here L. Miller et al., 1989, were quoted). There is a rather unequivocal use of interpretation throughout the account: the fact that Travellers move about a lot in church services or cinema was cited as "an example of the individual's use of the defence of 'second skin' as described by Bick" (p. 176). The Traveller culture was branded as one "that operates, for the most part, in the paranoid-schizoid position" (p. 178). The account drew comparisons with "the dominant culture" (p. 174) in a way that did not problematise such comparisons. The teacher's role as interloper was not reflected on; a grandmother's startled and embarrassed look at being asked how far along her daughter was in her pregnancy was framed as "such restricted thinking being around before the birth seems a likely contributor to the mother's limited capacity for sustained thought for her newborn baby" (p. 179). An insensitive and stereotyped outsider account of "Traveller culture" resulted.

On the other hand, examples do exist of observers who have recently begun to successfully engage with the process of observing subjects who have traditionally been avoided or neglected. By this I mean that they produce accounts that honestly grapple with the complexities and painfulness of such a task. For example, Lazar et al. (1998), writing about their observation of premature infants, found that the observer was not able to experience in the usual sense. At times she was not able to look, or not able to see once she dared to look. She was not always able to observe for a full hour, and took notes in session because she struggled to remember what had happened. The observer "had to put up with the terrible feeling of being a more or less violent intruder into a sphere in which she did not belong" (1998, p. 23). She also found it difficult to leave, feeling that her pure presence was important. Observation was described as "at once exciting and terrifying" (p. 30) and members of the seminar group experienced guilt. She found that she felt no pain when witnessing the raw events of the observation but that unbearable psychic pain set in afterwards, during the writing up. The authors noted that they found themselves faced with a multitude of serious problems: emotional, technical and ethical in nature, and that they had to learn along the way how one should and should not go about observing a premature baby (p. 34).

In the special edition of the *International Journal of Infant Observation* focusing on social work (1999), practitioners did begin writing about observing abused, disabled, and at risk children, and of increasing knowledge and enhancing empathy with such children. The observers mirrored the distress, inability to communicate and

isolation of these children in their accounts, thereby giving poignant insights into their worlds (Doyle, 2000). Organisations were observed specifically to contribute to child-protection training (Miles, 1999). Observation was used to show that a child was in considerable emotional need even though the abuse she had suffered had ostensibly been resolved some 6 years earlier (Mack, 1999). In 1999 S. Briggs and Canham pointed out that one of the functions of social work is to deal with the disturbed, the damaged and the distressed. They held that infant observation could assist the social worker to develop the capacity to tolerate the powerful emotional impact of this kind of work. It was shown that work discussion groups in which the details of interactions can be discussed, significantly support the work being done. Such discussion can give an appreciation in those involved in the work of its complexities and emotionally disturbing nature. The insinuation is that without a supervisory forum in which such thinking can occur, practitioners may not realise the weight of what they carry and inadequately digest it.

Covington (1991) commented that infant observation's emphasis on normality might in part be a response to the need to witness what is "good enough" (p. 74), in other words, that this might be a defensive process. Besides the huge anxieties generated in the observer by the experience of observing primitive emotional states (M.E. Rustin, 1989), S. Briggs and Canham (1999) noted that what one sees as a social worker goes beyond the "normal" pain of development. One sees the bleaker and more violent aspects of human nature, and in addition there are scarce resources to deal with it. S. Briggs and Canham (1999) also pointed to the difficulties of being able to see what is happening to children when what is happening is often abusive. They referred to a looking away that is compounded by a defensive organisational culture that has developed precisely in response to the painful nature of the work. They found that there is a general culture that serves to put a barrier between workers and children.

In the first book published on infant observation (Reid, 1997a) there is an important chapter focusing specifically on race, culture and context in infant observation (Ellis, 1997). It is interesting to note that Ellis began her career as a social worker and introduced child observation to social work training. She made the point that infant observation can be used, specifically by means of the seminar discussion, to understand how meaning is attributed to difference. Ellis (1997) observed a black baby born in Britain to West African parents. Both parents were professionals, but the family experienced serious financial difficulties when the father changed jobs and in fact had to move to a council flat in an area of considerable social deprivation, where racism existed. Thus the observation offered an opportunity to observe the effects of culture, racism and deprivation on the developing child. The seminar group often wondered about their own cultural assumptions and the observer admitted that it was hard for her to maintain a non-judgemental frame of mind. Fear of racism became an uncomfortable issue that paralysed the group at times. The child was seen to develop a strong capacity for survival despite a very absent mother who was struggling with her own dislocation. Ellis's (1997) account mentioned the difficulty of having all-white seminar groups and even acceded to power differentials impacting on consent to be observed. In her published account, however, the author again did not explicate the difficulties of relating cross-culturally to the mother.

By citing an observation by a student of a Nigerian family, S. Briggs (1999) showed the complexity of the interaction and the ambivalent feelings that arose. Two examples follow:

> I started the observation with a variety of feelings: a sense of privilege (not to say relief) that I had found a family willing to be observed; and a vivid awareness of my own whiteness as well as social/class differences

with this black family with neither my professional role nor the basis of an established friendship to draw on. There was a question for me about how free the mother might have been to make objections about the observation. …My feelings about this external context played a part in my reluctance to attribute meaning to what I observed in the early observations. My reports of the first observations reflect this tentativeness as well as my sense of being an outsider and not therefore "qualified" to name feelings. …I felt this most palpably on occasions where mother kept me waiting at the door or left me to see my own way out. (1999, p. 152)

The ending of the observation is difficult. Mother resorts to being asleep in the bedroom where she seems to be spending long periods of time. I do not get to see her to say goodbye. Maria leaks all over the place with diarrhoea and comes to me for the first time with arms raised to be lifted up. I hold her and find myself both moved and disturbed. (1999, p. 153)

Consciousness of difference seemed to prevent empathic communication. The observer relied greatly on the seminar group to see how depressed and troubled the mother was. The observations nearly came to a premature end when the mother stopped being home at the agreed-upon times. S. Briggs (1999) overtly referred to "the impact of difference" in this observation (p. 152) and held that "more written accounts of this kind of work are needed" (p. 154).

S. Briggs's (1997b) observation of the Bengali infant at risk (Hashmat) comprises one of the few accounts in the literature that raises the extensive problems inherent in observing across culture, race and socio-economic divides; in other words, where many differences exist. He wrote about using infant observation to discover the social world by making meaning of unknown, unusual or bizarre behaviour that one might encounter. The (often difficult) experience of observers came to the fore in such accounts, as well as the impact on the family. For example, a family may wish to hide certain aspects or experiences from an observer who stands outside their culture or socio-economic class, and demonstrate others. S. Briggs, a male observer, asked Hashmat's mother through a translator how she would feel about him observing, especially when she was breastfeeding (2002). She smilingly replied that she would not be breastfeeding at all. In the same family the father suggested that the observer might want to come later in the day so that he could observe all nine of his children. In other words, there were times when the observer was excluded, and times when he was encouraged to become more involved than he had offered to be. It is possible that behind these events lay cultural and gender prescriptions, such as breast-feeding being a female domain, and the importance of a large family.

With the more complex observation of newer subjects, the observer's degree of involvement is necessarily problematised. The more difficult the observation gets, the more the temptation to get involved (S. Briggs, 1997a). Secondly, there may be more involvement when studying something from inside, as in a participant observation of a social process. Mackenzie-Smith (1992) had limited engagement with her observees. Chiesa (1993) and Winship (2001) kept their engagement to minimum "courtesy contacts" and Winship (2001) responded to gestures initiated by the observees. In a community setting this stance of non-involvement may initially seem to be a way to redress the power imbalance of having a knowledgeable professional enter a poverty environment. It conveys a degree of respect and a willingness to listen and learn. However, in situations of great need, this stance could be felt to be very withholding. Alternatively, the silence could be seen as critical and attacking or persecutory. A great deal could be read into the silence, for example, that the observer and participant are silent because they feel they have nothing to say to each other - they are too different, from too different worlds, for there to be easy, relaxed speech - it seems impossible. Caplan (1998) felt the opposing pulls of her wish to respond to the baby's appeals to her during

the observation hour, and her realisation that this would feed unhelpfully into the family dynamics. Bardyshevsky (1998) did interact with the child being observed, in response partly to his urgent need for emotional help. In her work in a Hungarian residential nursery, Tarsoly (1998) consciously aimed at modifying the method into something more akin to participant observation in order to help carers build a more containing relationship with the infants.

Significantly, social work has begun to adapt the stringent two-year, once-weekly framework of observation in an attempt to make it more accessible and useful in social work contexts. It was felt that the "the rather monumental observational programme", initially conceived as taking place over two years, should be shortened in the training of social workers (S. Briggs, 1999, p. 147). The idea of applying the basic method to subjects other than infants was explored. In a review of social work literature during the 1990s, it was suggested that different and difficult subjects, such as elderly people and disabled children, could be studied. It was suggested that children up to the age of 5 should be discussed in the same seminar group:

> Whilst many of the central tenets of the Tavistock approach remain, the model has also been changed to meet the needs of those using it. Whilst this may on occasions lead to disagreements about "correct" observational procedure, it also means the introduction of ideas from outside which can enrich the conceptual framework of the Tavistock model. (S. Briggs & Canham, 1999, p. 6)

In conclusion, published infant observations outside South Africa invariably either overlook culture and poverty in their description, or promise to examine it in an in-depth way, and then fail to do so. It is possible that this is the result of a certain defensiveness that is activated when the observer is very different from her observation subjects. Perhaps for similar reasons, there is a tendency to romanticise cross-cultural contact, which may be a form of distancing (Kruger, 2005a, 2006). Very few observations have begun to explore what observing in this kind of setting actually entails. None have focused on this as a subject of study in itself. Engaging with difference in the observation setting has been shown to be an extremely complex and demanding task. The theory and practice of infant observation seems, at times, ill equipped to manage this task. It seems that South Africa, with its racially divided history, multiculturalism and huge disparities in social class, provides an ideal setting to explore some of the thornier issues in the practice of infant observation.

5.5.1.3 Subjectivity

The particular theoretical lens and intention of the observer must influence what is seen; or as Kohut (1984) put it, "There can be no observation without theory" (quoted in Covington, 1991, p. 70). Seligman (1993) wrote of the many different images of the infant that have been proposed (such as Klein's aggressively phantasising baby), all of which have relied, to varying degrees, on direct observation of infants and their caregivers. By implication of course, and what he did not say, is that the particular gaze of the theorist has influenced these images. Along these lines, Davies (2002), reviewing Likierman's (2001) account of *Melanie Klein: Her work in context*, criticised it for omitting the personal dimension. Klein, who developed theories about children, was a mother whose relationships with her three children were notoriously fraught (Grosskurth, 1986). Seligman (1983) quoted Freud (1911), who called his early characterisations of infant life a "fiction", by which they both meant that there was a process of guesswork involved (p. 274). Zinkin (1991, cited in Covington, 1991) pointed to the very different baby of infant

research and the one observed by analysts (who start off with a particular picture of the infant's emotional life). In fact Trevarthen (1998), referring to psychoanalytic descriptions of the baby, said that he did not "recognise the adventurous and mischievous infants I know in these fabricated accounts" (pp. 105-106). Trevarthen (1998) criticised S. Briggs's (1997a) observational study of infants at risk by pointing out that it was "too cognisant of the theoretical infant of Klein and Bion" (p. 110).

Infant observation, as discussed, has, however, attempted to minimise the impact of the observer's theory on what she reports. M.J. Rustin (1989) acknowledged that, just like anthropologists, psychoanalytically-informed observers go into their field with certain preconceptions and orientations in mind. The subjectivity of the method is admitted (compared to objective empiricism), but is not explored in any great depth in infant observation reports or infant observation literature more generally. From a social constructionist perspective it is thought to be impossible to record anything without several degrees of interpretation, on various levels. Perhaps this has not become a central issue in infant observation literature because of the choice of "normal" (read homogenous) and easier subjects, where differences between worldviews are minimised.

Infant observation has implied that it is possible, by an act of will and technique, to have an atheoretical gaze during the initial stages of the observation. Theorising at too early a stage by observer or seminar group is thought to be a defence against the pain of emotional experience (M.J. Rustin, 1989). There is no attempt to encode events prematurely. While this is explicitly resisted, it is important to ask whether it is possible to not theorise. Winship (2001) maintained that he was able to observe from "as far as possible, a position of zero intention (no hypotheses or predicted outcomes)" (p. 257) and compared this to Bion's start point -K.[4] The laudable aim here is to maintain an open focus without a search for wanted facts or truths. Even Bion, however, admitted that this is not wholly possible (Casement, 1985).

By using "everyday, non-theoretical language" (M.J. Rustin, 1989, p. 57), the imposition of preconceptions on to a situation is thought to be discouraged. This lack of theory also characterises the final paper that students write after the seminar process; a very abstract level of theory is not deemed necessary, in part because of the many kinds of professional work with which student observers are engaged. It is felt that the most important goal is to register the complexity of the phenomena of the observations and to engage with the emotional experience of observing. In other words, not everyone has the theory, and it is not really a prerequisite. The theory that *is* explored in the seminar groups is invariably psychoanalytic. Coll (2000) called his seminar group's theoretical framework "eclectic" (p. 25), including social learning tenets and problem solving, but also cited the use in seminars of specific works by psychodynamic practitioners such as Anna Freud and Winnicott.

Psychoanalytic theory may not make its way into students' final reports, but seminars are conducted by supervisors who have in-depth knowledge of psychoanalytic thinking. King (2002), writing from within the field of social work, described being convinced by the seminar group to take a different view of her observations:

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[4] By "minus K" Bion (1967) meant the mind's inability to know, to utilise relationship in order to create meaning, and to tolerate the recognition of reality and its limits. This concept is related to his idea of "failures in linking" explicated earlier.

I think recognising these differences of perception also helped me considerably to reflect on the comments made about my observation, where it was suggested that the lack of emotion expressed might be suggestive of maternal depression. At the time, I remember feeling quite angry with the members of the group, and particularly the group leader, as if they had turned my nice cheerful observation into something ashen and lifeless. However, when I returned to my write-ups of observations I could see that there was merit in these speculations and this was a useful avenue to explore in understanding the meaning of BB's behaviour. (pp. 218-219)

Conversely, a seminar group may take an ashen, lifeless, depressed mother and turn her into a nice cheerful one, using theory. Infant observation accounts may read as deceptively straightforward, detailed accounts. Their subtext, however, is all psychoanalysis. It is argued here that the student's awareness of why she is embarking on the observation endeavour, under whose auspices, literally and figuratively, and for what purposes, must influence her gaze in all ways. Her texts may not be full of psychoanalytic theory, but her choice of what to look at, what to remember, and what to record, conscious or otherwise, is partly determined by whom she is writing for. Therefore it is problematic to suggest that one can write theory-free accounts that are in "everyday" language and that approximate someone else's reality. What happens when infant observation becomes informed by a new purpose (as part of needs assessment) and with a wider view (to see what is there to be seen) and a different audience (community psychology practitioners)?

King (2002) was one of the few authors on infant observation to refer to the social construction of knowledge and to use the word "power" in a discussion of what infant observation can do (p. 220). In the seminar groups she "was puzzled and remain[ed] unclear why it was that each account of a young child that my colleagues gave seemed to mirror something of their own personality or preoccupations in the way mine had done" (2002, p. 218). Her puzzlement may have something to do with infant observation's reluctance to engage with the impossibility of giving a literal and factual account of what one sees.

Infant observers have often touched on the importance of the personhood of the observer as a tool, because the method focuses on emotions as the main object of study (Sternberg, 2005). Infant observation accounts are, by implication, full of the observer's feelings, and the feelings of the observed as mediated by the subjective presence of the observer. In fact, "the evolving relationships which are here the focus of study are themselves so delicate and transitory that they can only be apprehended by methods which involve an element of subjectivity" (M.J. Rustin, 1989, p. 69). Detachment and self-distancing (which occur in more behaviourally-minded research) are thought to be a barrier here (M.J. Rustin, 1989). While the infant observation literature frames the issue of the observer's subjectivity in this way (as the conduit for emotive processes), the complexity of what this implies is not engaged with from a social constructionist perspective. Issues of representation (Who is seeing, and who is writing? Who is reading, and who is hearing?) are particularly important in a postmodern age and in cross-cultural, politicised work.

In attempting to bridge community work and psychoanalysis, the specific view of social work as a practice in which relationships are central was asserted (S. Briggs, 1999; Doyle, 2000; Schon, 1983). This is an idea that has much to offer community observations. In such practice emotional engagement and an understanding of the dynamics underpinning exchanges between people are highlighted. The result is that sensitive, discerning practitioners (trained in observation) are placed within a welfare-orientated profession. Stripped of their professional role, such observers will, as has been shown, experience a great deal of anxiety and strain. Especially

where there is a language barrier and socio-economic and cultural differences exist, more verbal explanation may be needed, but less may actually be offered (see, for example, S. Briggs, 2002; Piontelli, 1985). In an observation across a socio-economic divide, Piontelli (1992) noted that "even now I know nothing about the premature birth" (p. 75). In other words, conversation in such contexts may be minimal. The quality of the gaze changes, depending on who is looking and who is being looked at, and under which circumstances. Context becomes a crucial factor to be considered. For example, in his study of juries, Winship (2001) described not actively seeking to gather data but a state of being with the observation that attempted not to impede the ingestion of experience - watching less to observe more. This degree of relaxedness is perhaps more possible in known environments. In foreign settings it may be harder not to watch. Everything changes depending on where it happens but, I have argued, infant observation accounts tend to gloss over context and not acknowledge this.

While the observer becomes trained in watching with an eye to impartial recording, the concept of being non-judgemental is a problematic one, especially in a racially divided country, and will be given due consideration in the present thesis. It is also more difficult to be non-judgmental when difficult and disturbing events or interactions occur in an observation. For example, Piontelli's (1992) account mentioned how upsetting and unbearable observations can feel in which children fail to develop well. Her description of the mother in Jack's observation indirectly conveyed her frustration with her.

There is some evidence from published observations that the actual subjects of observations are relationships (chiefly between mother and infant, or infant and family) rather than separate individuals. My argument is that all relationships in the observation space are important. In a cross-cultural setting, it is possible that the relationship with the *observer* needs to be recorded in equal detail, as a site for important information. This requires the description to be even more extensive. S. Briggs (1998), in his cross-cultural study of the Bengali infant, noted that "As Hashmat's observer, I became engaged in quite complex exchanges with him, his parents and his siblings, the extended family and friends, and the family's relationship to both British and Bangladeshi cultures" (p. 195). S. Briggs (1998) gradually felt less antagonised by the brothers' fights. He began to wonder about whether what he was observing held particular, different meanings in their context. He began to see his subjects as situated within a particular cultural milieu which had psychic consequences all of its own:

> I found that I was thinking about the difference between a playful, humorous interchange and its vicious counterpart, a violent enactment. I wondered again how toughness - the capacity to fight, to maintain a possession, or even one's own body boundaries - was crucial to an infant developing in these circumstances - and to the psychic survival of young Asian boys living in contemporary British society. (1998, p. 206)

At the same time, one has to wonder whether S. Briggs's reinterpretation may not have been the result of a defensive process. The many references to infants' resilience in infant observation accounts may defend against the painfulness of their vulnerability.

5.5.1.4 Language

Closely linked to the issue of the gaze and subjectivity of the observer is the use of language in infant observation. The observer is also an author. In psychoanalysis there is a long history of representing the state of mind of a

complex individual on paper through the eyes and experience of another one. M.J. Rustin (1989) reminded us that Freud's case studies required him to function "much as a writer might do" (p. 74). Similarly, observation reports might be more like fictions or artefacts than is generally recognised (M.J. Rustin, 1989). Even so, M.J. Rustin (1989) held that they are "committed to reaching as high a standard of literal accuracy and correspondence with observed fact as possible" (p. 74). Literal accuracy is a problematic concept from a social constructionist perspective. Also, it is impossible to remember everything that happens - we are invariably selective. This is a kind of selectiveness that may include not only the psychoanalytic perspective (which M.J. Rustin admitted to) but also our own histories, and, as the intersubjectivists call it, organisation of experience: "Our present understanding of anything or anyone is…inevitably limited by the historicity of our own organised and organising experience" (Orange et al., 1997, p. 89).

It is when it comes to a discussion about infant observation as research that some pertinent questions about the reliability of reports have arisen:

> If details are missing, is this sometimes to do with the nature of the family observed and the impact on the observer of these particular family dynamics? How accurate are the written transcripts when so much more information emerges during the seminar presentation? To what extent did we agree or differ about the meaning of what was being observed? (Emanuel, 1997, p. 167)

Trevarthen (1998) pointed out that "Ethologists attempting to see objectively (accurately and comprehensively) what animals do in their natural habitat have found that such delayed-notation technique tends to reinforce ideas brought to the observation as pre-judgements, and to filter out the unexpected" (p. 109). Trevarthen thus criticised S. Briggs's (1997a) observational research into infants at risk by saying that it relied on a data-recording method that is open to unconscious revision in the process of writing up. Therefore, rather than promoting "objectivity" as M.J. Rustin and others have suggested, writing up afterwards may actually filter the data even more in terms of preconceived notions. Trevarthen's (1998) argument can also be extended - unconscious revision is probably always present, regardless of when we write, and even when we are filming our data. Observation reports represent coherent narratives, with a beginning, middle and end - and the writer is inevitably ordering the material in terms of this storytelling. In such a narrative it seems it also seems likely that her own voice becomes central.

The fact that all observation reports have their own style, depending on who wrote them, is not really considered in the literature. Secondly, such reports are inevitably written for a particular audience. Whether they are read in supervision groups, or published, they always have a psychoanalytic audience, reading with a psychoanalytic lens. It is recommended that observers should, as is common practice in naturalistic observations, keep the language of recording "descriptive, non-selective, and non-specialist" (Piontelli, 1992, p. 14). Despite this suggestion of homogeneity, there are in fact many variations of focus and writing style across observation accounts. This may have to do with the largely unacknowledged subjectivity of the observer. Some observations lack description of the physical setting (see, for example, Besnard, Courtois & Fayolle, 1998): "She then has a period of calm sleep, with no further facial or body movements. I look around the room for a couple of moments, and as soon as I come back to Noémie I notice that her eyes are wide open; she looks at me, then goes back to sleep." (p. 68). An infant observation in a poor, cross-cultural context, however, acutely observed everything from the road leading to the house to the hidden parts of it:

I found the small, light blue house with white shutters that she described. There was a grassy patch to one side but bare earth from the door to the road. Used tires separated the dirt from the grass. A sturdy, tall, dark-skinned man was working on a car. (E. Gibson, 2002/3, p. 49)

It is very interesting that this happened where marked differences existed between the observer and observed, and where the observer moved into a community foreign to her. In another example of differing styles, Caplan (1998) wrote in far less detail than I have. Her attunement to "the breast's withdrawal at the outer edge of the feeds" (p. 7) is startling compared to the more literal approach of other reports, and strongly suggests that she was indeed interpreting in the writing up. It is also interpretation that leads the observer to "tell her (the mother) what I think" (p. 11). We see Caplan (1998) reflecting on her own experience, for example, "As the observation proceeds, I come to feel/realise" (p. 17), and convictions in her reports: "I believe that an observer not only receives projections from mother and baby, but also is internalised" (p. 19). As mentioned, some observers have noticed their struggle to write reports when things are too painful to witness (Lazar et al., 1998). From such struggles and variations in style it is clear that the idea of objectivity in recording other people's experiences is problematic. It is possible that infant observation reports, with their emphasis on reporting neutral and objective facts, are in some way avoiding the pain of the subjective experience, by censoring emotion in the language.

Infant observation has not yet explored language in a postmodern sense, namely as the construction of meaning in itself. Kruger (2005b) recognised that stories of the poor, and also psychological stories of the poor (which is what some infant observation accounts are) are in fact textual artefacts. The issue of language, and how it relates to power, will potentially be an important one to consider in the development of South African infant observation.

5.5.1.5 Power

Le Riche and Tanner (1998) explicitly drew attention to the fact that there is a "power lens" in infant observation (quoted in S. Briggs & Canham, 1999, p. 6). S. Briggs and Canham noted that power is an issue of particular importance for a profession like social work, which is constantly grappling with the abuse of power, often by adults towards children. In most published accounts, however, it seems as though the observer's own opinions about what is going on, seen from the vantage point of her own organisation of experience, is underplayed in favour of homogeneity of interpretation (as in King's account, 2002). Perhaps this is partly a product of Bick's legacy. Kruger (2005) has pointed out that discourses are used to shape all psychological data. The question arises whether there is enough reflexivity in the seminar group to consider itself critically too? This kind of meta-critique asks the group to stand outside psychoanalytic discourse in order to consider itself. What is spoken and who may speak (even, or perhaps especially, within psychoanalytic seminars) comprise issues of power (Kruger, 2005). This is not written about critically in the infant observation literature, however. It is possible that respect for psychoanalytic traditions and institutions prevents this (Malcolm, 1980, 1997).

S. Miller (1998), running seminar groups in South Africa, noted that "such courses involve issues of neediness and nurture" (p. 6). It is possible that in South Africa a greater culture of dependency on the seminar leader could exist due to a perception that s/he has the more "legitimate" knowledge, often gleaned through study abroad at the Tavistock. The question arises whether there will be even more neediness when the observer is working in very

difficult, deprived circumstances and also whether Tavistock knowledge will be able to support and contain that experience.

5.5.1.6 The mutual impact of observations

Many authors have commented on the fact that the infant observation experience affects the observer in profound and enduring ways (see, for example, Coll, 2000; Covington, 1991; Hatzor, 2003; Lobel, 2003). As noted, the impact on the observer is usually described as something intense, related to feeling strong primitive anxieties (S. Miller, 1997; L. Miller, 1989), but observing infants is also described as enjoyable (Covington, 1991; King, 2002) or even exciting and exhilarating (McFadyen, 1991). Many authors on infant observation refer to it as a privilege (S. Briggs, 1999; S. Miller, 1997). Sternberg (2005) pointed out, however, that there are observers who "have had the experience of [infant observation] and did not find it personally useful" (p. 7), although she did not elaborate on why not.

Covington (1991) maintained that infant observation has a role to play in the observer's own analysis by "getting in touch with the infant in themselves" (p. 73) and that the observer changes through the process of observation. Observation was portrayed as a site for creative interchange, growth and struggle and this was felt to be proof of something we cannot remember or always believe in our own analysis (Covington, 1991). Lobel (2003) showed how processing her own reactions to an observation led to a realisation that looking at the dyad revived painful feelings that she had as a first child gazing at her mother and infant sibling. It was suggested that we ultimately observe in order to learn something about ourselves and learning about oneself, Covington (1991) reiterated, is good for professional practice. She noted that there is often a match between observer and family. Covington (1991) went so far as to say that the chief value of infant observation lies in its impact on the observer and, specifically, in the impact of seeing as an act in itself. Covington's (1991) description is somewhat sentimental. There are other kinds of impact that the literature does not explore, such as being conscientised, transformed and/or depressed by the experience of being in very different socio-cultural settings, sometimes for the first time. Neither she, nor other authors who have written about the transformation of the observer, have really explored the experience of the observer when faced with more difficult subjects. Even in "ordinary" observations, the impact of the process on the observer seems to be regarded as secondary to her observations of the baby. In published accounts the observer's experience, including difficult feelings, may certainly be mentioned (as foregoing examples have illustrated) but this is by no means the primary focus.

M.J. Rustin (1989) held that a great deal of self-scrutiny is needed by observers to clarify the particular source of states of mind evoked by mother and baby. The observer needs to ask where overwhelming feelings are coming from. The seminar groups function as a space where some highly emotional interactions can be thought about. While some counter-transferential phenomena have been documented in seminar groups, there do not seem to be any published accounts of instances where the group or the leader were entirely overwhelmed by the observation material and *failed* to deal with it in a containing way. Perhaps infant observers and seminar leaders are reluctant to publish such experiences when they do occur. Sternberg (2005) admitted that in practice the seminar group may not always be a safe environment where there is freedom to play. She quoted Magagna (1987) who wrote of her

anxieties, when being supervised by Bick, that if she "disrupted the peaceful community" of the group, she might end up being the "unwanted baby" (Sternberg, 2005, p. 101). Sternberg (1998) acknowledged that seminar leaders and group members might struggle to address certain aspects of the material. Despite this, it is interesting to note that comments about the "persecuting nature" of some seminar groups experienced by Tavistock staff and at the Institute of Psychoanalysis were made in discussion forums and via "personal communication", rather than in print (Sternberg, 2005, p. 103).

The issue of the impact on the observer, which is considerable even under favourable circumstances, potentially becomes even more important in settings where there are power differentials. I argue that this is an area that needs to be explored in greater depth. Infant observation accounts in at-risk situations, cited previously, have shown that the degree of involvement by the practitioner can of necessity vary. The intensity of the observer's experience can also increase under such circumstances. For example, I have discussed S. Briggs's extremely difficult observation process wherein Hashmat was tortured by his siblings in the absence of maternal watchfulness (1997a). Because the observer was often the only adult present, he had to intervene at times when there was a threat to life. Similarly, Adamo and Magagna (1998) documented a young child's search for a private space with the observer, physically separate from the intense intimate relationship with the mother together with her new baby. Transferential functions assigned to the father by the child were mediated through the observer. This emotional space provided a boundary around the primitive emotions experienced by the child, thus allowing the development of some capacity for self-observation and reflection. The observer had to shift from identifying with the child's infantile feelings to being available for the mother, "providing emotional space for her concerns and understanding of her anxieties" (Adamo & Magagna, 1998, p. 22). Here the observer performed the function of the father, becoming a support for the mother's relationship with the child. Thus there were strong convergent pressures from both the mother and child on the observer to fulfil some missing parental functions. The observer recognised that she could not be a father substitute but could and did respond, in her role as observer, in ways that provided for the child and mother a rescuing space, support and understanding:

> In more favourable circumstances, the observer's role is an easier one. He (*sic*) is, so to speak, left comfortably sitting in his place, taking part, but only via his empathic attention, in the events which unfold. However this is not always the case. Sometimes the required cast is incomplete, some of the actors are missing and the observer is called more directly onto the stage. (Adamo & Magagna, 1998, p. 23)

At times the intensity of the relationship with the observer can affect the termination of the observation process. For example, in the above case the relationship with the observer had become extremely important for the young child, the mother, and other family members. There was a possibility that the child would act out destructively. "For this reason, it was felt that to keep rigidly to the pre-arranged conclusion of the observation after two years was inappropriate. A gradual weaning from the observer was therefore adopted" (Adamo & Magagna, 1998, p. 23). Monthly observations occurred for the subsequent year and sporadic visits and phone conversations after that.

Presumably infant observation would not be that popular or widespread if it were not generally felt to be a worthwhile experience. By this I mean that most observers find it sufficiently rewarding, enriching and educational, as well as not so uncomfortable as to terminate the process. Inherent in this are, of course, my own assumptions

that this is what constitutes a "worthwhile experience". It is also possible that some infant observers do not feel any of the above, but nevertheless continue with their observations for other reasons.

Observations are usually described as having a positive impact on families. In general, the roles in which the family casts the observer is focused on more in published accounts than the immediate and ongoing emotional impact on the observer. Some accounts tantalise by getting close to thinking about the bi-directional relational issues involved in observation, but then skim over them. For example, Maiello (1997b, 1998, 2000) maintained that she was interested in the observer's relationship with both the mother and the baby, but eventually made only a few comments about the mutual impact. The observer is most often described as "welcome" (Bick, 1964, p. 558), "quietly helpful", "sympathetic", "supportive" and "interest[ed]" (M.J. Rustin, 1989, pp. 61-62), although it is recognised that a mother might see an observer as a persecutory figure. I have, however, problematised the concept of being merely "present" at any time, but particularly when there are considerable differences between the observer and observed. The "complex question of the therapeutic function of observation within a family" (M.E. Rustin, 1998, p. 3) is perhaps raised most pertinently in young child observations, where the subject interacts more with the observer. In some cases the observer's presence seems to have had discernible effects on the evolution of the relationship between mother and baby during the process (M.J. Rustin, 1989). In others, the observer was only able to take full note of her possible significance for the mother long after ceasing the visits to the family.

The observer is often described as being able to experience some of the impact of the baby on the mother by means of her own feelings. The impact of the observer's presence on the mother, that is, how she feels about the observer, for a variety of reasons, is explored less. "The subjects of infant observation seem to be only to a small degree affected by the presence of an observer" (M.J. Rustin, 1989, p. 74). As described, observers are nowadays encouraged to listen for what is not explicitly said (unconscious communications). Such communications could be about the mother and baby, but equally about the observer herself. M.J. Rustin (1989) noted that "observers are encouraged to be sensitive to the mother's feelings about them", which she linked to the intensity of the situation of early infancy and the mother's own possible need for sympathetic attention (p. 67). This explanation does not take into account the possibility that the mother may have legitimate feelings, for example, of hostility, towards the observer because of a socio-political history. Difficulties in establishing rapport with the mother are explained in the literature either as an indicator of the mother's difficulties with her new situation, or as a sign of the observer's difficulties in personal relations (M.J. Rustin, 1989). Because there are so few cross-cultural studies, the impact of race relations on the relationship with the mother is not really considered. One needs to ask what else such difficulties in rapport could indicate. Infant observation may be too quick to explain relational phenomena solely in terms of transference, thereby neglecting "real" contextual issues.

5.5.2 The critique from within psychoanalysis

In a recent comprehensive review, Sternberg (2005) noted that there is "a substantial body within the psychoanalytic community who do not value infant observation" (p. 7). This criticism is not, however, based on social constructionist concerns. Besides those who simply do not find it personally valuable, allegations have been made that "the emphasis on the hypothesized internal experiences of the infant leads to a form of theoretical

brainwashing" (Sternberg, 2005, p. 7). Secondly, some authors have held that infant observation is insufficiently concerned with the unconscious (as epitomised in the work of André Green) (Sternberg, 2005). Sternberg (2005) argued that the latter point is invalid because it has arisen out of a failure to distinguish clearly between systematic infant observation research and psychoanalytic infant observation.

In American psychoanalytic circles there has been a burgeoning interest in the intersubjectivity between mother and child in infant research, by which is meant the way in which they relate (see, for example, Beebe & Lachmann, 2005; Murray, 1991, 1997). This has been seen as empirical evidence for the importance of theories focusing on early parent-infant interaction and its impact on development. The process of human relatedness is focused on. Secondly, the ways in which relating happens in allied ways in the psychoanalytic situation emerges with new clarity (Beebe, 2005; Beebe & Lachmann, 2005; Tronick, 2003). Speaking from within the Self Psychology paradigm, Teicholz was of the opinion that "although Kohut might feel differently now, were he alive in today's research climate, he actively questioned the relevance of infant research for psychoanalysis because he insisted on the empathic vantage point for treatment" (J. Teicholz, personal communication, April 24, 2007).

By contrast, I have yet to find any literature about the Tavistock model of infant observation, or in fact any other kind of observation, written from an intersubjective, contextualist perspective. By this I mean literature that considers the interplay of the subjectivities *of the observer and observed* (either in or outside the laboratory). Knoblauch, who has recently written with Beebe about forms of intersubjectivity in infant research and how that relates to adult treatment (Beebe, Knoblauch, Rustin & Sorter, 2005) was of the opinion that to date no one has examined this issue specifically (S. Knoblauch, personal communication, April 25, 2007). Amusingly, Donna Orange felt that it was "a very important question, but one that gets me rather blank stares when I raise it" (D. Orange, personal communication, May 8, 2007). Knoblauch noted that:

> There is an ongoing dialogue among psychoanalysts who believe in nomothetic research in which the subjectivity of the observer is not taken into account and those who find that stance "unscientific" because of the inevitability of the research leaving out so much of the interactive experience that shapes the observed as well as the observer. But that conversation is a much wider one including all kinds of other difficulties with psychoanalytic research. (S. Knoblauch, personal communication, April 25, 2007)

Tronick, who has done extensive research observations both in the laboratory and the home, commented that:

> In my experience there is little problem with "sitting in the corner" and then writing up your notes. Yes there is the inevitable observer effect but it can be minimized by visits establishing rapport and by visiting regularly, and spending some time with the mother at the end of the visit. A key is not to interpret or judge which is difficult because all mothers want to know that they are doing well and of course believe that you "know" the truth. Focusing on what the baby did can lead to mother feeling you are with her and that you care about who she cares about - the baby. (E. Tronick, personal communication, May 7, 2007)

Tronick acknowledged that "even the descriptive Tavistock approach is rather interpretive", but recommended using coding schemes as a guide to what to look for and as a corrective, and videotaping interactions (E. Tronick, personal communication, May 7, 2007). In other words, he worked within a different model. This chapter, and Tronick's comments above, have shown that there are clear differences between the classical Tavistock approach to observation, and other procedures where infant observation is used explicitly for research purposes. In overview

then, where infant researchers use intersubjective theory, it is to think about mother and infant, analyst and patient. Infant research thinks about observer/observed in terms of observer effect, which should be acknowledged but, some hold, can be counteracted.

There also seem to be lines drawn between the Tavistock's use of theory, related to both observation and clinical work, and theory used in other parts of the world. For example, in 1999 *Psychoanalytic Inquiry*, an American journal edited by Lichtenberg (a major contributor to Self Psychology), dedicated an issue to "Child psychotherapy: A report from the Tavistock Clinic". This was described as a "transatlantic collaboration" and a sample of "Tavistock thinking" (Daws, 1991, p. 124). The Tavistock's theoretical orientation was described as "mainly Kleinian, but open-minded with major strands of British Independent thinking" (a group defined as neither Kleinian nor contemporary Freudian, and including Winnicott) (Daws, 1991, p. 121). In other words, there were clear divides suggested between American Self Psychology and the Tavistock in the way this report was presented. As each issue of *Psychoanalytic Inquiry* is dedicated to a specific topic, response to the articles about infant observation did not occur in this particular journal. Similarly, it is noteworthy that intersubjectivity theory is not taught on the Tavistock's MA course in Psychoanalytic Studies (although Foucault and Lacan are). The Tavistock has, however, established a Refugee Team that focuses on thinking about how to intervene pragmatically and sensitively with minority populations like refugee children, where socio-economic and cultural differences exist between practitioner and client. This suggests that clinically these intersubjective aspects are indeed considered.

In another example of the "divide", Sternberg (2005), in her authoritative research on infant observation as a training method, discussed "the therapist's inner instruments", in order to ask what infant observation might contribute to the development of such skills (p. 43). Talking about the new recognition of the therapist as a "'real' person", she reviewed theorists such as Greenson and Klauber (p. 55). Prominent American intersubjectivists such as Orange, Atwood and Stolorow were noticeably absent. Her concluding comment was that there is an increased emphasis on the clinician's use of him or herself, "even among those who are less interested in the intersubjective approach" (2005, p. 60). In other words, this was posited as an optional theory. Her link with observational practice was that by watching the mother-infant relationship, a therapist should become "aware of the intersubjective relatedness of the analyst-analysand relationship" (2005, pp. 112-113). There was no specific link made with the relatedness between the observer and her observees. It seems that a thorough social constructionist investigation of the notion of observation, in whatever form it occurs, has not been conducted to date.

5.5.3 Conclusion: A critique

In summary, from a social constructionist perspective it can be argued that traditional infant observation neglects the salient issue of context. It largely avoids issues of difference (including racial, cultural and socio-economic difference) by predominantly focusing on middle-class subjects, or by limiting the recording and discussion of the difficulties that arise in the observation space related to this. Certain sectors of society, such as gay and single-parent families, are avoided. It can be argued that this constitutes a sexist and exclusionary practice. Infant observation also insufficiently considers the observer's impact on the observations; in other words, the fact that who she is will impact on what happens in observations, and what is seen, remembered and recorded in them. Linked to

this, it needs to think about how language constructs and does not just represent reality, and to consider more explicitly how power is pervasive in all relating, and in the production of knowledge. Lastly, the point was made that infant observation could be thought of as a powerful social relationship that has a bi-directional impact, potentially leading to profound change. These issues are not commonly considered in existent critiques of infant observation to date.

5.6 Infant observation in South Africa

In the following section the way in which infant observation has been used in South Africa to date will be considered. Firstly, there is a classical tradition of Tavistock-style observing. Secondly, infant observation has been used to explore culture. The controversial issues considered above will again be raised where applicable in the discussion that follows.

5.6.1 The classical tradition

While a rich international literature on the theory and practice of infant observation exists, South African literature on the subject is sparse. Infant observation has been studied in South Africa since 1987 (for 20 years) (S. Miller, 1997) compared to nearly 60 years of use in the United Kingdom. Perhaps because it is a relatively new field, South African infant observation has not yet extended the developments pioneered by Piontelli, S. Briggs, Winship and others into using observation as research, reviewed above. Instead, there seems to be a desire to adhere to the more classical form of infant observation (see, for example, Lubbe, 1996). The practice of classical psychoanalysis is not well established here, and perhaps for this reason there is a general trend to adhere to it very strictly as an idealised model (M. Solmes, personal communication, August 8, 2006). It should also be noted that there are different emphases in South African psychoanalytic practice, including a flourishing interest in Self Psychology. There is only one kind of psychoanalytic training available in this country, and that is a Jungian one (K. Gibson, 2002b). There seems to be a notion in South Africa that the Tavistock is the only institution for psychodynamic training; this is so despite the fact that developments in the United States have been prominently used by, for instance, the Self Psychology Group in Cape Town. Practitioners who have had some training overseas (often at the Tavistock) return and mentor others by, for example, running infant observation courses (S. Miller, 1998). However, South Africa has similar social problems (and worse) to those that gave rise to innovations overseas by analytically minded social workers. Therefore I argue that the potential exists for South Africa to provide an extremely rich contribution to the study of the social environment and its impact on infants, using infant observation.

In South Africa the Cape Town Society for Psychoanalytic Psychotherapy (CTSPP) has been offering an infant observation module since 2001. It does not form part of a clinical training course per se, but has recently been accredited by the Tavistock Clinic and the University of East London as part of a Postgraduate Diploma in Therapeutic Communication with Children. As mentioned, observation courses in this country predominantly aim at enriching practitioners (chiefly psychologists). South Africans such as Lubbe, S. Miller and Davies have attended international infant observation conferences from their inception (S. Miller, 1997); they have also run

seminars in South Africa in Durban, Johannesburg and Cape Town, and have published accounts of South African observations (Davies, 1998; Davies, Horwitz & Wirz, 2005; Lubbe 1996; S. Miller, 1998).

S. Miller (1997) extended a call for the endeavours of infant observation seminars to lead to research projects and to future publications focusing on the South African experience. What has been published falls short of this, both in amount and focus. There are very few published South African accounts of any sort, despite this call for data a decade ago. One wonders why, with regular observation seminars running in Johannesburg and Cape Town, there has been so little publication (local or otherwise) of observations, of which there must be plenty. The accounts of Lubbe (1996) and Davies et al. (2005) are among the first. In both these cases students' accounts were published collectively, under the auspices of a seminar leader. This link with the Tavistock may provide credibility and replicate some of the hierarchy and power issues at play in psychoanalytic circles in other countries (Malcolm, 1997). Internationally, Maiello (2000), a visiting Italian analyst, has published on her South African observations subjects, as has S. Miller (1998) (a South African who teaches at the Tavistock). To date, very few South Africans have published in the *International Journal of Infant Observation*.

South African observations in deprived settings seem to be almost non-existent, and certainly have not been published. There are no cross-cultural studies by South Africans published in South African journals. The complexity of observing in community settings as a South African has not been explored anywhere. South African accounts that are being published locally and internationally often do contain some kind of cross-cultural content. There are three important observation accounts that have come out of South Africa, which will be considered under separate headings (**5.6.2.2**). Yet they fail to really engage with the political and cross-cultural issues encountered during observation. In my experience of three observation seminars during the course of the present study, and as testified to by the majority of published accounts (see, for example, Davies et al., 2005; Lubbe, 1996), infant observers in seminar groups in this country seem mostly and consciously to choose predominantly white, middle-class subjects to observe. Poverty settings, in which infants are at risk and observers acutely experience the complex relationships resulting from our socio-political history, are not chosen. This means that data are being produced about minority infants only.

The first contribution from South Africa to the *International Journal of Infant Observation* was from S. Miller (1998). She described how she and a colleague commuted once a month from Johannesburg to a seaside town to conduct infant observation seminars. At this time infant observation was in its early stages in South Africa and so this was pioneering work. S. Miller's (1998) account of "baby Rodrigo" (born to father "Filipo") described an infant in the comfortable home of a 30-something professional couple in a semi-rural area. No mention was made of the family's or observer's cultural positioning. When the mother was at times ambivalent towards the observer, this was explained as a process of splitting,[5] and not linked in any way to their possible but unstated differences. Baby Rodrigo had a middle-aged African carer, who had three children of her own. Her interaction with the observer and

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[5] A primitive defence mechanism described by Klein and related to the paranoid schizoid position, in which "bad experiences are split off and projected into the object which is then felt to be persecuting and dangerous and especially threatening to the good experiences. In order to protect the good experiences, they too may be projected into the object which then becomes idealised" (Bateman & Holmes, 1995, p. 39).

the child lacks detail and forms a uniformly harmonious picture. The observer did not acknowledge or investigate what could essentially be a situation of cultural triangulation in South Africa in 1998. Similarly, Lubbe (1996) described four South African infants, but did not provide any information about their culture or socio-economic contexts. Davies et al. (2005) wrote a pioneering article entitled "Infant observation in South Africa", but again the observations included did not mention cultural and/or socio-economic factors at all, nor examine what their impact might have been if there were differences between observer and observed in these areas.

An early example of South African infant observation can be found in Gering's (1994) MA thesis, completed at Rhodes University. The more traditional goals of infant observation, namely commenting on development, and linking it with clinical practice, were achieved. She mentioned that her three observation subjects all came from different socio-economic and cultural backgrounds, but never explicitly stated what they were; rather, similarities were highlighted. Gering (1994) quoted Robson (1993), who considered observation to be an appropriate technique for getting at "'real life' in the 'real world' as it facilitates authentic happenings" (p. 29). She did not unpack the problematic issue of claiming to represent something authentic in the world of observable fact by means either of video or written reports. Her own subjectivity was overlooked. Despite stating that "Variables such as age, class, gender and ethnic background can influence the quality of the interaction as well as affect the observation either positively or negatively", Gering did not explore difference in her study (1994, p. 30). In a rather pat conclusion, she stated that further research has to be done in relation to different cultures and various forms of childcare.

The above-mentioned accounts are disappointing in their failure to engage with the challenges of observation in cross-cultural and deprived South African settings. Below, a consideration of the ways in which infant observation principles have been used specifically to work with these issues (also in community psychology) will form a background for my review of classical infant observations that have been conducted in neglected settings in South Africa.

5.6.2 Other uses

Besides the traditional functions of infant observation, some authors have suggested that in South Africa it may serve an additional function of studying culture in a non-judgemental way. Ellis (1997) wrote, "In my view, observation offers the possibility of studying 'differentness' in ways which need not be characterised by schism, fear or opprobrium" (quoted in Maiello, 1998, p. 18). Publishing the proceedings from the Second International Conference on Infant Observation in a Southern African journal, S. Miller (1997) (a South African) wrote that:

> The study of infant observation and its applications seems particularly appropriate for use in South Africa. The observer enters into the family as a privileged student intent on learning and not judging. Susan Reid says in her introduction to Developments in Infant Observation (1997) "the impact of this 'open-minded, naturalistic observation' is that the student is encouraged and supported to see what is there to be seen and not look for what they think should be there". This is, I think, an excellent antidote to the danger of imposing a Eurocentric perspective on infant mental health research in South Africa. (p. 166)

Infant observation has thus been proposed as a tool in which a non-judgemental, unbiased view can be taken on otherness in the South African context. Following on from this, it was suggested that the Eurocentric mindset and

its theories can be left out of the picture, while something spontaneously South African is left to emerge. However, these ideas can be problematised. As previous examples have shown, it is not easy to abandon the Tavistock mould. The classical observation frame may occlude aspects of what we see, direct us to look at others, or defend us from looking at all. It will furthermore be asserted here that it is impossible, in a cross-cultural South African setting, to be non-judgmental and completely lacking in prejudice. When Maiello (1998) observed in a South African township, she was perhaps able to call herself "non-judgemental" because she is European and presumably unaffected personally by her own positioning in the socio-political history of South Africa. Maseko (2001), a South African also working in South Africa, similarly described the observation hour as one in which one "observes without selecting or judging and without drawing immediate conclusions" (p. 42). Maseko (2001) claimed that she could "record systematically", but this underplays the selectivity of our gaze, and the way in which who we are inevitably colours what we see. Especially in a cross-cultural setting, novel features of the setting may claim even more attention. Maseko was a black woman observing a black family, albeit with cultural (Sotho/Xhosa) differences. Prejudice and judgement presumably come more strongly into play when the observation presents an opportunity for black/white contact in South Africa.

5.6.2.1 Infant observation principles in community work

In South Africa no evidence has been found of the use of specific infant observations as a tool to inform community interventions. Infant observation has not been used for the purposes of research into unknown communities, or as part of a needs assessment process to date. Community psychology consultation work in South Africa has, however, drawn on infant observation principles through the field of organisational observation (K. Gibson, 2002b), as discussed in Chapter Three. Elements of infant observation can also be seen in some cross-cultural interventions in South Africa. For example, in an account of a low-income mother-infant therapy conducted by Berg (2001), she demonstrated that a lack of observation of local custom could result in a failed therapy, and even in tragedy (infanticide). South Africans have also used infant observation for research into treating postpartum depression. Taking the ideas contained in programmes like *Watch, Wait and Wonder* and *Sure Start* further, the Thula Sana mother-infant interaction programme aimed to "create a space in which the unspeaking baby can be thought about" (Tomlinson & L. Swartz, 2002). Community health workers helped to develop the ability of mothers to recognise the individual capacities of their babies and the nature of their developmental needs. They also attempted to facilitate the engagement between mother and infant, partly through emotional support of the mother (Burmeister-Nel, Spedding & De Villiers, 2004; Cooper et al., 2002; Tomlinson, 2003; Tomlinson & L. Swartz, 2002).

5.6.2.2 Infant observations in cross-cultural and deprived settings

Only three published observations conducted in a South African township have been found to date. All appear in local journals; two of them in *Psycho-analytic psychotherapy in South Africa*, the only local journal of its kind. An Italian analyst visiting South Africa (Maiello, 1998, 2000) conducted the only white/black cross-cultural study among them, and published accounts of it both locally and in the *International Journal of Infant Observation*. It is

therefore possible to review this literature in some depth. These accounts will be discussed as important examples of what has been achieved in South African infant observation and what has been omitted.

5.6.2.2.1 Nhlapo

In Cape Town infant observation has been used as part of the training of psychiatric nurses and psychiatrists who work with children at the Red Cross Children's Hospital (Nhlapo, 1990). Nhlapo (1990) documented a year-long observation done in Gugulethu as part of her qualification in Advanced Psychiatric Nursing (Child Elective). As described in Nhlapo's (1990) article on her observation in the journal *Nursing RSA Verpleging*, the course shows some divergences from the Tavistock model: unusually, attendance by the observer at labour was requested, and an obstetric history taken. Visiting time was specifically arranged at bathing and feeding times for maximum interaction. Visits were conducted fortnightly instead of every week. As at the Tavistock, selection of easier subjects occurred: there was a specific request for mothers who were married and likely to stay at home. Two-thirds of the mothers wanted to prolong the contact when the course had ended. Nhlapo (1990) observed a young couple from South Lesotho, which was by chance the same place she came from. She said, "They felt they could trust me. As a result we were able to talk freely about our culture and customs" (1990, p. 18). Anderson (who ran the course) noted, in her introductory comments in the article, that:

> (The observer) was familiar with the language and customs but subsequently did further reading on the subject. She and the mother were very much on the same wavelength. The importance of culturally matching the observer and family must be stressed. Working through an interpreter is very difficult, as his or her interpretation of the question may differ from the observers (*sic*) to a marked extent, which alters the feedback. Only the empathy of people who have mutual trust and understanding can elicit this sort of information. It cannot be obtained by questioning from one of another group, who the mother might feel would not understand, or treat with respect, this sort of material. (Nhlapo, 1990, p. 18)

The taboo on questioning the mother is interesting here, and presumably relates to Bick's (1964) original prescription. The potential need to ask was, however, implicitly acknowledged. It seems significant that three South African accounts (Gering, 1994; Maiello, 1998; Nhlapo, 1990) asserted that questioning the mother, contrary to Bick's recommendations, might be necessary as part of a cultural investigation of sorts. Nhlapo's (1990) observation account focused largely on cultural phenomena, such as Basuto customs around marriage and childbearing. Greater detail than usual was recorded about socio-economic status and the family's variable sources of income. The family experienced financial difficulties, but the effect of these on the family were explained only in practical terms, such as the father's family moving in and contributing toward maintaining the house. Later, the couple moved into a small room behind the house that the father had made of iron sheets as "they wanted Privacy" (*sic*) (p. 20). Nhlapo did not mention or examine the class difference between her and the participants, and how this might have impacted on the observation. There is some over-simplification in Nhlapo's account, perhaps because of the degree of sameness and identification recommended by Anderson:

> Our customs are slowly going to die out. It is important to record them so that our children's children will learn of the heritage that comes from their forefathers. I think the ending will be a happy one as Tshidi will rear Didi in the country of her birth, according to their long established customs. (1990, p. 20)

The focus on culture in Nhlapo's (1990) account misses the impact of poverty on the developing child and on the family as a whole. This is simply not recorded (in the published account, at least). One wonders whether the familiarity of the observer with the cultural milieu obscured the effects of poverty on this family. There seems to have been a predominant interest in shared culture, to the detriment of a deeper investigation of how poverty affected the internal world of the infant. It appears then that the observer's subjectivity can dramatically skew her account, depending on her own history and interests, and her positioning in relation to the subject. And yet this is not reflected on.

5.6.2.2.2 Maseko

Maseko (2001) recorded her experience of observing a second-born infant residing with an extended family in a township setting. Maseko, a middle-class, Sotho woman and an educational psychologist, was part of a two-year infant observation seminar organised for the psychoanalytic study of the early development of children (in Johannesburg). Interestingly, she conceptualised the observation's aim as "studying the strengths and weaknesses of the holding environment", which then gives an understanding of how the baby's internal world is shaped (2001, p. 42). This observation is closest in setting to the present study, with the important difference that the family was middle class, with a Xhosa father and a Sotho mother. Their stay in the township was temporary. The observation was conducted in Sotho and Xhosa.

There was some ambivalence towards the observer. The parents did not let Maseko know when the child was born, despite having said that they would. Yet Maseko noted in conclusion that she became part of the extended family in a way, and that the whole family came to visit her when she was ill in hospital. Maseko highlighted the impact on the mother/baby relationship of living in an extended family, the theme of cultural differences (Xhosa/Sotho), and the use of songs in development. The mother also spoke to the observer about her conflict between Western and traditional medicine. Maseko mentioned that the legacy of apartheid left crime and deprivation, but countered that there is also a vibrant culture and strong community spirit in townships. Hers is one of the few infant observation accounts to mention apartheid by name. She also examined her positioning as a psychologist towards the family's cultural one in some depth. Both parents and the mother's extended family were described as friendly and welcoming towards the observer, but the father's family was described as uncomfortable with the presence of a psychologist, which might "interfere with their tradition" (p. 43) and be an intrusion on the mother and baby. The older sister showed mixed feelings, including hostility, towards the baby, and would often seek attention from the observer when the mother-infant bond seemed too close to bear. The observer was described as the baby's "visitor". The relationship to the observer was thus considered on a number of levels. The relationship with the mother seemed significant:

> In this observation I was eager to see the baby, but this was difficult because the mother seemed to need my attention. What struck me was the mother's recollections about her own childhood and details of her own mothering experience. She felt like a little girl left alone to look after a child who needed a wise adult in attendance. (Maseko, 2001, p. 44)

The way in which the mother used the observer for her own emotional needs was striking and central in Maseko's account. The mother spoke freely to the observer and even confided in her. There was immediate evidence of

transference phenomena (abandonment was an early theme). The relationship was not simple: at five weeks the observer arrived to find a ceremony with lots of guests in progress, and felt surprised that the mother had not warned her about this. There was pressure from the maternal grandmother on the observer to intercede with the mother related to carrying out traditions. The observer was sent to the mother's family house one day when there was an instance of bereavement. Impartiality and a non-interventionist stance thus became difficult. There was no detailed description (at least in the published account) of the surroundings. About the baby in relation to her social environment, Maseko wrote:

> In addition, her environment seems to allow space for both physical and mental exploration. The culture of singing, dancing and township music amongst other activities were common. With these activities Mpendulo seemed ready to become part of family and township life. (2001, p. 50)

While this is well observed, there is a sense in which the struggle with poverty underlying township life was not engaged with in the account, perhaps because this family was a middle-class one. Presumably the observer engaged in a degree of cross-cultural observation (Xhosa/Sotho) and may have felt some of the tension relating to this, but this was not discussed. Nor did Maseko explore her impact on and "use" for the family in depth.

5.6.2.2.3 Maiello

In 1998 Maiello, an Italian analyst, conducted a 3-month observation with a Xhosa woman hailing from the Eastern Cape, who lived with her paternal aunt in a tin shack in a township near Cape Town. Maiello's (1998) account raised important questions and considerations about the study of culture through psychoanalytic technique. Her observation goal was stated as gaining first-hand experience of similarities and differences in modes of communication between an African mother and her infant. She referred to the fact that the method of infant observation has been developed within the framework of Western psychoanalysis, and that her observing eyes were trained in Western culture. She hoped that this could facilitate the discovery of differences. Significantly, she mentioned being particularly alert to her counter-transference reactions and to the "*adaptations* that the observational setting might need to be both acceptable to an African family and useful in another cultural context" (p. 18; italics added).

Maiello (1998) noticed asking more questions and talking more than would be usual for her in a European setting. The issue of language was mentioned, both as containing the essence of a culture, and as an instrument of power. Chiefly, Maiello (1998) made observations about the constant physical contact between mother and child and how this related to the concept of psychological birth (citing Mahler, 1975). Of interest to the present study is that Maiello (1998) became aware of the baby growing up in a noisy environment filled with radio music, humming, swaying and singing (also as a way to soothe the restless infant). There was intense tactile interaction, but an absence of the "loving gaze" we have come to expect in European mothers. The baby did not fix his gaze on his mother or objects, and still had a liquid and static quality at the age of 7 weeks, to the point that the observer worried about his eyesight. She pointed out that in Western eyes, the baby may have been interpreted as passive - but in his own culture, he was in a state of *mdlezana* (an undifferentiated mother-infant union). Shared mothering

was observed, as evidence of African individuals being deeply rooted in community, versus the individualistic ethos of the twentieth-century Western world. The issue and impact of poverty were not mentioned.

About her own role as observer, Maiello (1998) wrote that she was aware of what a "totally unusual figure" (p. 22) she was in the mother's relational patterns, and that she was suspicious and withdrawn in the first encounter, which she opted to have not at her home, but at the mother-infant unit. She adapted her observational attitude to make it acceptable to an African family. For example, the emotional atmosphere in the home was felt to change only when the observer spoke of having grown-up children and a grandchild herself. The mother said, "Here is your Grandma" and gave the baby to the observer to hold (1998, p. 23). Maiello (1998) spoke of searching for the "right emotional distance that allowed me both to meet and observe the three members of this family" (p. 23). She said that she was "very conscious of the weight of the historical asymmetry of being a white person asking black persons to correspond with a wish of mine" (p. 23) and cited Ellis (1997) on the issue of consent as a site where there are obvious power differentials between the observer and observed. For Maiello (1998), finding the right position meant leaving behind professional and interpretive tools, and "as far as possible" culturally determined preconceived ideas. Active positioning, she held, was not involved:

> It had more to do with listening and allowing the family to find the right place for me at the beginning. Only then could I adjust my own emotional perceptive capacity and use my eyes to see more and better. If cultural factors do play a role in psychic development at all, *their acknowledgement is the condition for beginning* not only to explore the depth of their potential impact on the members of another culture, but also to learn about the relativity of our own cultural identity. (1998, p. 24; italics added)

In 2000 Maiello refined her ideas about this observation. In her attempts to try to understand intrinsic cultural otherness as it manifests both externally and internally, her goals came closest to those of the present study. She was able to admit that cross-cultural observations add complex and particular new dimensions, not only in terms of interpreting the material. She noted that she remained more self-conscious of her role of observer than usual. However, her conclusion is somewhat disappointing. She maintained that transcultural observation was useful, but was essentially an application of the method:

> I strongly feel that the *infant observation* of students in *psychoanalytic training* (Bick, 1964) should remain in a shared cultural setting. This will help the observer expose himself (*sic*) entirely to the emotional experience in the interpersonal and intrapsychic dimension and receive the full impact of the primitive mental states which find expression in the unfolding relationship of every mother-child couple during the infant's first weeks of life, without having the temptation of exploring possible cultural aspects at the same time and of having to deal with the complex trans-subjective issues inherent in a transcultural infant observation. (2000, pp. 91-92)

In other words, cultural aspects were thought to lie outside the real domain of infant observation and cross-cultural observations were portrayed as too complex for the student observer to manage. There is a further assumption here that trans-subjectivity can be avoided as long as we observe in our own cultural group. S. Miller indicated that she did not agree with Maiello's conclusion (S. Miller, personal communication, February 5, 2007). Maiello's (2000) attitude also stands in sharp contrast to S. Briggs's assertion that "understanding diversity is a priority for all engaged in contemporary therapeutic work with children and families, and this is a complex field where contexts of difference increase uncertainty of meaning" (2002, p. 193). In other words, considerations of culture are mandatory even, or especially so, when students are training.

5.6.2.2.4 Others

Grier (2002) observed a South African child in an immigrant Asian family living in Britain. The observer was herself Asian. Like Nhlapo (1990), Grier (2002) held that her own background and perceptions could usefully inform her understanding of aspects of childhood in the Asian community. She made the point that both observer and observed were outside their original culture. She was able to supplement her account of the mother and child with comments about their culture stemming from her own insider perspective, for example: "In Meena's family's culture, it is customary for a woman to be supported by her mother at the time of her baby's birth" (p. 95). She focused on factors in the infant's life stemming from the family's experience of dislocation from its original culture, and also on how cultural factors affected the family's capacity to contain and nourish its children. Here, again, as in Nhlapo's (1990) account, her subjectivity lent a particular focus in the material. She produced an account that compared anthropological accounts of Hindu culture with what she observed. This is quite unusual. Also of great value are her reflections on the dynamics between herself and the family, in a cultural sense. She showed that the way in which the observer and observed relate has a great deal to do with conscious and unconscious comparisons and an evaluation of the distance between them. She noted, for example, an expectation of intimacy because of the shared experience of being Asian and away from home:

> When I first met Suraj, he seemed full of a lively curiosity and interest in me. He soon brought out some photographs to show me. They were fairly recent photos of himself and his family. I was reminded of a popular Asian tradition of proposals for marriage which commences by exchanging photographs of the prospective bride and/or bridegroom and their families. I wondered if, unconsciously, Suraj and his mother were keen to introduce me to the "inner circle" of the family and might have been playing with the idea of whether we would "make a match"? (Grier, 2002, p. 115)

5.6.3 Conclusion: A critique of South African infant observation

In conclusion and overview, there have been no published observations conducted within coloured families in South Africa. The only recorded observation of a low-income family focused on cultural phenomena and did not explore the impact of the socio-economic differences between observer and observed (Nhlapo, 1990). The only cross-cultural observation was between a European analyst and a black family, and it was very short (Maiello, 1998). It is pertinent that a sense of discomfort with the observer occurred in the cross-cultural observation and in the observation where a black, Sotho psychologist was seen as anti-tradition (in other words, a cultural issue) (Maseko, 2001). Otherwise, black observers seemed to find themselves trusted and even amalgamated into the family by their black subjects. It was noted that South African observers tend to choose observation subjects that are most like themselves, either in terms of culture or socio-economic status, or both. Two authors raised the issue of language difficulties (as potential and actually problematic) (Nhlapo, 1990; Maiello, 1998). Only one author (Maiello, 1998, p. 19) mentioned the word "power" in her account, and reflected that the modality of infant observation may need to undergo change in order to be relevant in the context of a non-Western culture. Poverty and its effects were not addressed in any of the accounts. The observers all seemed to have slightly different goals or agendas. These signs of flexibility are promising, because they suggest that infant observation could potentially make adjustments for use in the South African scene. On the other hand, there seems to be even less awareness in

these accounts of important issues such as language, subjectivity, power and relationship than in international accounts.

5.7 Points of departure

Following on from the critique of both international and South African infant observation above, and for the purposes of the present study, infant observation will be reframed below as a psychoanalytic ethnographic community endeavour. This is an attempt at synthesising the three theoretical paradigms that have been discussed in the literature review (Section Three). It is thought that this three-way approach will help to address the issues raised in my critique.

5.7.1 Towards infant observation as an ethnographic endeavour

In Chapter Four I argued that what psychoanalysis in general adds to ethnographic projects is a consideration of unconscious meanings, emotion and relationship in a thoughtful process that admits uncertainty. In this section I will consider the potential contribution that the particular psychoanalytic tool of infant observation can make to the ethnographic endeavour. The parallels between infant observation and ethnographic practice may become even more prominent when an observation is conducted in a community setting, as part of a needs assessment process. Like much ethnographic fieldwork, such observation will comprise cross-cultural contact across socio-economic boundaries, with the goal of learning something about a group of people by going out into the field to be among them. The present dissertation argues that an ethnographic lens, and specifically a postmodern one, is an essential adjunct to this process, because it is one way to admit and engage with the enormous complexity of such a task.

Careful observation is fundamental to both ethology and psychoanalysis (Piontelli, 1992). Piontelli (1992) referred to her "field techniques" and compared her observations of foetal life to explorations of a distant and faraway world (p. 15). Piontelli (1992) tried to form in her mind a kind of "ethogram" of the foetus within its natural environment (p. 9). In both ethnography and infant observation, the issue of the degree of participation in the lives of the participants arises. As discussed above, several authors, including Bick (1964), have likened infant observation to participant observation. Many have noted that observers have a role of some significance in the lives of the families they visit, even when they try to be passive or non-interventionist (Briggs, 1999; Piontelli, 1992). Both infant observation and ethnography observe in natural settings. The infant observer can be thought of as a kind of urban anthropologist, in the sense that she moves into "some hidden segment of the modern city" in order to study people in the course of their daily lives (Emerson, 1983, p. 1). Like ethnography, infant observation has suggested that it is possible to learn first hand, by being closer rather than distant.

Both paradigms aim at being sensitive to the particularity of a group or situation. As a form of research, infant observation is extremely close to its participants, because it pays such acute attention to what is happening in the room. Infant observation can help ethnography to be more "experience-near" (Geertz, 1976, quoted in Emerson, 1983, p. 25), because it attempts to become deeply involved with "the subjective meanings" of the people being observed, including the unconscious ones (M.J. Rustin, 1989, p. 56). Emerson (1983) maintained that in fieldwork

the ethnographer feels subject to the codes of the people she lives amongst, and similar assertions could be made about visiting a family every week for a year. The ethnographic preoccupation with locally meaningful context can be paralleled with the desire, in infant observation, to understand particular meanings. It is possible, as anthropologists and infant observers alike have shown, that "living with" a particular group of people can create the kind of connection that breaks down prejudice and increases empathy, as well as being revealing of the observer, who also learns something about herself in the process.

Description and exploration are important facets in both paradigms. A preliminary descriptive phase is central to anthropological disciplines and the formation of hypotheses usually takes place in this phase (Piontelli, 1992). Piontelli (1992) cited Tinbergen (1969) when she maintained that you cannot "afford to rush through the preparative descriptive phase and through exploratory watching of natural events" (p. 24). Speaking about both foetal observation and ethological work more generally, Piontelli (1992) held that quantitative methods may never be fully applicable to the type of study that centres on the individual and her inner as well as environmental world. Like the field anthropologist, the psychoanalytic observer needs enough latent expectations and conceptions to give coherence to what she is seeing, but also needs to remain open-minded and receptive to the experience of the observation as it develops:

> They also have to be prepared to respond and think about new experiences, both of the families observed and of themselves, which may not easily or immediately relate to their preconceptions at all. This is not altogether different from the situation of field observers doing anthropology or sociology. (M.J. Rustin, 1989, p. 57)

This is an important consideration for the infant observer who uses the method in novel settings. But what happens when unprecedented issues arise? Specifically, will the seminar group, steeped as it is in certain ways of seeing, have the flexibility to work with new phenomena that perhaps demand new responses from the observer? Will their theory be sufficient to contain and explain the experience? Will the observation group be able to embrace the "ethnographic aspect" of such an endeavour? There might be some similarity across observations by different group members, but will they really share the same problems?

Both paradigms involve the issue of interpretation. Piontelli (1992) noted that infant observation and ethological research are similar in that the observer assumes that a vast repertoire of behavioural patterns common to the entire human species underlies and is expressed in the pre-verbal behaviour of the infant. Inferences about observed behaviour can later be more systematically checked against cumulative data collected from a series of subsequent observations. Explanatory accounts can result, where only causal connections existed before. Neither field aims at comparability, however. As in infant observation, the purpose of ethnography is not to produce broad, statistical information - rather, the ethnographer is interested in gaining a new understanding and in gathering detail (Angrosino, 2002). Geertz (1973) has said about cultural theory that "what generality it contrives to achieve grows out of the delicacy of its distinctions, not the sweep of its abstractions" (p. 25). M.J. Rustin (1989) has called descriptive observational methods a way to investigate relationships "in more fine-grained ways" (p. 56). Hence an ethnographic infant observation could conceivably contribute tremendous detail and specificity to the community assessment cause.

Apart from their similarities, however, the two paradigms also offer the possibility of enriching each other through their differences. Postmodern ethnography could contribute a consideration of context, culture and class, subjectivity, language and relationship to the infant observation enterprise. While infant observation has some interest in the immediate context of the infant's behaviour, postmodern ethnography offers infant observation a way to think about the neglected aspect of the wider social context. It has been argued in this chapter that wider contextual information has generally been insufficiently considered in infant observation accounts to date. By comparison, the circumstances of the subjects being studied have always been important in ethnography, and in a postmodern world context becomes even more crucial.

In infant observation it could be said that the observation reports constitute both field notes and thick description. This is the only account written unless an essay is produced later, involving some theory, for examination purposes or publication. Ethnographic accounts were traditionally posited as descriptive. Postmodern ethnography argues that interpretation is inevitable from the first, however. Similarly, it will be argued in the next chapter that in infant observation, the first act of attending to what is going on is an act of interpretation itself (Riessman, 1993). What the viewer attends to will be informed by a myriad of influencing factors, including the context of the observation and her own subjectivity, or organisation of experience (Orange et al., 1997). The postmodern lens can thus help infant observation to engage with the issue of the subjectivity of the observer. It has been shown that, as in ethnography, subjectivity is inherently a factor in infant observation, where the observer is the tool and all her information is filtered through the sieve of her own personhood. Traditionally, however, infant observation, like an older ethnography, has minimised the wider social context and has not focused on the nature of the social contact in a particular observation setting. When observation occurs in a community very different to one's own, social context may be highlighted and cannot be easily ignored. Particularly when there are huge disparities between observer and observed, the observer's origins, including her class and where she lives, may seem more relevant. The very fact that she goes into a home very different from her own, and then leaves again, is important - and links with the kinds of issues that travelling ethnographers are engaged with.

Thus the "observer in the community" may need to be thought about more, just as the call has gone out to consider who the ethnographer is and what she is doing. R. Rosaldo's concept of the "positioned observer" (Olson, 1991, p. 188) is useful here. Like the ethnographer described by Geertz, the infant observer needs to be in the text in some way that admits that she was "there" and now she is "here" writing (Olson, 1991, p. 190). Even when the observer is sitting in a corner, she cannot be impersonal, and her writings cannot make claims to being scientific. Geertz (Olson, 1991) has pointed out that anthropological works cannot be matched to a "reality" because the reader is far (including geographically) from the subject. Equally, an infant is observed by one person and not several who can compare impressions. Geertz's comment suggests that the writer has in fact created "truths" which cannot conceivably be verified. The reader is at the mercy of the author's interpretation. Is there any way then in which a supervision group can purport to interpret something objective about "what was going on" in an observation, while at the same time not taking who the observer is into account? In effect, they are reading or interpreting the observer herself, but this has been insufficiently recognised.

Infant observation needs what Geertz has suggested about ethnography: namely, a textual way to consider how the observer is present in *everything*. A postmodern analysis of an infant observation account may also analyse things like the observer's writing style. For example, traditionally a particularly lyrical writing style may be taken as a defence mechanism or idealisation. A more literary approach might ask whether this is in fact something about the personhood of the observer (one imagines how Geertz would sound in an observation account!). At the same time, infant observation seems to offer a solution to the tricky issue of reflexivity in the ethnographic text. The infant observation procedure potentially offers a way of representing the self, for the very reason that the subjectivity of the observer is so central in the process: the infant observer observes, feels, writes and analyses. On the other hand, infant observation may need to learn from feminist and postmodern ethnographic texts about how to acknowledge her own personhood in the work. In deconstructing infant observation for needs assessment purposes, we will have to ask questions such as whose knowledge is being privileged? Who is seeking help? Whose help is being sought and with what? Who has the power, when? And for whom are infant observation accounts being written?

Infant observation offers a way to think about observed interactions and could therefore, I have argued, address more extensively the relationship between the observer and observed, but has failed to do so to date. Ethnography is increasingly trying to think about relationship, but it was noted in Chapter Four that it may lack the tools with which to theorise more deeply about the complex power play that must inevitably be a part of any ethnographic encounter. Here ethnography could be helped by infant observation to produce accounts of the relational process involved in collecting data. Analysis of anthropological material, in a theoretical sense, does not really occur. The infant observation supervision group, on the other hand, periodically theorises about what could be happening in the observation. There are strong theoretical principles guiding such an analysis, which have been developed over a century, involving psychoanalytic ideas such as psychic skin, containment, and so on.

The point has been made that both psychoanalysis and infant observation focus on the *emotional* dimensions of experience, compared to other anthropological and sociological research (M.J. Rustin, 1989). Ethological studies may seem too "unemotional and superficial for someone used to speculating about the depths of the human mind" (Piontelli, 1992, p. 4). Piontelli's work with foetal observations had strong emotional undertones, which she could pick up as a result of her presence in the field. She said that "In anthropological research in particular the observer becomes an important tool of research by adding to the records of the observations those subtle emotional parameters that no videotape can record" (1992, p. 13). Infant observers, like psychoanalysts, offer a particular training in self-awareness and in sensitivity to implicit and *unconscious* communication as a source of understanding.

L. Miller (1989) acknowledged that "each family has its own flavour, a culture of its own" (p. 2). The infant observer thus has access to the details of one particular family's way of life. However, Lester and Brazelton (1982) pointed out that "the parent-infant dyad is a microcosm of the culture at large" (p. 53) and Riessman (1993) noted that "culture 'speaks itself' through an individual's story" (p. 5). In other words, the infant observer invariably also gains a sense of what the family's cultural context is, as some of the accounts cited here have demonstrated. It has been shown that the issue of culture is problematised when seen through a postmodern lens - What is it? Who defines what it is? Through whose eyes is it being described? The inviolate authority of the ethnographic report

has, over time, been turned upside down (Aunger, 2004). In a similar way, we would need to ask questions about who is describing what, and for whom, in any infant observation account that wants to engage with cultural representation. Is it possible to learn something about culture using infant observation then? Is one able to generalise at all?

Furthermore, ethnography could help infant observation to change its Western conceptualisations and methods. At the 2000 Congress of the World Association for Infant Mental Health, Berg, a South African, spoke about the impact of the social and of working across cultures, and of the need to understand representations that stand outside a European position (Barnett, Barrows, S. Briggs & Daws, 2001). Barnett et al. (2001) commented that Berg clearly understood the importance of anthropological knowledge in helping her clients. Berg was said to help mothers begin to think about what they can give their babies in the midst of chaos and violence. Berg's team, who are "not only trained psychologically, but also transculturally" believed, like Barnett et al. (2001), that new methods need to be created to deal with the particularities of the cross-cultural scene.

In summary, the similarities between infant observation and postmodern ethnography include a focus on detailed observation, including participant observation, working in a natural setting, focusing on participants' meanings, and description and interpretation. In a community context, it is argued that infant observation must needs take on the exploratory, open-ended spirit of ethnographic fieldwork. Postmodern ethnography can help infant observation to engage with issues such as context, the subjectivity and representation of the observer, difference, and relationship. On the other hand, infant observation lends a sophisticated level of analysis, including the analysis of emotion and the unconscious, to the ethnographic endeavour.

5.7.2 Infant observation as psychoanalytic ethnographic community research

The present project can be framed as an experiment in psychoanalytic ethnographic research, using infant observation as part of a needs assessment process. Chapter One hinted at the potential of infant observation for needs assessment, as outlined at proposal stage. In this section I will motivate the use of infant observation in community psychology more systematically, by discussing its advantages, as well as mentioning the theoretical tensions inherent in such a project.

A psychodynamic approach in community psychology has increasingly used a variety of innovative techniques for assessing, treating and communicating with children, as was shown in Chapter Three. Infant observation may be yet another useful psychoanalytic tool. It will, however, have to engage seriously with the demands of its "community psychology context". S. Briggs embraced the way in which the application of infant observation inevitably affects its procedures and technique when, commenting on the 2000 Congress of the World Association for Infant Mental Health, he said:

> I was struck by the emphasis on the application of observation to early preventative intervention throughout the world, and that observational approaches appeared to be developing in a way that struck chords with the Tavistock approach but were to an extent independent of the Tavistock tradition "developing on the ground". (Barnett et al., 2001, p. 4)

Infant observation (like all psychodynamic practice) shares with community psychology an interest in early development and the root causes for later difficulties. The systems approach in community psychology work with children could therefore be enhanced by infant observation procedures, in that infant observation potentially provides one way to examine the exterior and the interior, the individual and the system, and the reciprocal relationship between them. Inherent in this is a tension between being active and being passive, however. One criticism that could be levelled at an infant observation project in circumstances of extreme need is: Can one watch people suffering, and especially an infant suffering, and do nothing? The tension between watching and working for change remains a difficult issue in such a project, and the use of infant observation in community contexts can be considered controversial.

However, I argue that community psychology's emphasis on prevention intersects with infant observation's therapeutic benefit for the mother-infant couple. Infant observation, like psychoanalysis itself, has shown a conviction that the early mother-infant relationship needs to be supported in the interests of child development, and at times has done so more actively and therapeutically. This chapter suggested that infant observation may particularly have secondary benefits when used in settings where there are difficulties. S. Briggs (1997b) noted, "The qualities of attentiveness and mindfulness in an observer can support a more resilient development in infancy" (p. 212). S. Briggs felt that "a very important question is how infants in disadvantageous social circumstances can develop inner resources" (2002, p. 190). Infant observation may be one way to think about and develop resilience.

Furthermore, Nsamenang (1992) noted that every cross-cultural research project carries political and ethical implications that must be given serious thought in the design and execution of research. It is important to respectfully gain information about the community being worked with before designing, in consultation, interventions that are empowering and facilitate lasting change (Nsamenang, 1992; Orford, 1992). Infant observation conceivably offers one way to respectfully enter a community from a position of "wanting to learn about", rather than as an expert coming in to share knowledge (Maiello, 1998). The family gives permission to be observed; that is, they choose to be involved. They can, in theory, also choose to terminate the observation at any point. Infant observation may be a non-intrusive research tool, compared to interviewing or survey. How it is experienced will differ from family to family, however, and this assumption will need to be tested. It may in fact be more intrusive than other forms of needs assessment.

An infant observation in a disadvantaged community could potentially elicit an insider view of the community's difficulties, developed with care and time and as a precursor to developing a responsive and accessible intervention. It could be argued that the family's permission for and involvement in the observation sets it apart from less empowering practices which are "done to" clients. A process of thinking together about the baby, the family, and its difficulties may be put into motion and be empowering of itself. It could also be argued that as a form of enquiry, and possibly therapy, it targets groups (the dyad, and possibly the whole family) and therefore is a less individualistic form of intervention.

Lastly, the strong group supervision structure inherent in an infant observation process may help to contain the significant anxiety of cross-cultural work in a low-income setting, if it is prepared to work thoughtfully with

realities like race, poverty, culture, apartheid and power, and how these impact on the participants in multiple ways, in the past, present and future.

In summary, then, there are particular advantages of infant observation for an ethnographic research project in the community setting. It has already begun to be used in applied forms. It may be one way to learn about what goes wrong in early child development under conditions of poverty. It may be a respectful and even therapeutic way of doing research. It offers a very firm holding environment in terms of its weekly group supervision structure. And, potentially, it may be a way to focus on the dyad, but to simultaneously think about the interplay between the internal and the external, in other words, the individual and the social.

5.7.3 Key terms and tensions for the present study

Taken together, the first five chapters of the present dissertation have introduced key concepts that will be salient to the study that follows, and which most latterly have been revisited here in the light of the infant observation paradigm. Below I will attempt an operational definition of the terms as I shall be using them, as well as noting the tensions that are involved in thinking about the same terms across paradigms. It will also be reiterated here that there are certain tensions inherent in the classical infant observation module itself.

Infant observation regards the mother as the context, since Klein, in a sense, introduced her by means of the concept of object relations. The mother, or primary caregiver, is considered to be the infant's first and most important environment. This acknowledgement is, historically, quite an achievement in itself in more orthodox psychoanalytic circles that traditionally emphasise Freud's drive theory or the "inner world" (Greenberg & Mitchell, 1983). While analysts such as Winnicott and Bowlby did much to advance the study of external relationships, as late as 1987, Bowlby commented, "I have found it extremely unfashionable to attribute psychopathology to real-life experiences" (R. Bowlby, 2004). Gradually, psychoanalysis has become interested in how early interactions shape us. Most recently, as discussed in Chapter Two, relational and Self Psychology paradigms (including intersubjectivity) have moved the idea of relationship centre stage, both developmentally and clinically. This development has resulted in a renewed interest in the mother-infant relationship in empirical infant research, in the relationship between analyst and patient, and also, to a degree, in thinking about how the researcher impacts on what is seen. However, it has not, to my knowledge, extended to a consideration of the complex relationship between observer and observed in their particular context within the field of psychoanalytic infant observation in the home. Therefore a degree of unexplored tension exists between "Tavistock thinking" about observation and the intersubjective perspective.

Within both ethnographic and community psychology paradigms, it was shown that the concept of context refers to the multiple systems that surround any individual. Ethnographic research, Canham et al. (1997) noted, has in general examined a broader context than that adopted in psychoanalytic infant observation: "It could be said to have taken a wide angle lens view" (p. 4). Similarly, community psychology is interested in layers of environment and how they impact on individual mental health. From this comes the premise that intervention needs to occur at systems level for change to happen. By contrast, it seems that still imbedded in the notion of infant observation is

the idea that one should focus on the infant or at most the dyad and family, without being distracted by or, worse, drawn into the many systems that surround them. Drawing from infant observation, intersubjective, ethnographic and community paradigms, the present dissertation considers under context *both* a) maternal environment as well as b) physical, social, economic, political and community environments. One of my assumptions at the start of the present study was that it is unnecessary to separate these realms.

There is a core tension around subjectivity and objectivity in the infant observation module. Waddell (1988) held that infant observation "is a method with no claims to impartiality or objectivity. Rather the reverse, it is rooted in subjectivity of a particular kind" (quoted in McFadyen, 1991, p. 13). She went on to say that this kind of subjectivity is about avoiding preconception (in Bion's sense of the word). I hope that the foregoing discussion has illustrated that infant observation does indeed claim that it can describe facts and that it is possible to minimise the impact of the observer on the material being observed and reported. Secondly, subjectivity without preconception is an impossible notion in the intersubjective view. Instead, we should perhaps turn our attention to what our preconceptions are, in order to work with them. In summary, the subjective interpretation of what is seen is undeniably a hallmark of infant observation (M.J. Rustin, 1989). However, I have claimed here that infant observation does not think widely enough about what constitutes subjectivity and how it operates. Is it ever possible "just to watch"?

Because infant observation gives rise to substantial written records, it is also important to think about its use of language - as a discourse in itself, and also in terms of its limitations to describe emotional phenomena (K. Gibson, 2002b; Frosh, 1999). What is observed with the eye in the context of an observation is essentially translated into the written word. It will be necessary in the present study to consider what has been chosen for representation, and why, and what has been omitted. Is it ever possible "just to describe"? Who may speak and write about the observation experience, and how does power function within that? This can be revealing about the observed situation in itself. K. Gibson (2002b) made the point that when tape-recording interviews, signifiers such as tone, facial expression and gesture can be lost in the written transcription, which may focus on what was said. Infant observation goes some way towards capturing these minute but important containers of meaning, for further thought and analysis. One of its strengths is that its reliance on "pure" description gives it a nuanced, filmic quality (with the understanding that, as in film, the frames are selected).

5.8 Conclusion

There is no doubt that the observational exercise delivers new insights of various kinds. Traditionally these have been linked to training and, more recently, to intervention and knowledge production. By stepping outside the training mould, pertinent issues, which could previously be avoided, have come up. Here I have proposed that a dialogue between infant observation, community psychology and postmodern ethnography actively engages with these issues and allows us to see them not as problems, but points of departure for new developments in the method. While infant observation has begun to entertain new functions, settings and client groups, it has not yet been used specifically as a method for gaining information about South African communities in need. What the actual problems are of observing in a community setting are unknown and need to be investigated. I have argued

that this represents a form of ethnographic investigation. In attempting to employ psychoanalytic infant observation as ethnographic community research, my study derived its methods from all three paradigms. These methods will be discussed in the next chapter.

CHAPTER SIX: Methodology

6.1 Introduction

Chapters Two to Five outlined the theoretical background to the present study, which will be briefly reiterated here. Firstly, social constructionism was presented as the postmodern metatheoretical lens that guided the thinking in the present dissertation. Its core contribution is to assist in the interrogation and deconstruction of "truths" inherent in the infant observation paradigm. This will involve uncovering assumptions and asking questions. Specifically, intersubjectivity theory, a form of postmodern psychoanalysis, was advocated as a metatheory for considering the intersection of subjectivities in the infant observation situation. Secondly, the psychodynamic community psychology approach was presented as a way of thinking seriously about context in its widest sense, and its impact on any research project or intervention. This involves the political and the ways in which it is expressed emotionally, in relationship. Leading South African practitioners have shown that a psychodynamic focus on the unconscious can aid and deepen the endeavour to think about context. Thirdly, it was shown that postmodern ethnography offers an emphasis on the interpretation of meaning, and multiple subjectivities, in a way that is compatible with psychodynamic community psychology. Akin to community psychology more generally, a postmodern ethnographic lens contributes a spirit of open-endedness, inquiry, and innovation. Fourthly, as a central focus, infant observation was extensively examined in terms of its traditional tenets and the ways in which it has more recently begun to explore social and group processes and been considered as a tool for research. The argument was made that, by using these other paradigms, infant observation's potential to work with issues of context, power, subjectivity and the complexity of interpretation using theory and language may be extended. In other words, it is my claim that, theoretically speaking, infant observation will need the paradigms of intersubjectivity, postmodern ethnography and psychodynamic community psychology in order to be most useful in the South African context - and also, arguably, in other contexts. These other theories thus form the basis of my critique of the infant observation module, which comes under scrutiny in the present dissertation.

This chapter examines the methodology employed in the present study, namely the use of infant observation as a tool for research in a community setting. It begins by reviewing the study's goals and stating how they were concretely operationalised. The research design, which is a single case study in the qualitative paradigm, will be described and considered. Secondly, the data-collection methods employed will be described and justified. Lastly, an approach to the analysis of the material will be explicated. In each case, my choices will be explained by looking at the methodological points of departure contained in psychodynamic community psychology, postmodern ethnography and psychoanalytic infant observation. In this I will refer throughout to how they coincide. Some final points about validation, the limitations of the research design, and ethics will be made.

6.2 Goals

The broader aim of the present study was to contribute to planning and offering needed psychological services for

low-income black children in South Africa, and to improve existing services. In order to do so, it sought to address the paucity of South African research into the experiences of low-income children within their specific socio-cultural contexts. The focus of the present study was thus to produce knowledge in an area about which little is known. Several theoretical paradigms contributed to the choice of psychoanalytic infant observation as a methodology, as will be described. A single, detailed case study of an infant in the first year of life in a low-income, coloured community resulted.

A secondary question that was asked is whether such a thick description is able to add something unique to a needs assessment process. Does it say more than other more traditional methods? What kind of knowledge *does* it produce when used in a community? The proposal was not that a single infant observation should be used as a needs assessment strategy alone, but that it might usefully be incorporated, in some form, into a wider needs assessment process.

Thirdly, the present study represented an innovative use of a training tool for research into a South African community. One of its goals was thus to see what would happen when infant observation was taken out of its theoretical framework and used in a new context. What does the infant observation model allow us to see? Does it dictate what should be seen? What necessarily lies outside it? Does it need to change in order to be useful? Is it useful at all? Ultimately, the question being asked was whether infant observation could become part of a methodology for working in communities. In this sense the present study represented a methodological exploration.

In summary, the aims of the study were to:

1. Provide a thick description of a single low-income mother-infant dyad (including their interaction);
2. Consider the potential contribution that such a description might make to a needs assessment process; and thus
3. Explore the utility of infant observation (a practice that is essentially informed by a theoretical framework constructed in Western contexts) as a tool for psychologists working in low-income communities in South Africa.

Some of the secondary questions that arose around the present study, and which were linked to these aims, were:

1. What did I find out about mothers and infants in poverty, using infant observation? What does the mother-infant dyad look like in a poverty situation, both internally and externally? Did I indeed produce a thick description of a neglected phenomenon? What else did I describe that might be unexpected?
2. What does this detailed description add (if anything) to the needs assessment? What was the impact of the observation process a) on myself as the observer? b) on the family? What exactly did it offer the community in which it took place? What kind of insights did it yield for the observer? Could these inform an ensuing intervention, or not?
3. Is infant observation a useful method for working in South African communities? Does the observation process

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need to adapt? What are the theoretical implications of this study in terms of the use of psychodynamic theory in community settings? How does it contribute to a more general methodology for working in South African communities?

These research aims and sub-questions were operationalised in the study as follows:

1. By gathering information about the effect of the infant's socio-economic and cultural environment on her internal life. It was hypothesised that the particular circumstances and customs of mother and child would be reflected in their interaction in a way that shapes the internal life of the developing infant in specific ways, and that an infant observation can record this data in immense detail, perhaps even offering unique insights. It was hard at the outset to predict what additional information the study might yield. Because the psychodynamic approach does not traditionally privilege the external, it was hypothesised that one outcome might be a deeper insight into the effects of the poverty environment on the child's developing internal life. This would help to redress the imbalance that exists in community psychology, of focusing on the external (L. Swartz, 1991). However, the present study was also implicitly interested in the deeper knowledge that can result about other phenomena observed in this setting.

2. By systematically recording what happened when a middle-class white, Afrikaans practitioner entered a low-income coloured home with the purpose of observing. It was anticipated that this process could be more fraught than in other settings, potentially with false starts, absences and non-compliance. The practitioner could conceivably be seen as an interloper, as a passive and unhelpful figure, or become the object of attack (Tomlinson & L. Swartz, 2002). Alternatively, the process of being witnessed could of itself feel like a containing and supportive experience (Bick, 1964; Reynolds, 2003). It felt important not only to reflect on the impact of my presence on the family, but also on the impact of doing the observation on myself. It was anticipated that the new context might affect the method, in ways that needed to be recorded. A complication that came to mind at proposal stage, for example, was how the neighbours and the larger community would respond to a single family being observed in their midst. The observation could have enduring consequences for the family, both positive and negative, giving rise to important ethical issues.

3. By analysing the data about process and content referred to in (1) and (2) in the context of other information contained in existing needs analyses and research conducted in Moretown. By determining whether the kind of information (content and process) obtained during infant observation serves to deepen the knowledge obtained via other modalities of needs assessment and research.

In this chapter I will present my research design in two ways. Firstly, I will lay out what it is that I did. Secondly, I will explain the contribution of the traditions of psychodynamic community psychology, postmodern ethnography and psychoanalytic infant observation towards informing my choice of methods. It will be shown that, just as there is theoretical compatibility between these seemingly diverse paradigms, there is also some methodological overlap.

6.3 Research design

6.3.1 Qualitative social constructionist research

The present study represents qualitative research situated in a social constructionist framework. Willig (2001) defined all qualitative methodology as being centrally concerned with meaning and the quality and texture of experience for participants. The qualitative researcher seeks to understand "'what it is like' to experience particular conditions…and how people manage certain situations" (Willig, 2001, p. 9). The focus is on understanding how the research participants themselves attribute meaning to events. Qualitative researchers, Willig (2001) added, study people in naturally occurring settings that comprise their own territory. Nelson and Prilletensky (2005) outlined several characteristics of qualitative research, which will be summarised here:

1. Gathering textual data, including observations of behaviour;
2. An immersion in the context and lives of the participants in the field;
3. Giving up an attempt at controlling what is being studied;
4. Holistic and contextual understanding of phenomena;
5. Using the subjectivity and emotions of the researcher as data;
6. Moving inductively from the specific to the general in an exploratory way;
7. More concern with depth than breadth (generalisability);
8. Working both creatively and rigorously.

Nelson and Prilleltensky (2005) noted that because qualitative research is not concerned with generalisability to populations, the focus is not on large sample-sizes, but information-rich participants. Orford (1992) pointed out that the qualitative approach lends itself to the development of substantive, inductive theory that can be linked with existing theory later in the process. The relative lack of structure at the beginning of a qualitative research process is an essential ingredient if the theoretical account produced is to be firmly grounded in the data collected (Strauss, 1987). Many authors on qualitative analysis agree that analysis occurs in various degrees throughout the research process, including the data-collection phase (De Wet & Erasmus, 2005; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Orford, 1992). De Wet and Erasmus (2005) pointed out that most qualitative analyses proceed in a nonlinear iterative fashion, best represented by a spiral. Orford (1992) explicated the qualitative research process as typically being one in which texts are initially coded into categories, upon which preliminary interpretations are made. Further rounds of data are usually produced at this point, with the research becoming more structured in the data-collection techniques. These resultant texts are similarly coded and interpreted. Core themes or categories are produced, which are then written up in a final account.

The choice of a qualitative research design in the present study was informed by a variety of paradigms. Firstly, social constructivist research tends to rely on qualitative, naturalistic research (Nelson & Prilleltensky, 2005). There has also been more attention to qualitative research in applied areas of psychology, including community

psychology (Nelson & Prilleltensky, 2005). Qualitative research is also used in psychodynamic and anthropological research. Advances in psychoanalytic knowledge have depended hardly at all on quantitative data (M.J. Rustin, 1997). Therefore a qualitative research design was indicated from a variety of theoretical perspectives.

Community psychology advocates a qualitative approach, because it seems able to open up the complex link between external and internal life in poverty contexts (Orford, 1992). Orford (1992) has argued that community psychology's ecological focus on person-in-context renders inappropriate more traditional, relatively highly controlled research designs. That is because an appreciation of the complexities involved is required: the relationships between people and their environments usually turn out to be reciprocal. Behaviour is seen to be a function of the person, the environment and a complex interaction between the two (Lewin, 1951, cited in Orford, 2002). The best research methods for exploring this are still being discovered - however, qualitative research seems suited to capturing the complexity of social phenomena in the concepts and theories it generates (Orford, 2002). In qualitative research the ways in which social phenomena are expressed in a specific context or particular location are also taken into account (Orford, 1992). Thus qualitative studies are particularly suited to studying social interaction within complex behaviour settings like families. One of the distinguishing characteristics of qualitative research is the fact that there is a focus on the "insider's view" of his/her own world (Orford, 1992, p. 127). This accords with the expressed purpose of thick description in ethnography.

While being a practical subject that aims at change from micro to macro levels, community psychology is also committed to building up knowledge through research (Orford, 1992). It has been argued over some years that more theory is needed to understand the complex interface between the individual and society in this paradigm (K. Gibson, 2002b; Leiderman, 1989; Orford, 1992; Rieff, 1977; Seedat, Cloete & Shochet, 1988). A qualitative design is suited to the present study, because it focuses on a relatively neglected area about which little information is available. It also seeks a way to record and explicate something in detail. In this way theory about the impact of poverty on internal life could be developed, as well as the theory of using infant observation to inform community interventions. Lastly, Nelson and Prilleltensky (2005) noted that qualitative research and community psychology share an emphasis on diversity (including methodological diversity) and collaborative research relationships.

Willig (2001) noted that researchers with quite different epistemological positions use qualitative research methods. The social constructionist researcher is centrally concerned with identifying the various ways in which a culture constructs social reality. She admits that what we perceive is never a reflection of environmental conditions, but one specific reading of them. As a result there are thought to be "knowledges" rather than a single "knowledge" (Willig, 2001, p. 7). Kidder and Fine (1997) made a distinction between "Big Q" and "small q" qualitative research. The former is linked to constructivist research, whereas the latter merely supplements quantitative methods with non-numerical data-collection techniques (Nelson & Prilleltensky, 2005; Willig, 2001).

6.3.2 A single case study

The present dissertation represents a case study produced using infant observation techniques. In the discussion below the case study will be considered as a way to achieve depth and complexity in the description of a formative life period, as observed in a natural setting.

A case study has been defined as a "situation-analysis" (Bromley, 1986, p. ix). The case study, Bromley (1986) noted, can take many forms. A case study is not of itself a research method, but rather a way of focusing upon a particular unit of analysis, which can be one or several cases (Nelson & Prilleltensky, 2005; Willig, 2001). The case study is characterised by an "in-depth, intensive and sharply focused exploration" of a natural occurrence with defined boundaries (Willig, 2001, p. 70). A case study can focus on an individual, a social situation or process, or any major event that is interesting in its own right (Bromley, 1986). In other words, it is a good way to study a phenomenon in a particular context in some depth (Nelson & Prilletensky, 2005). Its methodology is similar across disciplines: "A particular set of events and relationships is identified. This 'case' is then described, analysed, interpreted, and evaluated within a framework of ideas and procedures appropriate to cases of that sort" (Bromley, 1986, p. ix).

There is, however, no general agreement on the content or organisation of a case study or on the procedure that should be used to carry it out (Bromley, 1986). Willig (2001) noted that it "may involve the use of a wide range of diverse methods of data collection and analysis" (p. 70). Bromley (1986) showed that the aim of the case study method is to illuminate a complex system. Crucially, the point is to understand something which was previously puzzling. The present research will make use of the case study methodology to investigate a previously neglected area of study over a protracted period. Infant observation here serves as a tool to discover more about what is essentially an unknown phenomenon.

A case study is typically a record of a relatively short, self-contained episode or segment of life that is critical or formative (Orford, 1992). Infant observation reports record the first months or years of life in great detail. A case study typically involves a small number of units of study, whether an individual, group or community, across a span of time. While the infant and her family were the declared focus of the present study, it was envisaged that information about further systems such as the family within the community, and the community itself, could come to light. Case studies, like infant observations, target singular naturally occurring events in the real world. In both cases descriptive and causal analyses follow (Orford, 1992).

The case study method is "the bedrock of scientific investigation" (Bromley, 1986, p. ix) and has been consistently used in the field of clinical intervention (Westen, Novotny & Thompson-Brenner, 2004). The choice of a case study method for the present study is based on its pervasive use in many areas, including psychoanalytic, community and anthropological practice. The case study method is also typically associated with the constructivist paradigm in community research methods (Nelson & Prilleltensky, 2005). Community psychology uses this method as a way to

consider context, because the case study approach deals directly with the individual case in its actual context (Bromley, 1986). Orford (1992) asserted that case studies are thus particularly relevant to community psychology, because they give accounts of "persons-in-situations" (p. 124). Community psychology practice always takes place within the relevant social context or as close to it as possible. It is important to see people operating in their normal habitats, which also assists in getting away from an individualistic ethos: "Working with a community psychology orientation one is always attracted to working in people's own homes, at their places of work, in their neighbourhoods and with their social networks" (Orford, 1992, p. 8).

Infant observers enter the family home, where they could potentially see how group and social processes work. There is an accepted and well-valued tradition within community psychology of intervening with children through the adults that surround them (K. Gibson, 2002b). Early attachments and a setting that promotes good relationships and the development of adaptive skills have been shown to be important (Cowen, 1994, cited in K. Gibson, 2002b). Apart from harnessing existing strengths, the practitioner also needs to come to understand how difficult the circumstances are that some children live in (K. Gibson, 2002b). A case study about the first year of life targets the parental environment in some depth. This information could potentially add to existent data about the circumstances and lives of children in Moretown.

K. Gibson (2002b) noted the way in which the case study method within community psychology can facilitate a more participative orientation towards the research process. Case studies are often used in the course of applied work of a problem-solving nature, rather than as pure research. The present study was conducted outside a framework of explicit help- or service-providing, but as was noted in the literature review, observations themselves can have a variety of benefits for the subjects being observed.

K. Gibson (2002b) argued that in community psychology the intention to explore both depth and specificity is well served by the case study. Great detail can be gleaned, but the case's interaction with its context can and should also be made explicit (Stake, 1995). K. Gibson (2002b) held that the usefulness of a case study is its attempt to provide a coherent and systematic account of experience, which serves to deepen understanding. Case studies can acknowledge different meaning systems. From a social constructionist perspective, case study is a primary method where the focus of the research is analytic (Nelson & Prilleltensky, 2005).

The case study has also been the primary method of presentation and writing for clinicians in the psychoanalytic tradition, following Freud (K. Gibson, 2002b, Fonagy, 1996, Piontelli, 1992). Psychoanalysis began with classic case studies (M.J. Rustin, 1989, 1997). In psychology a case study is typically a segment of a life-history (Bromley, 1986). Many psychoanalytic case studies function to illustrate or demonstrate a theory (Bromley, 1986). The observational programme inherently employs a case study method (M.J. Rustin, 1989). Its purpose is not to demonstrate something specific, but to give an account of naturalistic observations of a particular mother and infant made over time (M.J. Rustin, 1989). Reid (1997b) stated that the single case study is likely to provide one of the main foundations for research using infant observation methods. Convergences with the findings of more

empirically-based studies can then occur.

Bromley (1986) noted that in anthropology there is considerable variation in the purpose and procedure of case studies. M.J. Rustin (1997) pointed out that ethnographic studies in natural settings that aim at using descriptive methods and accumulating knowledge in the form of case studies are often less routinised in their methods than infant observation. In other words, infant observation offers a fairly predictable procedure despite its natural setting.

6.4 Setting

The selected site for research was Moretown, a poor, semi-rural coloured community near Stellenbosch, in the Winelands region of the Western Cape. This site was chosen because it represented an extremely unstable and underserved community, because information about the site had been gathered systematically since 2002, and because there was an existent helping infrastructure here that developed in response to a request for assistance from the community itself. Tierney (2002) has pointed out that selecting a site for research is not the same as gaining entrance, and that it is desirable to have a trusted person or institution to help introduce the researcher to the subjects. In this case it was felt that the Women's Mental Health Research Project (henceforth WMHRP), founded and run by my promoter and of which I was a part, was already a known presence to the community. This project focuses on maternal mental health in Moretown. While surveys, interviews and interventions had been conducted in Moretown over a number of years, connected to this project and others (see **Addendum A**), there was, however, a lack of detailed case studies about individuals or families within the community.

The community of Moretown is relatively self-contained and long established. Its residents are largely dependent on seasonal work in agriculture. According to the most recent census in 2001 and a more recent estimate by the local clinic, there are in the region of 4000 to 6000 residents. In 2001, 340 children under the age of 5 years were counted. Every month 15-20 new pregnancies on average are reported at the clinic in Moretown, making the community a prime site for gathering information about an infant in the first year of life. This figure has been consistent for the past five years and most of these mothers are reportedly unmarried (C. R. Williams, personal communication, March 13, 2007). The clinic has a weekly antenatal and a monthly psychiatric service, and referrals are made from these services to surrounding hospitals and to Child Welfare. In most cases infants are seen for monthly check-ups at the clinic initially and then at 3 to 6 monthly intervals. The main focus is on weighing and measuring the children, providing vitamin supplements and deworming (C. R. Williams, personal communication, March 13, 2007). The clinic uses the services of a well-developed and committed network of volunteers, many of who work through their churches. They run a soup kitchen and a number of other services for the community. The volunteers are an erratic resource, as they have to forego their voluntary work when paid work becomes available, even for short periods.

Psychological support is extremely limited in Moretown, especially for children. A visiting psychiatric nurse holds

monthly clinics and referrals are made to Stellenbosch Hospital, if necessary. The clinic in Moretown approached Stellenbosch University for assistance with patients who were presenting with psychological issues in 2001. As a result, a needs assessment process, which is still ongoing, was set in motion. Services have also been delivered for the past five years. In the present study the infrastructure that was established in this community in the process of assessment and intervention was used to gain research assistance.

6.5 Recruitment

The WMHRP had had contact with the clinic in Moretown over several years (see **Addendum A**). The observation required a pregnant woman who was willing to contract for the observation period of one year, starting shortly after the birth of her infant. There would also be one or two pre-birth visits, during which written informed consent would be obtained.

As discussed, infant observation procedures prescribe the random allocation of a case for study, preferably by someone who is not the observer. This is in keeping with the principle that a mother-infant dyad that is not known personally or socially to the observer be chosen (Miller et al., 1989). There are two recruitment stages: an initial enquiry by the intermediary, and then, if interest is shown, contact initiated by the observer. The latter normally takes the form of a phone call and introductory visit. Following infant observation guidelines, I was to introduce myself as "a student who is interested in learning more about babies by watching them" and to downplay my professional role as a psychologist (see **Addendum C**).

As all pregnant mothers in Moretown are asked to participate in the WMHRP, the recruitment officer of the project had access to a list of pregnant women in the community who could be possible participants. Exclusion criteria for the present project were: women who had been diagnosed with a mental disorder (including substance-related disorders), women who were known to live in abusive or violent households, and women who had serious medical conditions (such as being HIV positive).

It was decided that the participant on the list with the earliest due date would be approached first by the recruitment officer. She would be informed of the purpose and the method of the study and be requested to participate in the study. An informed consent form (see **Addendum C**) was created and would be signed by the willing participant. If this participant did not, however, want to participate, the next participant would be approached until one agreed.

In the proposal it was anticipated that there could be several false starts to the actual observation and that establishing a 12-month observation could in fact take twice that amount of time. In my experience parents were often known to withdraw after the start of the contract, sometimes for practical reasons, and sometimes for unstated or unconscious reasons that made them uncomfortable. More generally, Tierney (2002) made the point that it often takes some time to set up a fieldwork project and to obtain permission from the people one is interested in studying. In part, I might have had a prejudicial idea that this unusual project with its long-time commitment would not be

understood, valued or tolerated in the particular community I was entering.

It was initially thought, during the proposal phase of the research, that it would be relatively easy to compile a list of expectant women in Moretown and to approach them for possible participation in the study. In other words, it was anticipated that it might take a long time to find a participant who agreed, but the actual recruitment seemed relatively straightforward because an infrastructure already existed. In the end a participant quickly agreed, and the process of listing and interviewing possible candidates was in fact the more fraught element. Several research assistants were involved over a 5-month period and there were numerous delays and hiatuses. Recruitment was begun in August 2004 and a participant was found in December 2004. I eventually employed my own research assistant (Assistant C) who obtained lists of expectant mothers in Moretown from the research assistants of the WMHRP.

A first list of four names yielded Joe B, who initially considered participating but then said she was returning to work full time at three months. Her grandmother would care for her child. I enquired about weekend visits, but she declined, saying she did sports then. Assistant C decided to go physically to Moretown to recruit, without calling first. The first woman she visited was not home. The last on the list had moved. Assistant C interviewed two women who met the criteria and expressed interest. One was a 17-year-old girl, Lena O, who was home alone and would be moving soon. The second was Eve Smit, whose due date was a month earlier. Assistant C held an interview with Eve Smit in her car as she was scared of going down the alleyway to the back of the house, particularly as there were dogs on the property and she was afraid of dogs. She made an appointment for me to do a pre-birth visit the following Wednesday at 11 a.m. I would meet Eve Smit first, because her due date was earlier. If she was not home or had changed her mind about participation in the study, I was to proceed to Lena O's house, which was in the same street. Eve Smit agreed to the observation and this visit was recorded as the first pre-birth visit. Her baby was (she said) due on 22 January 2005. In the event, the baby was born on 2 January.

In overview, it can be said that contacting potential participants was difficult for important logistical reasons concerning the socio-economic context, but also possibly for less obvious reasons, which even at this early stage may have had to do with the unconscious aspects of the relationship between the researchers and the task. Obtaining agreement was relatively straightforward by comparison, once suitable participants were approached. The second, third and fourth subjects (Joe B, Eve Smit and Lena O) who were contacted all expressed willingness to participate in the study. The first subject I approached for informed consent signed. The observation process was carried to term, although not without threats to the process.

6.6 Participants

The participants constituted a family of four, resident among neighbours and relatives (see **Addendum D** for a map). The Smit family live in Maroela Street, which is, quite by chance, one of the poorest streets in Moretown. Limited demographic information was available, partly due to the nature of the task (observing, not interviewing)

and partly due to the particularities of the relationship between the participants and me. Initially, it was not clear to me who the father of the child was, or whether he was resident with the mother. This was revealed during the second pre-birth visit.

Table 1

Participants in the infant observation

Name	Age at start of observation
1. Eve Smit	24
2. Piet Smit	unknown
3. Natasha (surname unknown)	5
4. Maria Milla Smit	23 days

These details, as well as information about the couple's employment, income and marital status, their previous relationships and other children, also unfolded during the observation process. Therefore I shall give only brief information here and discuss the rest in the next chapter, in which the results of the study are laid out.

Eve is a mother of two. She is one of three children (two girls and a boy) and her mother is still living. Her mother works and lives on a nearby farm. She had her first child, Natasha, by a farm worker when she was staying at her mother's place of employment. There is a degree of contact between the child and the father's mother (Natasha's paternal grandmother). Eve recently married Piet, who is older than she is, at an indeterminate time before the birth of their child together (Maria, the infant being observed). Piet Smit is much older than Eve, possibly twice her age. I guessed him to be at least 50. He has one deceased and one living brother that I know of. He has other children from a previous union, among whom there is a grown-up daughter. Piet suffers from haemophilia. His one leg is shorter than the other, related to his medical history.

6.7 Data-collection procedures

The data-collection methods and methods of analysis that lie behind the case study can be diverse (Willig, 2001). Several strategies and sources were used in collecting data to answer the research questions posed in the present study, namely: 1) observation, 2) interview, and 3) data in the form of documents from other community sources. A fourth tool, namely observation of the observer, was employed during the observation process, partly in response to the developments within it.

6.7.1 Observation

In the present study an infant observation based on Tavistock guidelines was conducted in the community setting of Moretown for the period of one year. This infant observation process set out, as prescribed, to record the infant's behaviour and the mother-infant interaction in detail.

After the selection procedure described, I entered the home of the Smit family once weekly. There were two short pre-birth visits, conducted in the ninth month of pregnancy (December 2004), 19 days apart, which were both written up. I was overseas after the last pre-birth visit and the infant was unexpectedly born while I was away. This was followed by 43 observations over twelve months (25 January 2004 - 11 January 2005).

Both pre-birth visits and all the observations except one (previously arranged with the mother) were conducted at the same time (11 a.m.). Both pre-birth visits and the majority of the observations took place on the same day of the week (Wednesday). Some adjustments were made later in the process, when observations were re-scheduled. I visited for a set period weekly (one hour). I collected data by means of the infant observation procedure taught at the Tavistock, namely sitting in the room or space where the infant was and watching her. The idea was to keep the infant in sight, so if the infant left the room somehow, I was sanctioned to follow her. When the baby was not available for observation upon my arrival at the home, accounts were nevertheless written of the visit to Moretown.

The rationale for the choice of observation as a data-collection procedure in a community setting will be explicated below in terms of the methodological principles that governed it. An over-arching concept is that observational data in qualitative research provide information that participants may not talk about (Nelson & Prilletensky, 2005). Observation is a way to understand context. Some of the issues involved are the level of engagement by the observer, the scope of focus and the duration (Nelson & Prilletensky, 2005).

6.7.1.1 Paradigms informing the use of observation

Observation is a well-recognised form of research in the social sciences in Southern Africa and internationally (see, for example, Belle, 1994; Hugo, 1990). Below I will consider the way in which community needs assessment employs observation, the use of psychoanalytic infant observation for the purposes of research, as well as ethnographic participant observation and fieldwork.

6.7.1.1.1 Psychoanalytic infant observation

The aspects of infant observation that suggest it can be used in practical ways to investigate particular phenomena are briefly examined below. Chapter Five showed that infant observation research has been used to support theory and technique, and explore the social realm. Its potential to reveal cultural aspects was also noted. Here I will consider the particular strengths of infant observation as a form of research into communities. I argue that it

provides a way to consider the unconscious and emotion in community research, while also observing the external (context). Secondly, it has the somewhat underdeveloped potential to make discoveries about relationship and subjectivity.

It is proposed that the kind of psychodynamic practice involved in an infant observation can assist in gathering unspoken, unspeakable and unconscious information about the client group. It is felt, in the psychodynamic tradition, that multiple layers of meaning exist in any situation. For example, an expressed meaning may be contrary to a deeper, unconscious one. A simple act may need to be read for its true meaning. This may be particularly true in the complex setting of community work. A major contribution that infant observation can make, then, is a particular way of analysing situations, behaviours and events, aimed at extracting deeper meanings. There are bound to be many hidden meanings in interracial, cross-cultural contacts in low-income community settings following apartheid. Infant observation could extend its use to uncover the multiple layers of meaning in community work. This premise is also useful where power issues arise such as whose meaning predominates and which meanings may not be spoken. Psychoanalytic infant observation can help us to think more deeply about what the participants' experience was in a research project. What infant observation may offer is, as it were, "new ways of seeing", on a number of levels (K. Gibson, 2002b, p. 83).

The watching stance in infant observation sets up enormous empathic resonance in the observer - primarily, it is thought, with the infant (Miller et al., 1989). Infant observation, like other psychoanalytic practices, offers a glimpse into the emotional aspects of relationships; in other words, it offers emotional insight. In community psychology, where there has been a focus on the political and on practical solutions to urgent social problems, the psychodynamic approach has been offered as a way to deal with the emotions suffusing this work (K. Gibson, 2002b). This seems an important tool for the fraught arena of community work. In the literature such (often repressed and unconscious) emotions are broadly felt not to be an impediment to the work (and by implication, to logical research work), but a source of insight into the meaning of experience (L. Swartz et al., 2002a). Because of its nature, infant observation could offer access to the emotion in K. Gibson's concept of "politics and emotion in work with disadvantaged children" (2002b).

A characteristic of psychoanalytic observation is its close attention to the micro-elements of relationship and internal dynamics. Therefore it can be said that infant observation produces a high degree of specificity. Its very detailed analysis provides a description of very subtle dynamics. This is traditionally applied to the study of the mother-infant interaction. It has also been noted that the relationship with the observer comes into play sometimes. Relationship, which is a key factor in community consultation work, is thus also important in the infant observation model, but in a different way. However, infant observation may potentially be very well suited to capturing the micro-dynamics that reveal themselves more broadly in community projects and interventions. Its focus on how the maternal environment impacts on development takes context into account to a degree. The observer who studies an infant in a community may naturally also have access to observations about the community itself. Therefore, while infant observation is a form of inquiry within only one family, it can be undertaken as a way to ask questions about

the broader community within which the family lives. Infant observation could, for example, help to question the concept of a community as a romanticised whole by providing a more careful analysis of the way in which groups of people are divided or in conflict with each other (K. Gibson, 2002b).

It is thought, in psychodynamic work generally, that deeper truths can be arrived at using a reflective stance. The infant observer uses her own feelings to think about what they reveal. It is possible that, when observing in a community setting and scrutinising herself in this way, her assumptions, prejudices and positioning towards her clients or research participants can be uncovered. This is an important consideration in cross-cultural, politically charged work. Even so, there will inevitably be things that are hidden even to the self-reflexive researcher (K. Gibson, 2002b). The infant observation seminars, which form a thinking space, could theoretically help to counteract these blind spots.

6.7.1.1.2 Community needs assessment

The infant observation in the present study was framed as one part of a larger needs assessment process. Community needs are not homogenous and transparent or rationally and consciously motivated (K. Gibson, 2002b) and so needs assessment is a complex task. Not all voices can be heard equally and infant observation may help to make the least powerful voices of infants heard. While needs assessment is often framed as an activity about groups of people, it is important to remember that individual needs may vary greatly within any one category of people in need (Orford, 1992). Thus *both* detailed and varied information is required about what life is like for them. What is the hierarchy of needs in any one family, or for that matter, in an individual? How many people need assistance, and with what? Both of these kinds of question are necessary in a holistic needs assessment process.

Fieldwork is a recognised information source for needs assessment. This is especially useful where other sources of information about communities seem misleading or insufficient on their own (Orford, 1992). For example, Orford (1992) noted that surveys are less useful with difficulties that are less common, or when there is a stigma around particular difficulties, or when those people with the problem are particularly likely to be missed out. It is also difficult to survey for phenomena such as attachment disorder; here fieldwork and indirect indicators are thought to be more useful (Hartnoll, Daviaud, Lewis & Mitcheson, 1985, cited in Orford, 1992).

Like ethnography, community psychology generally advocates an approach that accesses local understanding and knowledge (K. Gibson, 2002b). K. Gibson (2002b) has suggested that methodologies are needed which highlight different meaning systems. For example, Dawes and Donald (1994) stated that it is particularly important, in a multi-cultural environment, to understand the meaning of local child-rearing practices and views of childhood, which can differ considerably from those within, say, mainstream British psychology (cited in K. Gibson, 2002b). Normalising assumptions limit thinking about children. Infant observation can assist by recording child-rearing practices in different cultures.

A tension exists in community work between local and imported knowledge, however. As discussed in an earlier chapter, there is a wish in community psychology to share the fruits of psychological understanding as widely as possible within the community. Transparency and participation will therefore be hallmarks of its methodology. It has also been highlighted that the purpose of infant observation in a community study is to learn and to share resultant knowledge. K. Gibson (2002b) has problematised the practitioner's stance by asserting that local knowledge is not always helpful for the less powerful groups in any community, such as children. Expert opinion is also needed at such times. The infant observation offers a unique opportunity to publish community members' experience. For example, infant observation can assist in debunking a romantic view of communities (Sterling, 2002) by producing nitty-gritty accounts of actual scenes observed. At the same time, if conducted by a clinical psychologist, it contributes a level of expertise.

Epidemiology features strongly in a community psychology approach, because of its preventative stance. Where possible, practice emphasis is on prevention rather than treatment. Infant observation can help to address the cause of distress at its roots by focusing on the first year of life in the developing individual. Special risks for the growing child may be identified (Orford, 1992). Beyond the difficulties experienced within the family, a sense must also be gained of the steps that members have taken to assist themselves, which professional and community resources are available, and how they are being used. It is anticipated that an infant observation account could highlight both deficits and strengths within the family and, by extension, within the community they live in.

The production of knowledge about needs is invariably a political issue, involving power relations. Whose view of needs is being produced at any one time? How are needs expressed, and to whom? Community methodologies crucially have to find ways to engage with issues of race, culture, power, politics, and the strong emotions that go along with these (K. Gibson, 2002b). In summary, within the community psychology paradigm, observation in the field is thought to be one way to find out more about complex needs from the perspective of the client.

6.7.1.1.3 Postmodern ethnography

Observation and interviewing are thought to be fundamental ethnographic data-collection techniques, but Angrosino also pointed out that "any means of gleaning information that contributes to a description of a people and its way of life can be considered appropriate to ethnographic fieldwork" (2002, p. 3). Below, the methods of fieldwork and participant observation will be discussed as methodological principles informing the choice to use observation in the present study. As discussed in the previous chapter, social scientists have begun questioning the ways that ethnography has traditionally been carried out and written about. Therefore a specifically postmodern take on these practices will considered.

6.7.1.1.3.1 Ethnographic fieldwork

Since the 1970s methods of field research have changed considerably in line with the development of postmodern

thought (Emerson, 1983a). Fieldwork is now thought of as a practice that benefits from, and even requires, thought and reflection on what is going on (Aunger, 2004). This focus has resulted in a more self-conscious stance toward the fieldwork enterprise (Emerson, 1983a). Emerson (1983a) showed that, rather than exclusively emphasising the techniques and end products of fieldwork, many recent discussions have shown a concern with the process of doing fieldwork per se: "the focus is on fieldwork as methodology, not as method or substance" (p. ix).

In this spirit Emerson (1983a) pointed out that there is no manual on how to proceed in the field. Fieldwork is not technically systematic in the sense of being able to specify in advance its exact methods. Rather, fieldwork is better understood as "a resocialisation process that involves and affects the whole person" (Emerson, 1983a, p. ix). Fieldwork is highly situational and contextual in character, which makes it difficult to provide general principles for proceeding that hold across projects and settings. At best, we can talk as if some of the practices we employ in the setting we have worked in may hold in other settings. More important, it seems, is to bring the social character of fieldwork itself to the forefront of thinking about fieldwork methods (Aunger, 2004). Emerson (1983a) noted that fieldwork is "inescapably part of the very social worlds it seeks to discover, describe, and analyse" (p. vii). Aunger (2004) noted that any form of data elicitation necessarily involves some kind of social interaction, even if it is observation from afar. Emerson (1983a) noted that recognition of this dispels the belief that the fieldworker can somehow avoid or transcend the sorts of practical concerns and personal involvements that pervade everyday social life. The ethnographer's personal experiences, especially those of participation and empathy, are recognised as central to the research process, whereas they have in the past most often been firmly restrained "by the impersonal standards of observation and 'objective' distance" (Clifford, 1986, p. 13).

Data must be seen as the result of a collection operation that constitutes a social situation with certain peculiarities. Among the non-random contextual factors Aunger (2004) listed were emotional holdovers from previous social encounters between the interviewer and informant, and more random factors such as the weather (Mishler, 1986). In any response to a question, he maintained, there is strategic decision-making about whether to reveal true opinions, as well as the miscommunication of meanings, and the contribution of distracting events. Aunger (2004) has said that crucial to reflexivity is the explicit consideration of the impact of data-collection methods on the nature of the data. He pointed out that the typical data-collection method of interviewing ignores the role the interviewer plays in determining responses. He claimed that situational factors in the interviewing context have been insufficiently considered. He noted that survey studies conducted in cross-cultural settings have typically shown significant interviewer-based biases in response, and that ethnographic research will typically exhibit such effects. For example, he mentioned the presence of others in the vicinity of the interviewee, as well as the participant's competency in the interviewer's language.

The ethnographer's presence (as a participant observer) probably always has an effect on the behaviours of those being observed. Aunger (2004) commented that even naturalistic or non-invasive data-collection techniques without an observer (such as a camera or tape) are likely to have some effect on what subjects say and do, unless observation is covert (in which case there are ethical difficulties). Therefore, he concluded, all legitimate data-

collection methods require reflexive analysis. When using participant observation, ethnographic conclusions are derived from impressions written down after participating in the social life of the group being studied. Some aspects of the observed material may particularly have caught the ethnographer's attention, and this forms part of the context of the observation. In ethnography, however, there is no clear theorising about how the unconscious influences such choices. Secondly, Aunger (2004) argued that another aspect of context is that general conclusions are formed based on a variety of situations.

Because postmodern fieldwork places the subjectivity of the researcher at the forefront, field researchers over the past several decades have come to recognise more clearly the inappropriateness for qualitative research of methodological procedures narrowly modelled on those of the natural sciences (Emerson, 1983a). As a result, field researchers have felt growing ease in discarding much of the classic apparatus of the natural sciences - for example, hypothesis testing, formulation of specifically defined variables, and a strict concern with reliability and replicability. As field research has become more explicit about and more committed to the interpretive paradigm, it has not only become less apologetic about field methods and findings, but has also begun the difficult task of tracing through the full implications of such an approach. In this sense it gains a different sort of systematic quality from the careful, self-conscious reflection on its doings.

6.7.1.1.3.2 Participant observation

Participant observation is one ethnographic tool for collecting detailed information about people's behaviour and needs from their perspective, by participating in their daily lives (Orford, 1992). It is thought that the only way to really delve into the lives of one's subjects is to live with them in order to experience them in their own setting (Tierney 2002). Systematic observations are made at the same time. The participant observation strategy is the centrepiece of scientific ethnographic research (Tierney, 2002), because it is the most used data-gathering technique in cultural anthropology (Ferraro, 2004). In-depth participant observation at a single field site has been called the defining research methodology of anthropology (Weldes et al., 1999). As an extension of fieldwork, it has an affinity with the work of both cultural anthropologists and community practitioners. Apart from being a way to collect data, it represents an effort to understand a culture in all its complexity, so that an intimate knowledge of the culture can result.

Infant observation does not strictly fit this category, in that the observer does not live with the family or necessarily within the community being observed. However, by processes of minimal interaction and habituation (Gering, 1994) the regular observer theoretically becomes an accepted visitor and so may glean more of an insider view than through other research instruments such as semi-structured interviews. The details of the participatory observation and in fact the degree of participation by the researcher varies from investigation to investigation. Complete participation is thought to be incompatible with the objectivity required (Orford, 1992) and even impossible (some activities may be dangerous or illegal) (Tierney, 2002). Infant observation is proposed as one way to get an intimate feel for a family's difficulties without losing a sense of boundaries. It may offer a way to participate more safely in

communities where there are high rates of crime and violence in that weekly contact is brief and quite structured, although long-term.

Infant observation has been linked with the concept of participant observation from the first (Bick, 1968). M.J. Rustin (1997) held that "observers are unavoidably *participant* observers to a certain degree, however passive and non-interventionist a role they try to take" (p. 61). In Chapter Five applied, explicitly participatory versions of the observation endeavour were considered. Orford (2002) noted that in community research, participant observation methods are not directly linked with determining incidence and prevalence, but that "they may produce *a much fuller picture* of the prevalence of a phenomenon within a single community than can be obtained by any other means" (p. 111; italics added). In other words, participant infant observation could give us more information about what a problem looks like and more detail about how it manifests.

In his critique of more traditional ethnography, Clifford (1986) noted that the method of participant observation has always enacted a delicate balance of subjectivity and objectivity. The ethnographer's personal experiences, especially those of participation and empathy, are recognised as central to the research process, but have most often been firmly restrained "by the impersonal standards of observation and 'objective' distance" (Clifford, 1986, p. 13). He noted that the predominant metaphors in anthropological research (participant observation, data collection and cultural description) have all presupposed a standpoint outside - looking at, objectifying, or, somewhat closer, "reading," a given reality (1986, p. 11). Postmodernism, by contrast, rejects this kind of visualism, stating that it is a more complex matter than simply gaining an objective view, even when one is on the outside looking in.

The methodological advantages of hands-on research, Ferarro (2004) claimed, are obvious: participant observation generally improves rapport because it represents an attempt from outsiders "to at least try" to live according to a foreign culture, which is often appreciated (Ferraro, 2004, p. xiv). Secondly, the quality of the data is often improved. First-hand research allows the anthropologist to distinguish between what people actually do and what they say they do, thereby avoiding hearsay (Ferraro, 2004). As Angrosino (2002) pointed out, ethnography uses an inductive analytical strategy; explanatory theories grow out of the experience as it is observed in real life. The purpose is not to test specific hypotheses in an experimental design.

The goal of participant observation is to describe the everyday; to know everything that one can, and to know what it feels like to be the subject (Tierney, 2002). For example, in a study on homeless people Tierney (2002) asked what it felt like to live in public places, how people could survive in such a hostile environment, and how they managed to get some enjoyment out of life all the same. The mind-set required by such a methodology is "a desire to see the world from the insiders' perspective" (Tierney, 2002, p. 11). Participant observation can "open up" worlds previously unknown to the researcher, such as, for the sake of this study, poverty environments. Tierney (2002) commented that the world that was opened up for him was surprisingly much like his own: "a world in which people have to be innovative, skilful, and clever if they want to survive" (p. 11). However, the specific challenges to the capacities of his subjects were ones that he had to learn about from the inside. Infant observation

has the ability to highlight unknown daily struggles, strengths and deficits, and similarities in the worlds of the observer and the observed. Potentially, this could give rise to a highly empathic picture of life in a poor community. Recommendations are thought to have greater weight if the observer has lived through the relevant experiences, so that there is a deeper understanding and appreciation of the subjects' needs (Tierney, 2002).

There is awareness in community psychology of the need to democratise the research process and make it participatory (K. Gibson, 2002b). A crucial point that Geertz and his colleagues have made is that contemporary fieldwork is seen as an attempt to understand the *meanings* that activities observed in natural settings have for those engaged in them. This is what makes it a potentially useful strategy for uncovering worldviews of people from cultures different from one's own. This is achieved by the researcher feeling subject to the systems and codes of the researched: "Immersion is sought primarily for the distinctive modes of understanding that it brings" (Emerson, 1983b, p. 1). This represents a further deviation from the infant observation model, which suggests a degree of distance and non-involvement. However, I have argued previously that, because this stance opens the observer to the impact of unconscious processes within the family (Miller et al., 1989), an unusually deep understanding of motive, meaning and need can follow.

While an ethnocentric stance is biased in favour of the observer's culture and tends to characterise what is foreign as primitive or backward, the participant observer attempts to understand a non-Western culture on its own terms. Hand in hand with this is the way the researcher thinks about her own position in relation to the people she is studying. The principle of cultural relativism is central: no culture is seen as superior to another, and each culture needs to be evaluated in its own terms (Tierney, 2002). Therefore participant observation is one way to deal respectfully with communities. It seems that the goal of infant observation, namely to understand something about an individual from the inside out, can theoretically be extended using the participant observation stance, to uncover other cultures from the inside out.

Discussions of the participant observation process yield interesting parallels and contrasts with the methodology of the present study and with infant observation as a whole. Tierney (2002) described his primary activity in a study of homeless people as "just hanging out" (p. 10). He indicated that a level of comfort, co-operation and trust developed as their world slowly opened up to him. Detail was observed as he "watched every little thing" (p. 10). However, the process was not without complications:

> The only time I felt uncomfortable was when the tables were turned and people on the street took to watching me and asking me a variety of personal questions. During the first few weeks it became clear to me that I was the oddity on the street and that I was being observed and scrutinized with as much intensity as I myself employed while watching them. (Tierney, 2002, p. 10)

Participant observation is, by inference, "an important technique for anyone hoping to develop relationships with, and not merely gather information from, those under study" (Tierney, 2002, p. 11). It is probably impossible to conduct an infant observation over a year in a community setting without establishing some kind of bond with the

subjects. Participant observers typically cultivate an attitude of interest and respect for native cultures, and have even been known to become a friend and advocate in the community being studied (Tierney, 2002). Participant observation is always a joint effort and requires mutual trust and respect. This makes it a useful strategy for a community project, where advocacy and participation are accepted principles.

It should be clear by now that, while comparisons have been drawn, there is a tension between the character of postmodern fieldwork and the character of the infant observation endeavour. The innovative use of infant observation as an ethnographic endeavour may therefore not be without its complications in the South African scene. A study such as this invariably gives rise to prickly questions: Will habituation occur? Does the presence of a white observer in a coloured community ever become something unremarkable? What kind of "intimate familiarity" or "empathetic participation" (Emerson, 1983b, p. 2), if any, will be possible in a cross-cultural, interracial, severely deprived South African observation setting? Will it be allowed to develop? Will the stated focus of infant observation on the internal world of the infant result in a selective view in which particular meanings are emphasised above others? To what degree will a white observer with an Afrikaans background allow herself to experience the needs of a coloured family living in poverty as a result of apartheid? Is it possible to think about their behaviour in ways that are not contaminated by her prejudice? I hope to answer these questions in the next two chapters.

6.7.2 Interviews

i) With the participating parents

At proposal stage it was decided that a semi-structured in-depth interview would be conducted with the participant mother at the beginning of the observation process, after six months and at the end of the observation period (Nelson & Prilleltensky, 2005; Orford, 1992; Rosnow & Rosenthal, 1996). It was decided that a graduate student in psychology other than myself would conduct the interview. I would not have access to the interview data until after the completion of the observation. This confidentiality was intended to foster more honest responses and to prevent my behaviour being shaped by what the participant revealed in the interview. Whether it was believed that this was confidential by the participants is another issue. The purpose of these interviews was primarily to gather data about how the mother experienced the observation process, in other words what she in turn observed about herself, the observer and the process. Because the interviews were conducted periodically, they assisted in finding out how this experience might change over time.

In practice it was decided to conduct interviews with both the mother and father of the observed infant, resulting in six interviews. The interviews were structured to elicit a story or narrative from the participant initially and then to focus on feelings. Open-ended interviews are widely used in qualitative research (Nelson & Prilletensky, 2005). Two newly appointed research assistants who joined the WMHRP in 2005 (one male, one female) conducted the interviews. The male assistant (James) had an Honours Degree in Psychology and the female assistant (Carol) had

an MA in Clinical Psychology. James interviewed the father, while Carol interviewed the mother. Interviews were conducted separately, using the same semi-structured interview schedules in both cases, within the same week. I devised an interview guide (Patton, 2002) with a number of questions and "probes" (Nelson & Prilletensky, 2005, p. 270). The whole research team, including my promoter, discussed the content of this guide in its three forms (beginning, middle and end interviews). The interview schedules were shaped both by the research questions (De Wet & Erasmus, 2005) and in response to issues and themes that were becoming apparent in the observation process. Nelson and Prilleltensky (2005) pointed out that, in line with the discovery-orientated nature of qualitative research, the skill of the interviewer in listening and allowing the participant to determine the direction of the interview is important. The interviews were recorded on audiotape and professionally transcribed by an assistant. **Addendum E** contains the three interview schedules.

ii) With the researcher/observer

My thesis promoter suggested, during the second half of the observation process, that I should also be interviewed. The function of this interview was to gather data about how I experienced the observation process while it was ongoing. My promoter conducted the interview and it was recorded on audiotape and professionally transcribed by an assistant.

Interviewing is a technique used in community psychology and in ethnographic research in order to collect data. Interviewing is not traditionally part of the infant observation process, but Canham et al. (1997) noted that the development of narrative as a research tool takes research into human experience and relationships in the same direction that naturalistic observations do. The interviews were unusual in that they did not initially set out to elicit narratives about the participants' lives in a broader sense, but to elicit their narratives about the infant observation process itself. In this way it was hoped, in line with social constructionist thought, that my final depiction of the observation process (in the present dissertation) would be a more poly-vocal one than is traditionally the case (Clifford, 1986; Durrheim, 1997; Gavey, 1989).

6.7.3 Other community sources

At proposal stage it was envisaged that, besides the observation accounts, the present study would also use the following as data:

i)   Previously gathered needs assessment data (lengthy annual need assessment reports were completed in 2002, 2003 and 2004);

ii)   Existing research about Moretown; and

iii)   Other South African and international infant observation accounts.

Bromley (1986) warned that case studies should not be based on single sources of information. Qualitative research

preferably utilises data in more than one form (Nelson & Prilleltensky, 2005; Orford, 1992), and ethnographers typically use a multiple sources for data collection in the field (Angrosino, 2002). Because all data-collection techniques have limitations and potential biases, a combination is thought to assist in providing the necessary checks and balances so that there is more likelihood of producing a reasonably objective overall portrait (Angrosino, 2002). Additional textual or archival data are a recognised source in qualitative research (Nelson & Prilleltensky, 2005).

6.7.4 Other documentation

The 43 observations resulted in 247 pages of observation records. **Addendum F** lists the observations by number and title. Beyond this, the process produced the following documents that were also available for analysis:

Table 2

Other documentation for analysis

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1. Extra notes on process that I made sporadically (as infant observations were written up);

2. Infant observation seminar records (taken in session);

3. Thesis supervision records (taken in session with my promoter);

4. Research group notes (taken in session);

5. My journal (reflections on feelings stemming from the infant observation seminars, written straight afterwards).

These other documents reflect a process by which I as the researcher was thinking about what I was doing and feeling (self-reflection). They arose both from a theoretical assumption that self-reflection is important, and in response to the particularities of the present observation process. Other researchers who have worked with journals include Hollway (1989), who kept a "Golden Notebook" consisting of field notes and theoretical ideas. Within the paradigm of infant observation, Piontelli (1992) carefully monitored and accurately recorded her counter-transference feelings in separate notes while engaged in her observations of foetal life. She was careful to keep the records of what happened separate from her interpretation of events. Nelson and Prilletensky (2005) noted that qualitative researchers generally take two kinds of field notes, namely descriptive notes about what they observe, including direct quotes, and analytic or reflective file notes "in which they record their impressions, insights, hunches and feelings" (p. 271).

6.8 Analysis

In this section, the procedures for the analysis of the data will be described. Holland and Ramazanoglu (1994) urged researchers to "try to explain the grounds on which selective interpretations have been made by making explicit the processes of decision making which produce the interpretation and the logic of the method on which

these decisions are based" (quoted in Olesen, 2005, p. 251).

All qualitative approaches use some process of coding data from transcripts, texts and field notes (Nelson & Prilleltensky, 2005). Any infant observation project is, like grounded theory and ethnographic fieldwork, interested in relating surface observations to deeper levels of theoretical explanation (M.J. Rustin, 1997). Observed cases are seen as instances of a theoretically consistent model of behaviour. In the present study, it was therefore decided that some aspects of a grounded theory approach would be utilised as part of the methodology, primarily to ensure a systematic analysis of the data. There has been a long debate about qualitative research needing to be as systematic, procedural and rigorous as quantitative research (De Wet & Erasmus, 2005; Katz, 1983; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Morse, Barrett, Olson & Spiers, 2002). Charmaz (1995) identified the provision of systematic research procedures as one of grounded theory's major contributions. Before giving a description of the techniques that were used, I will situate them within the framework of social constructionist grounded theory.

6.8.1 Grounded theory

Grounded theory is a term coined by Glaser and Strauss in 1967 (cited in Strauss, 1987) that refers centrally to a process of constant comparative analysis. Patterns are highlighted in order to generate or elaborate theory (Strauss, 1987). The purpose of grounded theory is not to produce statistically verified results (via random sampling of a specific population). Instead, grounded theory "aims to develop a theory that will synthesise, explain and interpret the data" (Lesch, 2000, p. 79). Because its focus is on specifying conditions that precede behaviour and the consequences of that behaviour, it is felt to be particularly suited to examine social interactions, structure and process (Annels, 1997).

Charmaz (1995) described simultaneous involvement in data collection and the analysis phase of research. Analysis commences straight away and later stages of data collection are informed by the early stages of analysis. Thus there is a constant interplay of data gathering and analysis. M.J. Rustin (1997) noted that the process of discovery in psychoanalysis is close to the grounded theory method, in that analysts also move inductively from clinical material to theories.

6.8.1.1 Social constructionist grounded theory

A social constructionist grounded theory (Charmaz, 2000) accords well with Geertz's version of postmodern ethnography in that both aim to study people in their natural settings and both focus on meaning and interpretation (versus truth). In a grounded theory approach, provision is made for new and even surprising meanings to emerge from the data. It represents a move away from the positivist stance of more traditional modes of grounded theory.

The constructivist approach asks of the researcher that she gain "intimate familiarity" with the worlds of her participants (Charmaz, 2000, p. 525). Charmaz (1990, 2000) held that this approach also results in keeping

participants' experiences alive and in the foreground for the reader. The constructivist approach in grounded theory admits that the researcher co-constructs the research process, the participants' responses, and the interpretation of the data, including her choice of categories and themes (Charmaz, 1990). This means that her personhood, theoretical background and own history will all play a role. This needs to be acknowledged and thought about specifically so that the researcher can stay close to the meanings that participants make of their own experiences (Charmaz, 1990).

6.8.2 Preliminary interpretation

The infant observation procedure itself has much in common with a grounded theory approach. In grounded theory early stages of enquiry are as open-ended as possible. I argue that, because the infant observation procedure aims at an open-ended record of sorts, it has great potential as a tool in qualitative research. While there were clear research questions informing the choice of research design and method, there was also an open-ended awareness that other important information could emerge from the present study. There was thus a commitment to recording the process in great detail on many different levels. Did it produce the expected data, or something else?

However, at the same time experience was being represented on different levels throughout the process. There was thus a constant interplay of data gathering and analysis, as in a grounded theory approach (Charmaz, 1995). Riessman (1993), discussing interviewing, problematised the very idea of representing experience. Her model is also valuable for thinking about infant observation. She suggested that by attending (in this case, observing), one makes certain phenomena meaningful, and that this in fact forms a first level of interpretation. There is choice in what one notices. What you see or look for is influenced by who you are. Similarly, K. Gibson (2002b) pointed out that interpretation occurs throughout any process of investigation. Infant observation aims initially to describe what is being seen and felt in the room. However, interpretation invariably occurs from the beginning (in the observer's head, even if the interpretations are not recorded). For example, towards the middle of the observation period, I found myself sporadically noticing unconscious communications to me from the mother during the actual observations. I then recorded these ideas, because I observed myself as having them.

The infant observation records produced in the days following each observation resulted in extensive notes that were organised in a linear fashion. In telling or re-presenting the experience in this way, the form of discourse will have both opportunities and constraints (Riessman, 1993). Transcription into a report creates a narrative that is related as though I were inside the experience; it is enacted: "I describe the settings, characters, unfolding plot, and stitch together the story in a way that makes my interpretation of the events clear" (Riessman, 1993, p. 10). There is an attempt at capturing the moment through description at great length. One invariably selects what is written down, and what is left out. Here, it is important to consider whom I was writing for.

In a third round of interpretation the records were considered in psychodynamic seminars with other infant observers on a regular basis. Theoretically, this was meant to ensure that there was ongoing reflection and some

consensus around the preliminary interpretation of the material. Observations were discussed in detail after they were read aloud. During the observation period I attended weekly infant observation seminars offered by the Cape Town Society for Psychoanalytic Psychotherapy (CTSPP) through a seminar leader called "Mrs K".[1] As all infant observation seminars were initially full, I was invited to sit in on an existent group early in 2005 until a new one was established. Simultaneously, I attended individual seminars with Mrs K, where I presented my pre-birth visits and the early observation reports. In fact, I "visited" two different groups a total of five times, and had three individual seminars with Mrs K. The circulated information flyer advertising Mrs K's seminars read as follows:

> Members of this seminar observe an infant in its own home, in interaction with family members, from birth for two years. The observation visits are weekly and last an hour. Detailed notes of all that has been observed are made as soon as possible after the observation as the purpose of these observations includes the training of the observer in disciplined observation. This includes the noting of his or her feelings and behaviour, and subsequent reflection. The perspective adopted in mainly psychoanalytic but literature in child development research is referred to where appropriate. Particular emphasis is placed on an attempt to describe the infant's emotional and psychological experience as manifested in all aspects of his/her behaviour and early relationships. The object is the study of the growth of mind and personality of the infant and the familial context in which this may be facilitated or impeded.

The flyer also mentioned that each seminar member had the opportunity to follow, in detail over two years, the early development of a number of babies. In terms of interpretation, the focus is on a measured, waiting stance which seeks to speculate on what *may* be happening over time. It is a given in the seminars that the group is forming hypotheses only, and it is usual for the facilitator to point out that only the passage of time and the observed development of the baby can confirm or disconfirm them. This attitude of watching, waiting and wondering (Reynolds, 2003) is a firm psychoanalytic principle, founded on the ideas of Freud, Klein, Bion and Winnicott, among others. It has the potential to produce extremely considered interpretations, about which there has been a high degree of consensus.

Data were also discussed with researchers in a maternal mental health research group, of which my promoter and I are members, along with three other professionals in the field of psychology. This group was founded by my promoter and is oriented towards discussing and supporting one another's writing projects. Broadly, we are all linked with the WMHRP in some way. Currently, we are all undertaking doctoral work under Professor Kruger's supervision. Meetings occur monthly. Data were discussed in this forum and also in individual supervision with my dissertation promoter, who obtained an MA and a PhD in Clinical Psychology from Boston University, which at the time of her training was predominantly psychoanalytic. Together, these discussions represented a fourth level of interpretation of the data.

The infant observation seminars, in which talking and listening happen, are in effect a way of producing a narrative together, in interaction. Language, Riessman (1993) pointed out, finds meaning in experience and then expresses it, enabling us to think about experience and not just live it. The story is told for a particular audience. I am creating a self in the telling: how I want to be known to the audience. What was included in the report and how the text is arranged and displayed "have serious implications for how a reader will understand the narrative" (p. 12). This interpretive practice is theory-driven. I continued to observe while the seminars, my thesis supervision, and the

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[1] More detail will be given in the next chapter.

research group were all ongoing. It could be said that the stages of categorisation that the data had already undergone influenced the way I behaved in the observations and what I was looking for, or noticing.

After telling and transcribing, Riessman (1993) held, comes analysis. In the present study I attempt to use the reports, interview transcriptions and notes taken in supervision to create sense and some kind of summation. By telling what all this signified, I created a "metastory" (Riessman, 1993, p. 13). The last (sixth) level of representation, Riessman (1993) noted, comes when the reader reads the finished text (in this case, the dissertation).

It is a principle in grounded theory that later stages of data collection are informed by the early stages of analysis. Similarly, K. Gibson (2002b) implemented a process of reflection in her research, with the explicit purpose of encouraging and deepening her thinking about the material being collected. She did this by gathering her data in phases or cycles that resulted in a continuous process of layering, which opened up new questions as the research progressed. While the core data-collection technique in the present study was observation, I also sought to find further strategies for collecting data throughout the process, based on the developing knowledge base. Thus, for example, it was decided during the observation period to conduct an interview with me as the researcher, and to keep a journal of my feelings after leaving every infant observation seminar. In so doing, I began observing the supervision and seminar processes, and myself in them. It was also decided during the course of the observation to interview both parents, and not only the mother. This was in response to the dynamic that arose between the father and me. The content of interviews was also determined according to developments in the observation process itself. These were choices based on a growing understanding of what was transpiring in the observations. In other words, the research instruments were refined based on a preliminary analysis of the data in supervision.

6.8.2.1 Immersion

While gathering the data, including the processes of observing, recording and being supervised, I initially tried to remain closely involved with the material, as opposed to thinking about it from a more distanced, intellectual position. In this sense, my bias (in terms of my theory and historical positioning) was initially not interrogated, so that it could be seen more clearly at a later stage and worked with as part of the thick description. For example, I was discouraged from re-reading observations by my promoter during the observation period (unless presenting them in seminars), or of delving into the literature too early on: it was felt that this could predetermine what I saw. This was partly a choice informed by the grounded theory principle of allowing meaning to emerge rather than starting a project with preconceived theories (Charmaz, 1995). To this end, grounded theory dictates delaying the literature review (Charmaz, 1995). Instead, I consciously immersed myself in the experience. Secondly, this approach, namely of "not knowing" or not packaging and explaining prematurely, was also theoretically informed by the psychodynamic paradigm, as a way of developing a space in which the unconscious can present itself (Bion, 1974, cited in Casement, 1985). Thirdly, the observation task also became very demanding. I experienced a sense of absorption that came out of the weekly encounters themselves. Subjectively, I felt that I could not withdraw emotionally in order to take on a more critical stance. It is possible that my experience as a therapist, of empathic immersion in a client's world, lay behind this. But this may also have been the result of the nature of this particular

encounter itself. The experience of observing was so absorbing that it left me without the emotional and mental energy to do much else at the data-collection stage.

6.8.2.2 Reflexivity and self-reflection

The importance of reflexivity in community psychology and in the postmodern paradigm more generally was clearly flagged in previous chapters. It is also a core principle in feminist research (Olesen, 2005). From a research perspective, reflexivity has been defined as acknowledging the central position of the practitioner in the construction of knowledge; she is inescapably a part of that which she is trying to know or describe (Tindall, 1994):

> Reflexivity requires an awareness of the researcher's contribution to the construction of meanings throughout the research process, and an acknowledgement of the impossibility of remaining "outside of" one's subject matter while conducting research. (Willig, 2001, p. 10)

Personal reflexivity involves the way in which the researcher's own personhood has shaped the research (Willig, 2001). It is closely linked to the concept of subjectivity, whereby the perceiving and influencing ego is acknowledged. Willig (2001) pointed out that qualitative researchers differ in the emphasis placed upon reflexivity in their research, in other words, how much they discuss who the researcher is and how she shaped what she saw. I have argued that infant observation has neglected reflexivity. Within social constructionist thinking, the subjectivity of the researcher is paramount:

> Simply stated, we are interpreting and creating texts at every juncture, letting symbols stand for or take the place of the primary experience, to which we have no direct access. Meaning is ambiguous because it rises out of a process of interaction between people: self, teller, listener and recorder, analyst, and reader. Although the goal may be to tell the whole truth, our narratives about others' narratives are our worldly creations. (Riessman, 1993, p. 15)

Reflexivity requires the researcher to consider the many selves she brings to her research, because these selves influence her choice of research problem, her interactions with participants, and her writing (Lincoln & Guba, 2000). This would include an acute awareness of hidden or unrecognised elements in the researcher's background (Olesen, 2005). It follows that the tools of reflection and self-reflection (considering self-experience) are needed in order to achieve reflexive research. This means considering the words, events and behaviours of everyone involved in a given project in great depth, including trying to access any unconscious motives behind them. In a psychoanalytic sense, this involves wondering and musing about possible meanings, implicitly accessed by using the self as a tool (Ainslie & Brabeck, 2003). Holland and Ramazanoglu (1994) held that feminist researchers need to acknowledge complexity and contradiction which may be beyond the researchers' experience, and recognise "the possibility of silences and absences in their data" (quoted in Olesen, 2005, p. 251).

Like K. Gibson (2002b), I actively instituted a process of continuous self-reflection, that involved examining what my emotional experience was, and reflecting on what this might mean. I considered explanations involving both unconscious transference, and factors related to the real world context of the study. I was guided in this by the

theoretical paradigm of psychoanalysis most broadly, as well as reflective social work practice using observation (S. Briggs, 1999) and the systemic and reflective focus of psychodynamic community psychology. All the paradigms I have drawn on in the present dissertation promote reflection, including the metatheoretical, social constructionist lens. I became aware that the different levels at which the encounter in Moretown was operating were numerous and inter-related. I was therefore encouraged in supervision to take the degree of self-reflection further than most infant observers do. K. Gibson (2002b) went so far as to say that the researcher should notice feelings engendered in her during interviews and in the writing up of the research. I noted my emotional responses when I eventually read all the observations through as a whole. My experience, including my emotions, thoughts and my relationships with and positioning towards my supervisors was later considered an important source of additional information. My journal, for example, was used retrospectively to see where it intersected with the observations and what it could add to an understanding of them. I therefore made a point of recording personal experience in an ongoing way in many different areas:
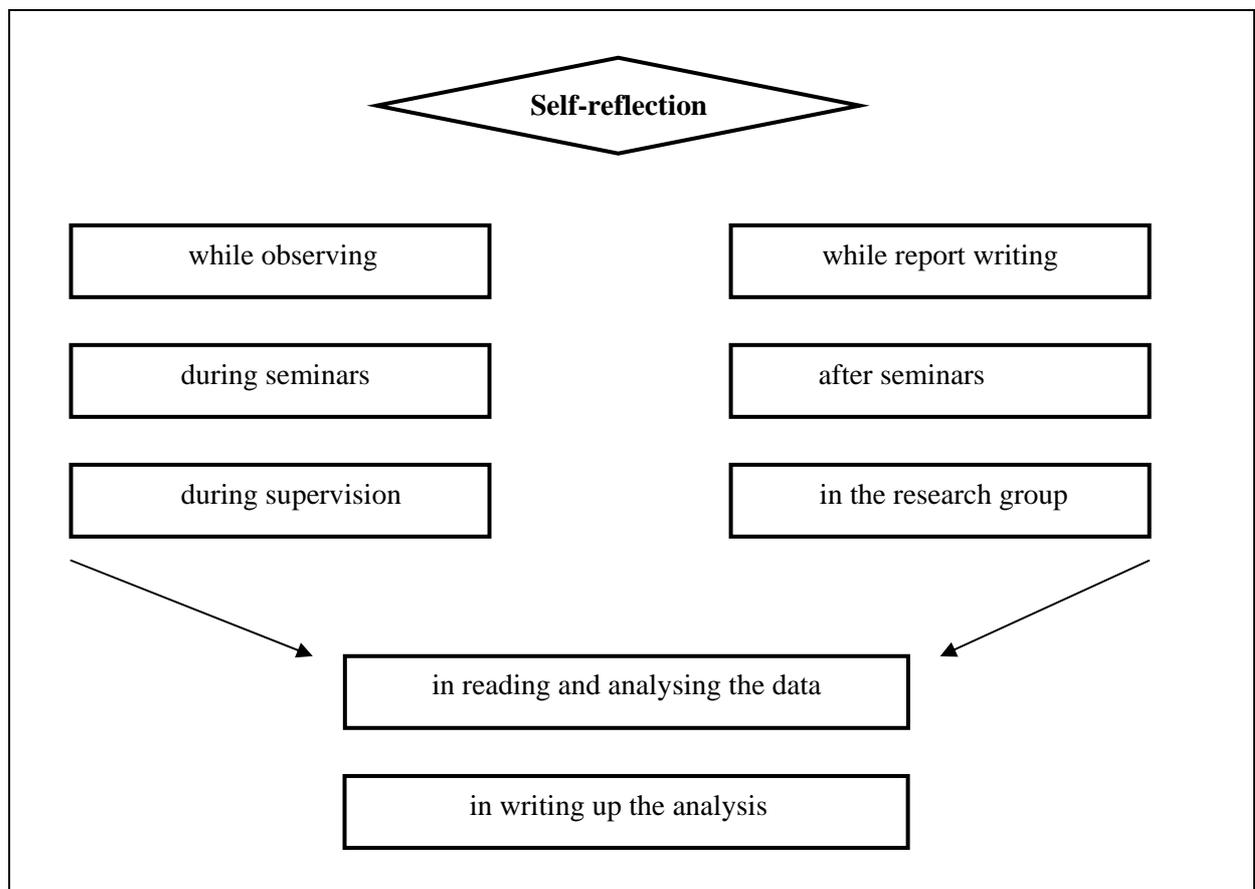
Figure 1. Self-reflection during the infant observation process.

At a later stage it was possible to see the correlations between these different areas. The same themes repeatedly came up across them and could be compared with themes in the reports. As previously discussed, the examination of the counter-transference is an accepted but traditionally underplayed part of infant observation practice. However, from proposal stage my study recognised that the impact of the observations on me would need to be analysed.

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6.8.3 Data analysis and synthesis

6.8.3.1 A close reading of the data

The first analytical step in grounded theory research, before coding, involves a close reading of all the documents. K. Gibson (2002b) has described this as "getting a feel of the material" (p. 96), while De Wet and Erasmus (2005) have called it getting a sense of the "spirit of the text" before imposing codes and categories on it (p. 30). This step has been advocated in arguing for systematic procedures in qualitative analysis (De Wet & Erasmus, 2005). This reading gives the researcher an initial sense of some of the aspects arising from the data and allows her to interact with the data as a whole in a relatively "unmediated" way (De Wet & Erasmus, 2005, p. 30). It also helps her understand the data in context, a practice central to qualitative data analysis. It may also help her to recognise the unexpected in the text. The researcher is on the lookout for regularly occurring phrases (Miles & Huberman, 1994) and reads the material repeatedly (De Wet & Erasmus, 2005).

I worked through all the reports as a whole a total of four times (including writing them). I had made only a few extra notes about the observations themselves during the observation period (see Table 2), but now made copious notes during the two readings after the observation period. The latter included, as I have stated, noting my emotional responses during the reading process. I also took note of aspects that stood out as significant in the material I was reading, achieved with hindsight and as part of a first overview of the whole process. These were invariably things about which I had been unconscious during the observations themselves, but which were quite clear in the reports. Particular observations had felt important during the process and each time I had noted this in the reports. During a second reading I marked important extracts for possible inclusion in the dissertation. After the first and second readings I compared my notes, which gave me a starting point for conceptualising the case study.

6.8.3.2 Meaning-making exercises

I engaged in several exercises while examining the data, namely:

1. Constructing a list of all the titles from the 43 observation reports;
2. Noting whose words were used in the titles;
3. Listing first and last sentences;
4. Listing first and last paragraphs;
5. Recording the changes in font, margins and page lengths;
6. Listing shortest and longest observations;
7. Listing observations that were marked as important in the reports;
8. Listing observations about which extra notes existed outside of the reports;
9. Noting when extra notes started being a feature of the report-writing process;
10. Noting when the breaks were, who was absent when and for how long, who was present at each observation,

and when rescheduling occurred;

11. Noting parentheses, preambles, postscripts and changes in writing tone and style;

12. Noting which observations had been presented, to whom;

13. Grouping the titles into numbered phases, based on shifts suggested by the titles, the changes in document formats and writing style;

14. Titling and describing the phases;

15. Writing a narrative about the observation process, based on the phases.

6.8.3.3 Coding

The observation process produced a great deal of very detailed, rich data. Because the material was mostly in essay form (not interview), there was a danger that I could miss something important if I did not go through it all carefully. In interpreting the results, line-by-line coding was therefore used to ensure that I stayed close to the data and that my findings came from the data examination and not from my own ideas or hypotheses (Charmaz, 1995). Coding occurred before formulation was begun.

Following a first reading and concurrent with the meaning-making exercises and further readings, I engaged in manual first-level coding, which is a first step in data reduction (Miles & Huberman, 1994). De Wet and Erasmus (2005) defined coding as the practice of finding specific segments of text that relate to a theme and/or linking a theme to specific segments of text and/or recognising a theme emerging from the data. At this level codes are descriptive but can also be interpretive (De Wet & Erasmus, 2005). De Wet and Erasmus (2005) also described a procedure for further coding, which they called fine first-level coding and second-level coding. They grouped data into data sets and coded them electronically using a qualitative software package. Second-level coding involved two steps: first, identifying clusters and hierarchies of information; and second, a deeper level of analysis during which they identified patterns and relationships in the data. This second step helped them produce their findings. Time was spent thinking about what the reasons for the results might be.

While there are many benefits in coding electronically, I decided to code manually. Given the amount of data (247 pages of observation reports alone) and because I would not be counting codes within and across texts, it was decided in supervision that I would select only specific observations to code. I manually coded four observations and thereafter a point of saturation was reached (Nelson & Prilleltensky, 2005). I chose these based on observations that stood out from the meaning-making exercises, as well as coding the first and last observations. After reading all the observations once, my promoter and I both coded the final observation and compared the codes we had arrived at. After the second reading, I coded another three observations, again creating analytic codes and categories developed from the data (Charmaz, 1995). While I had already made notes of a free-associative nature during readings one and two, I specifically held off synthesising my impressions into a formulation before I had coded observations for themes. Besides the observations, I coded my infant observation seminar notes, my journal, and my promoter's e-mails. I also extracted themes from the sections of the reports I had marked as important for

inclusion in the thesis.

The result of having written the reports myself, having read all of them consecutively three times, and having worked with them in the meaning-making and coding exercises, was that in time I became very familiar with the material.

6.8.3.4 Comparison

Lastly, the infant observation records and interviews were compared with existent data about the community of Moretown. In this way I could ask whether they contributed anything different, similar, or noteworthy. The comparison of new data with existent data was facilitated by the fact that I had played a role at the start of the needs assessment process in Moretown in 2002, as part of my clinical training. I also had access to WMHRP documents spanning the years between 1999 and 2007, namely:

1. Annual needs assessment reports (2002, 2003; 2004);
2. The results of the Depression Survey (2002-2005);
3. Interview material and journals of the interviewers;
4. Publications, conference papers, theses and dissertations, unpublished articles, and chapters and books in press;
5. Funding applications and proposals summarising research findings;
6. The 2001 census information.

6.8.4 Principles informing the method of analysis

Below I will consider the ways in which the paradigms of ethnography and psychodynamic community psychology led to my choices around analysing the infant observation material in the present study. Broadly, there was an emphasis on gaining access to the participants' meanings and experience. In order to do so I attempted to access the unconscious by using my experience of the process. Infant observation has also begun to experiment with coding procedures.

6.8.4.1 Ethnographic thick description

Tierney (2002) noted that the final write up of fieldwork entails more than writing; it is a process of thought and reflection as well. If the infant observation reports can be seen as field notes, then the analysis presented here (Chapters Seven and Eight) can be seen as the thick descriptive text that resulted. The analysis has been about accessing the meanings of the participants in the process. It has been said that it is only possible to make sense of research within the specificity of its historical, cultural and social context (Kinchelhoe & McLaren, 2000, cited in K. Gibson, 2002b). One way to do this is to through thick description, which locates and explains the experiences of participants in the research (Geertz, 1973). On the other hand, Riessman (1993) has warned that it is important to

distinguish between our views of subjects' lives and their own. Even when seeking our subjects' meaning, "in the final analysis, the work is ours" (Riessman, 1993, p. 67).

The concept of thick description is not alien to infant observation, as mentioned. A local study using infant observation described filming in this setting as "ethnographic film" and applied thick description as the penultimate stage of the analysis, as a way to speculate about the meaning of events (Gering, 1994). The present study puts infant observation forward as one way to achieve thick description, because it is interested in the connections between people, and in the personal meaning of human actions. One could ask, however, whether it is more interested in uncovering unconscious meanings (which are thus unknown, if still salient to the local actors). Its interpretive stance may be said to dictate a particular theoretical understanding of what is being observed that could be far removed from the understanding of those involved in the observed events. In other words, strictly speaking, this is not a view from the subject's conscious perspective. It can, however, offer an even deeper understanding of personal meaning by accessing the unconscious. Riessman (1993) pointed out that, if given the opportunity, our subjects might not agree with our interpretations. She also noted that meanings of experiences are not static, but shift as consciousness changes.

Secondly, infant observation could potentially also differ from the concept of thick description on the issue of context. Emerson (1983c) noted that in a thick descriptive enterprise, actions are never stripped of locally relevant context, but are tied together in textured and *holistic* accounts of social life: "Ethnographic thick description proceeds on the assumption that context is not an obstacle to understanding but a resource for it" (p. 25). Infant observation may at times consider context, in its broadest social sense, to be less interesting or important than an understanding of the mother and baby (specifically, their internal worlds). Infant observation traditionally sees the *mother* as the environment being internalised over time. It seems possible, however, to expand the use of infant observation and to challenge these limitations. For example, Denzin's (1989) definition of thick description (quoted in Chapter One) seems to come close to inserting the idea of unconscious meaning into such a description, by emphasising that which is beyond "fact and surface appearances" (p. 83)

Like psychodynamic enterprises, postmodern ethnography sees the experience of the researcher as important. Angrosino (2002) pointed out that in contemporary social science, ethnography refers both to a process of research and to the account that results from that research. As previously mentioned, some practitioners have taken the inclusion of the researcher's subjectivity so far as to produce "autoethnography", which is an autobiographical style of writing and research that includes the author's emotional responses in an attempt to connect personal and cultural experience (Berger & Ellis, 2002). It is felt that this encourages ethnographers to share authority, to develop a relationship with those studied, and to treat them as co-researchers. These are also important principles in community psychology practice.

The observer always features in the observation account to some extent. A postmodern take on community observation may foreground the observer even more. This is in keeping with the style of thick description; K.

Gibson (2002b) cited Geertz (1973) and Kincheloe and McLaren (2000) when speaking of thick descriptions as "social texts characterised by the contexts of their production, the intentions of their producers, and the meanings mobilised in the processes of their construction" (p. 81). The growing sensitivity to the actual practice of fieldwork has resulted in studies that insist that:

> In evaluating field data it is essential to describe such matters as what the fieldworker said and did in the field, how those "hosting" the research defined and responded to the fieldworker's words and deeds, and how all these doings influenced the fieldworker's on-the-spot interpretations and more polished analyses of events. (Emerson, 1983a, p. viii)

6.8.4.2 Psychodynamic community psychology

In psychodynamic community psychology research, as described, there has been a recent emphasis on in-depth analysis. Psychoanalytic interpretation is used to speculate about unconscious motives and experience. Methodologically, this means that self-reflexivity has become an important mode for community research (L. Swartz et al., 2002a). The reflexive stance continuously examines subjective experience during observation, description and analysis. Relationship becomes important. It is thought that a deeper understanding of the complex relationships in community work can result (K. Gibson, 2002b). Infant observation is attuned to noting tremendous interpersonal detail. The impact of the work (in terms of transference and counter-transference effects) is thought to be an important source of information about the client base. This has contributed to the idea that equal to the importance of the observation reports themselves will be an examination of the nature of the researcher and subject's experience of the observation process. In terms of method, the psychodynamic approach in community psychology research places an emphasis on the systematic recording of processes to facilitate their analysis (K. Gibson, 2002b; L. Swartz et al., 2002a). This has contributed to the idea in the present study of recording process wherever possible, also in supervision. Thought goes into the consistency and regularity of contact between community and practitioner, and the containment of difficult feelings that this provides. These are also principles in the infant observation procedure. This psychodynamic focus has been found to work well within more traditional approaches in community psychology, such as consultation work (K. Gibson, 2002b; Maw, 1996, 2002).

6.8.4.3 The use of coding procedures in infant observation

Infant observation is essentially a narrative of events and conversations. M.J Rustin (1989) pointed out that the problem of how to make sense of such unstructured observations is an issue in all field study methods, including infant observations. The previous chapter noted that there is some independent measure of the accuracy of written observation records by means of the discussion that occurs in seminar. The pilot project by Canham et al. furthermore showed that when groups of people rated one observation report, there was a high degree of consensus (1997). Several authors have therefore suggested the use of rating and coding procedures on observation reports (M.J. Rustin 1989, 1997; Winship, 2000). Having two or more people code the same observation report independently, before discussing it with the observer, seems one way of extracting themes in a more systematic,

consensual way (Winship, 2000).

6.9 Processes of validation

Any data-collection procedure has advantages and limitations. The biggest challenge for the present study concerns validity. Validity in the experimental model is defined as "the property of any measuring instrument, device or test that it measures what it purports to measure" (Reber, 1995, p. 832). From a qualitative perspective, validity has been defined as the degree to which research describes, measures or explains what it aims to describe, measure and explain (Willig, 2001). It can be seen as the process through which we make claims for the trustworthiness of our interpretations (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Riessman, 1993). In terms of the present study, can my impressions about what I observed be taken at face value? Did the infant observation method indeed generate knowledge about a single poor black child and her family? While I do not attempt to provide causes for behaviour in a wider empirical sense, my interpretation of the data, if it is trustworthy, may result in an account that deepens understanding. As Katz (1983) suggested, the danger is that a historical document of local interest is produced, which has limited value in terms of scientific findings. On the other hand, Riessman (1993) pointed out that concepts of verification and procedures for establishing validity from the experimental model rely on realist assumptions. Within a social constructionist framework, it is assumed that we cannot mirror a world "out there" (the truth) and that any reading of data is itself located in discourses (Riessman, 1993, p. 64). Lincoln and Guba (1985) proposed four criteria for trustworthiness:

1. Credibility: adequately representing participants' multiple constructions of reality;
2. Transferability: transferring the findings to other contexts;
3. Dependability: the extent to which findings are dependable;
4. Confirmability of the data by others.

Lincoln and Guba (1985) proposed several techniques for ensuring trustworthiness:

1. Prolonged involvement and persistent observation;
2. Multiple sources of information;
3. Multiple researchers and methods to determine consistency;
4. Checking the interpretations of data with participants;
5. Establishing an audit trail of steps taken in the data analysis;
6. Providing a detailed description of the setting.

The present study meets these requirements in the following ways (and the points below directly correspond with the techniques suggested above):

1. A one-year observation process;

2. The combination of observation data with other data;

3. The use of supervision and infant observation seminars;

4. The use of interviews;

5. The analytic procedure as laid out in this chapter;

6. The description of the setting in the next chapter.

A feature of the present study is that the major data-gathering processes are extremely subjective (the observer as research tool) (Canham et al., 1997). However, the regularity of the observation framework and the constancy of its setting helps any understanding of what happens in the observations to be tested and modified over time (M.J. Rustin, 1989). Any impressions formed by the observer "are allowed to develop slowly and are checked out in further observations" (Canham et al., 1997, p. 4). The use of a seminar for discussion is thought to offer "multiple perspectives…[that] facilitate the observer's attempts to find a meaningful story which makes sense of their experience" (Canham et al., 1997, p. 4). In the present study a rigorous supervision and consultation process in three settings was implemented, so that comparison and some consensus about what was being observed could be achieved. The result was that I had 39 supervision sessions altogether during the observation year, in the seminars, my thesis supervision and the research group. During these sessions I presented or discussed my own observations 19 times. I also sent the majority of my observations to my thesis promoter to read. Spence (1988, cited in K. Gibson, 2002b) has suggested a constant process of circling using the critical scrutiny of colleagues. This helps to test the initial assumptions again by challenging them with new ideas or opinions. It becomes particularly important to balance one paradigm or theory (the psychodynamic) with others (such as ethnography and community psychology) that may consider areas the first overlooks or minimises. Otherwise the data become limited and exclusionary. However, the fact remains that the opinions of colleagues represent further subjective responses to the material and will inevitably be affected by their particular positioning, often involving unspoken or unconscious assumptions. Within a social constructionist paradigm, this is accepted as inevitable.

The solution to this, authors have argued, is to try to uncover these assumptions and put them on the table as part of the research (K. Gibson, 2002b). K. Gibson (2002b) has argued that the researcher should repeatedly challenge and transform these assumptions, both theoretical and otherwise, during the research process. Being transparent about the data and the steps in their analysis preferably includes making them available along with the results (De Wet & Erasmus, 2005). As noted in the previous chapter, M.J. Rustin (1997) suggested making available for scrutiny both the observation reports, and the interpretive descriptions and commentaries constructed from them (in other words, what was said in seminars) in order to allow the procedure of interpretation to be as open to inspection as possible. This goes some way to addressing the question Katz (1983) has phrased as "How do we know you didn't overlook disconfirming data, or even make it all up?" (reliability) (p. 128). Riessman (1993) noted that persuasiveness is greatest when theoretical claims are supported with evidence from informants' accounts (the interviews) and when alternative interpretations of the data are considered. In the present study, having two very different kinds of supervision and several theoretical lenses at play helped the latter.

Connected to validity, Katz (1983) raised the issue of reactivity in research, which seems particularly applicable to the infant observation procedure: "How do you know it looks the way you describe when you're not there looking?" (p. 127). The presence of the observer invariably affects that which is being observed (Gering, 1994). Changes in the family's behaviour may be ascribed to habituation, whereas in fact there may be many other reasons for such shifts. For example, the data in any one session reflects to an extent the behaviour of the observer in that session. Differences in the behaviour of the family across sessions could then partly be ascribed to the changing behaviour of the observer. The present study attempted to address this by interviewing the participants on the subject of changing relationships, and also by keeping a reflective (if subjective) account of the observer's experience of the same. These were then compared at a later date. The promoter's reading of the data (weekly, as it was gathered) and periodic presentation of the data in the seminar groups and the research group, where changes in relating were noticed and discussed, provided further checks. This represents a form of triangulation, in other words, the use of various perspectives and investigators in the research process in order to facilitate richer interpretations (Banister et al., 1995; Willig, 2001)

A further issue concerns external validity, that is, the attempt to produce data that are generalisable in an ecological sense (Orford, 2002). Representativeness is an important consideration in community research and unfortunately the questionable generalisability of findings is a problem that can arise in qualitative approaches (Nelson & Prilleltensky, 2005). To whom are the results of the present study applicable? Can they be transferred to other individuals or groups, and where? Can the results of the present study be usefully generalised to the child's community, and to an understanding of low-income South African children and adults as a whole? As M.J. Rustin (1989) pointed out, the selection of families for observation was not designed to provide a random scientific sample, and therefore any claim that the families concerned are statistically representative of a larger population are precluded.

6.10 Ethical considerations

There were several important ethical issues to consider in the present study. While some could be anticipated in advance, it was important to continue to be vigilant of possible ethical controversies throughout the infant observation process. It was determined at proposal level that such dilemmas would be discussed with both the promoter and the infant observation seminar leader on a continuous basis.

Ethical issues are invariably complex and may arise unexpectedly, making them difficult to control for. It is interesting to note which ethical issues arose in the course of the study; the difference between those anticipated and those that occurred is revealing, both about participants and about my assumptions as the researcher.

The participant mother was asked to sign an informed consent form before the infant observation commenced, so that I could discuss some of the initial ethical concerns with her (**Addendum C**). This is not usual practice in an infant observation. The study at times uncomfortably straddled the infant observation model and a wider research

model. The infant observation seminar leader (Mrs K) was thus reluctant to engage with research issues such as ethics and exclusionary factors, and expressed some discomfort about there being a research agenda at all.

There is a range of ethical and political issues in any data-collection process. Of central importance in the present study was the power relationship between the researcher and the researched. As a researcher I was implicitly an outsider in a deprived setting. From the first there was an awareness that this could potentially give rise to an experience of intrusive, attacking eyes that pervert the truth, but are being given access because of a power imbalance. Tomlinson and L. Swartz (2002) stated that "the idea of a silent listener is not always prized" in community projects (p. 108); thinking about suffering, and not immediately taking action, may be viewed negatively. It thus became necessary to critically analyse power relations and my position of "watching" in an ongoing way, and to consider the level of co-operation from the community at all stages. I realised during the process that the notion of informed consent is relative in this context.

There was also awareness from the outset that the observation process would have consequences for the observed family. What they would be specifically was unclear at the start, but it was felt that the present research could affect community dynamics. The family in which the observation took place might be considered special, or pathological, and victimisation could occur. The observation could negatively impact on the position of the family in their neighbourhood and/or wider community, thereby creating lasting difficulties for the subjects. In this sense the observation could worsen things for the family, or add to their problems. To this end, all three interviews with both parents sought to elicit information about the impact of the observation on the family's life in the community, in order to assess this.

The following areas of concern were highlighted and addressed at the proposal stage:

(i) Confidentiality

As is common in psychological research, confidentiality at all stages was ensured. The site for research, the address and names of the participants were disguised in all written work. Neighbours' and friends' names were also changed.

(ii) Referrals

When help was requested, I made an appropriate referral to social work services.

(iii) Duty to report

Entering a home for child observation raises questions of ethical responsibility, especially as the observer in this case was a psychologist with a duty to report. Provision was made for the possibility of observing violence, neglect

and sexual abuse (pertinent considerations in communities where there is great poverty) (J. Lazarus, 2003). While as a researcher I was in this instance not acting in my capacity as therapist with a "duty of care" (Allan, 1997, p. 105), I still had a duty to report. I therefore informed the parents from the outset that I would have to report any signs of physical and/or sexual abuse or child neglect (**Addendum C**). It was thought that this might have an impact on how the family behaved and would have to be considered in the analysis of the data. However, it could be argued that the observation hour always represents an artificial situation, due to the mere fact of the observer's presence. Also, if it is indeed so that a household becomes less abusive because of the presence of the observer, this can be considered to be a benefit of the study. I was prepared for the fact that the continuation of the study might be compromised in the event of having to report. At the same time, it was thought that watching deprivation without immediately being able to do something to relieve it could be felt to be unbearable, which raised questions of sustainability. Here the containing function of supervision was to become very important.

iv) Termination

The end of the observation period was prepared for from the start. It was noted in Chapter Five that families can potentially become attached to the observer. Thus I made repeated mention of the structure of the observation process, and it was further marked by interviews at the beginning, middle and end.

The therapeutic aspect of the observation was considered at proposal level, but the texture and depth of what this implied only really came to the fore during the observation process, whereupon the family's attachment became a central concern. While not a clinical intervention, it was recognised that the present study could potentially have a therapeutic effect. This dictated a high degree of sensitivity on my part as a researcher. Issues around trust, respect and boundaries came to the fore.

The psychodynamic approach, in which little is known about the clinician, allows for a high degree of projection by the client. This principle informs the infant observation procedure as well. In this respect the research subjects are implicitly encouraged to form a transference towards the observer. In other words, the potential for a highly charged relationship with the observer always exists, perhaps especially so where very few opportunities exist for this kind of connection with professionals. In a disadvantaged community few services also exist that could assist the family in channelling these feelings. The observation process typically ends after a year or two, without discussion with the family of the unconscious forces at play in what transpired. Therefore the potential existed for the observed family to be left with unprocessed feelings. Anger at the observer for abandoning them became a possibility. In this sense the research had the potential to impact negatively on the family and make them and their community uncomfortable about participating in further research by the WMHRP, which is needed in order to provide an appropriate service in the area.

There were several other ethical issues I could not plan for. Exclusionary factors included serious difficulties in the family such as substance abuse. It was not considered that the family might, for a variety of reasons, not disclose

such problems during recruitment. Once the observation was underway, however, it would then seem unethical to turn the family away when new information came to light. The issue of "normal" and "suitable" families for an infant observation in a poor community becomes a central one for reflection.

Transparency and the need for research knowledge to be made immediately accessible is emphasised in the traditions of community psychology research (Macleod, Masilele & Malomane, 1998, cited in K. Gibson, 2002b). Infant observers, however, minimise their professional roles, introducing themselves purely as students interested in learning about babies by watching them. I therefore did not disclose that I was a clinical psychologist, although the family knew that psychology was my field of study. This was to avoid the pitfall of becoming a consultant to the family. However, ethically it raised the issue of a professional with psychological knowledge observing and potentially not doing anything about detrimental behaviours. In a broad sense, to protect against this situation occurring, the duty to report and the option to refer were included in the consent forms, as discussed. However, this did not cover less obvious forms of maltreatment. This is an issue in infant observation generally (it is always very hard and not always possible to watch without intervening), but even more so in the present study, which was a research project with formal ethical accountability. In time I became uncomfortable about having said that I was there to study babies (albeit in order to benefit the community) when I increasingly found myself watching the parents, the neighbours and the community at large. Secondly, infant observers do not share the reports they write. The father in the present study wished to know what it was that I had learnt from the observations. This was a difficult question to answer. At the same time it felt important to share the knowledge I had gained.

While the ethics of not doing (of thinking) were raised at proposal level, I could not predict what a core issue this was to become. The position of watching is always potentially an uncomfortable one to some degree, but possibly even more so in a severely deprived community. The participating mother approached me for money for the baby. Boundaries were challenged and were considered carefully in supervision. It was difficult not to respond with action, and to stay in a thinking space about what I was doing. Part of the rationale was that endless need could not be filled by charity, but that a rigorous study could result in interventions that address problems at their root in the longer-term. Buying a present to mark the baby's birthday at the end of the observation took on enormous significance and the question of what was appropriate arose. Infant observers traditionally do not give gifts of food to thank their subjects, but participants in WMHRP projects do receive supermarket vouchers in thanks. Even issues such as receiving scholarship money to conduct the research became an ethical issue. It was difficult to find a way to end the observation without feeling I was abandoning the family. I realised it is impossible to conduct a discrete study and then leave a community such as Moretown.

6.11 Conclusion

This chapter outlined the data-collection procedures and the chosen method of data analysis in the present study. In so doing, it examined the influence of psychodynamic community psychology, postmodern ethnography and psychoanalytic infant observation on the choice of methodology. This chapter provides a methodological

framework for the discussion of the case material in the following two chapters. The findings will be reported in terms of the three goals stated at the outset of the study.

SECTION FOUR: RESULTS AND DISCUSSION
CHAPTER SEVEN: Results

7.1 Introduction

The goal of the current dissertation was to explore the utility of infant observation as a tool for knowledge production about low-income communities. Specifically, the aims of the present study were to:

1. Provide a thick description of a single low-income mother-infant dyad (including their interaction);
2. Consider the potential contribution that such a description might make to a needs assessment process; and thus
3. Explore the utility of infant observation (a practice that is essentially informed by a theoretical framework constructed in Western contexts) as a tool for psychologists working in low-income communities in South Africa.

In my discussion of the results of my study in this chapter and the next, I will return to the secondary questions and operationalised goals as articulated in Chapter 6 by asking:

1. What did I find out about mothers and infants in poverty, using infant observation?
2. What was the impact of the observation process a) on myself as the observer? b) on the family?
3. Is infant observation a useful method for working in South African communities?

In order to answer these questions, the data will be presented as a case study and an evaluation in 6 parts over two chapters, namely:

1. A description of the participants and the setting;
2. An overview of the developments in the observation;
3. A description of the relationships in this context;
4. An analysis of the relationships in this context (discussion);
5. A summary of the findings of the case study (Chapter Eight);
6. An evaluation of the infant observation process (Chapter Eight).

This format came out of the analysis of the data, in which it became clear that context and relationship were central themes. I have chosen to focus on the mother in the analysis, and specifically on the relationship between the mother and myself as observer. The reasons for this are threefold. Theoretically, I consider the mother to be important. Practically, space for the discussion of the other figures is limited. But most importantly, the mother was a focal point in the observation process: personally, it was this relationship that felt the most compelling to me. Despite the prominence of my own subjectivity in the research process, this is not the focus of the dissertation. Therefore I will curtail the discussion of my own experience and explore it in detail in a separate paper.

In presenting the data I have become aware of the ways in which I have worked novelistically. Some of the concepts that guided my choices included "being kinder to the reader", "not giving the punchline away", "keeping

the through-line" and "maintaining the dramatic tension". A detailed consideration of the ways in which infant observation reports may similarly use language in order to manufacture a particular literary product is beyond the scope of the present dissertation and will be explored in a separate paper. However, it will be highlighted that much like any teller in a conversation, the observer "takes a listener into a past time or 'world' and recapitulates what happened then to make a point, often a moral one" (Riessman, 1993, p. 3). This is applicable to my retelling of the infant observation process here, now several steps removed by a multi-layered process of interpretation and representation.

7.1.1 A note about the extracts

As discussed in the previous chapter, the content presented here is the result of a close reading of several sources of written material, namely the observation reports, the notes taken in the infant observation seminars, my process reflections recorded at the time of the seminars, and the transcripts of the interviews with the parents. I have used coding procedures on all but the transcripts. It was my intention in the analysis to adhere as closely as possible to the written material produced during the observation process. As there is nothing else but data to prove the validity of my interpretations, it is necessary to quote the observation reports at some length. This is meant to give the reader access to the data (De Wet & Erasmus, 2005; M.J. Rustin, 1997; Katz, 1983). The 43 observation reports of themselves constitute a separate document 247 pages in length, which is also available for reading (cf. M.J. Rustin, 1997). The observations occurred over a period slightly longer than a calendar year, between December 2004 and January 2006. The first two pre-birth visits are marked as Observations 1 and 2; therefore Observation 3 is the first one at which the baby was present. In hindsight, I thought that it might be significant that I have chosen to mark the observations by numbers and dates, as opposed to indicating where in the observation process we were by citing the baby's age, which would be the case in an infant observation essay at the Tavistock. Although this was not a conscious decision, it suggests that what seems central in writing up this particular case study is not, as might be expected, only the baby, but more broadly the meaning of my connection with the family over 12 months.

Two further technical points:

As I was in two forms of supervision simultaneously, I will distinguish them by using separate terms. Here, "supervision" refers to the regular meetings I had with my thesis promoter ("Ms L" in the extracts, namely Professor Kruger)[1] and "seminars" refers to the weekly infant observation seminars I had with "Mrs K" over a year, either individually or (more often) in groups with other infant observers. As previously mentioned, a third kind of peer supervision was received via a monthly "research group" composed largely of doctoral students which was founded by my promoter, and of which I am a member.

Secondly, the extracts from the observations in many cases contain dialogue in Afrikaans. The interviews with the parents were also conducted in Afrikaans. The original language has been retained here in the observation extracts in order to remain faithful to the vernacular, but has also been translated in an English rendition, which follows it in brackets. However, the interviews have been translated in their entirety, in the interests of economy. Similarly, the

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[1] Professor Kruger was originally given a pseudonym in the observation reports as part of the convention.

consent form and the three interview schedules (**Addenda C** and **E** respectively), which were originally in Afrikaans, have been translated. A professional translator did all translation work, after which I checked it. It will be noted in the observation extracts that I tried, at the time of their writing, to give some indication of the dialect used by participants; hence Afrikaans words are often spelt as they were used phonetically by the speaker. An example would be "babitjie" instead of "babatjie" (little baby). I also requested that the proofreader not alter the observation or interview extracts in any way, so that, apart from the translation, they appear here as they did in the original reports.

7.2 The cast of characters

In the following sections I will briefly describe the physical appearance as well as the typical mood and temperament of the participants in the observation, including myself. When I read the observation reports as a consecutive whole, it struck me that they formed a compelling story of events between people. Like a piece of theatre, there was a particular setting against which the action took place, there was conflict and a denouement of sorts. The people ("cast" or "characters") in this narrative had particular personalities, motivations and subtexts, discernible in subtle and complex ways. Relational developments occurred. There was also a sense in which all the people in the story were involved in presenting themselves to one another at different times, in a kind of performance (for example, the performance of observing and the performance of motherhood). In the reports words and images linked to the world of theatre even occurred occasionally, especially in early observations. One of the few dreams I had about the family also involved a theatre image:

There is a play on, a carnival atmosphere. The baby crawls into the lights; lots of family around. Oh, this is very pleasant I think - I will stay much longer. It is a show for me, for my benefit. They like me after all. (Journal entry, December 2005)

Citing Bakhtin, S. Swartz (2006a) noted that the concept of carnival captures the possibilities of "crowds and clowns; multiple messages and many voices…If the unconscious is carnival, then working with the unconscious is a kind of carnival too" (p. 435). Therefore I have chosen to present the observations as a "drama". I am not the first participant observer to describe the "dramatis personae" in a case study (see Whisson, 1990; Winship, 2001). Geertz's (1973) description of a passage from his "raw" fieldnotes as "this little drama" was meant to show, Greenblatt (1999) held, that "there is rather less observation and considerably more explication" in such notes than anthropologists generally admit to (p. 16). My use of the term hopes to point to the same. No doubt my experience as an actress also contributed to my choice to think about my participants and myself in a dramatic light. Centre stage is the mother and child, and other characters will be described more peripherally. I will start by describing the investigative team that set out to find this particular dyad. We formed a three-tiered system, resulting in two layers of containment around myself as the central observer. Because we lived in such segregated worlds, I will present the researchers and the participants in an "us and them" dichotomy. This frequent theme emerged in the coding of the observations.

7.2.1 The psychologists: Us

7.2.1.1 The observer: Jana Lazarus

I am tall, slender, pale, and have dark hair. Generally I prefer a harmonious environment in which there is not too much conflict. I am quite shy at times. I can be affronted when people do not treat me with some sensitivity and regard for my feelings. I do not readily enter debates with people unless I know them well and trust them. It is very rare for me to find a more public space where I feel safe enough to articulate my opinions freely without fear. I don't have a very thick skin. I tend to seek positive regard and acceptance in my close relationships. I am vigilant about abandonment as it is has been a past theme in my life. My favourite kinds of interaction are those in which I feel very relaxed and as though I can be myself. I can be quite childlike, joyful and playful, and I like being funny. I prefer social situations that are light and humorous but where there is also a sense of closeness. At times I struggle to be assertive: I worry about forcing others to do things for my sake, against their own will. I would rather suffer by being more flexible and doing things I don't really want to, or missing out on things I do want. I have strong caretaking tendencies. I can get overly serious, internally persecuted and anxious, and dislike feeling like that: it makes me very stressed. I have a very strong work ethic. I function best when I actively put my wellbeing and pleasure first, although I sometimes suffer from guilt related to this.

I find that in my therapeutic work with clients I am able to overcome a lot of the aspects that hamper me in my personal life: I can be authoritative, assertive, convincing, conflictual, tolerate abandonment, meet and know my own anger in an appropriate way, and so on. I enjoy the depth of communication that happens in therapy. It is even tolerable for me not to be liked at all times. It is both a public and a private space, both intellectually challenging and emotionally engaging. I feel proud of the subtle and instinctual mode of my work. It is also nice when people get better. It is a kind of connection where the boundaries are very clear and that is important for me.

My experience with babies and children is limited to my work as a nanny to an infant in the first year of her life, as a therapist who sees children under 5 (among others), as well as to interaction with my nieces and nephews and the children of friends. Children seem to like me, perhaps because I enjoy playing with them.

In describing myself in this way, I am struck by how these "truths" about me are situational, and that I have many selves, some of which are quite contradictory to the information here, and some of which have been edited out. I am also aware of how my psychological understanding of myself shapes my discourse about myself.

7.2.1.2 Mrs K and the seminar group

I attended infant observation seminars with Mrs K, a clinical social worker and consultant child and adolescent psychotherapist, who is a member of the Tavistock Society of Psychotherapists and Allied Professionals (TSP). Mrs K was trained in infant observation procedures at the Tavistock by a teacher (Mirjana Renton) who herself had trained with Bick (M. Renton, personal communication, January 30, 2007). Mrs K would herself have needed to conduct at least one two-year observation in order to be able to teach. Mrs K is a member of the Cape Town

Society for Psychoanalytic Psychotherapy (CTSPP). She offered weekly infant observation seminars in Cape Town as one module in the Postgraduate Diploma in Therapeutic Communication with Children course accredited by the Tavistock. The module could also be taken as a stand-alone course for clinicians working with both children and adults. It was within the latter capacity that I joined. There were 6 members in our group. They were mostly clinical psychologists in private practice, working either with children or adults or both.

7.2.1.3 The research assistants and the promoter

Carol, James and my promoter (Ms L, in other words, Professor Kruger), together with another clinical psychologist (Sandy), formed the maternal mental health research group of which I was a member. All the members of the research group had worked in the community of Moretown and were familiar with it. All of them were also connected with the university. Sandy taught at the university and was employed as a therapist there. Ms L co-ordinated the MA programme in Clinical Psychology and Community Counselling and saw clients in a private capacity. Ms L, Carol and James were all directly connected with the university's WMHRP: Carol and James were employed as research assistants on the project, and Ms L had founded it. Sandy and Carol were both working towards submitting doctoral proposals linked to the WMHRP at the time, under Ms L's supervision. Therefore in total 6 people from the University supported me during the observation period.

At one point in the observation process, following a period in which I felt unsafe, a decision was taken in supervision that I should be accompanied to observations. This meant having someone drive into Moretown with me, who would then either wait in the car or be nearby, for example, at the local clinic. This solution was a temporary one that was soon refined, as I shall indicate below. There were several research assistants who actively entered the drama at this point. The people who accompanied me were James (the Psychology Honours graduate who also interviewed Piet), Carol (the clinical psychologist who interviewed Eve), Ms L (a clinical psychologist and my promoter), Frank (a Research Master's student) and Alice, a Psychology Honours student, who came with me most often in the 6-month period between May and October 2005.

7.2.2 The family: Them

In retrospect, our "camp" seems quite clearly defined: predominantly white, educated, middle-class, and female. We stood in sharp contrast to our observation subjects. Below, I will briefly give my general impression of each of the family members.

7.2.2.1 The mother: Eve Smit

Eve is short, with bad teeth and big eyes. She has spiky hair and caramel-coloured skin. She mostly wore trousers, T-shirts and sandals or tennis shoes during observations, and some kind of covering for her head like a scarf, stocking or woollen hat. Sometimes her hair was braided, highlighted, or in rollers. Her build was increasingly revealed to be quite slender as the observations progressed and she lost the weight related to bearing a child. Her nickname in the family is "Koekie" (Cookie, which in Afrikaans as in English has a sexual connotation).

Eve is not easily cowed: she has a degree of courage and a feisty or assertive quality. Generally, Eve seemed more easily to show displeasure, or a certain brusqueness, rather than tenderness. When she was around me she frowned so frequently that I identified this as a characteristic expression of hers. Eve could be quite withholding. I saw her in very limited interaction with people other than the baby. It was therefore difficult to know whether she behaved at all differently towards and around other people. However, there were indications that Eve could more generally be taciturn towards others as well. In Observation 37 I observed during a local welfare meeting:

Of course Eve gets asked [to introduce herself] first. Mrs B says, "Ek het jou sien inkom, en gesien dat jy bietjie af lyk vandag, maar ek is bly dat jy ten minste nou ook so bietjie glimlag!" ("I saw you come in, and saw that you looked a bit down today, but I am glad that you are at least smiling a bit too now!") A woman behind us says that this is just Eve's way. (Observation 37, November 2005)

It seems that Eve was quite isolated. I did, however, see her being friendly towards her close neighbours when she was at home, particularly towards the female back neighbour (Noelene), who lived in the same yard, also had a small child, and gave birth to a second near the end of the observation period:

As I enter the yard, I happen upon lots of activity: Eve is bending straight-legged over a bucket on the ground to my left, with a scrunched-up ball of wet washing in her hands. She is smiling and looking up as though in mid-interchange with someone. (Observation 8, March 2005)

Eve had a playful side to her and could be quite animated and teasing in her interactions:

A dark-skinned man with spiky, semi-dreadlocks comes around the corner and picks up a yellow plastic packet standing next to Eve's door. I greet him and he greets back, but he keeps his eyes down at the packet. Eve teasingly says, "En wat is nou daar in?" ("And what is in there?") and he replies as he leaves again, but I can't make it out. (Observation 10, March 2005)

She had a good sense of humour and I often heard her laughing in her characteristically guttural way. She also had a tendency to drift off in a rather dazed and vacant stare:

Then Eve vacantly watches TV without seeming to see what's on (it's a promotional show with a popular black actor about investing your money for your dreams). Eve's eyes glaze over and she stares out of the door, lost in thought. She does not seem aware of me at all in this moment. (Observation 5, February 2005)

[Eve] is staring out of the door and past me as though in a trance. (Observation 8, March 2005)

I observed Eve in some difficult situations in which she seemed resourceful and diplomatic while standing her ground. I thought I saw in Eve an ability to take things in her stride. She had, I felt, a cool head and a kind of resilience. She seemed able to speak her mind and did not seem a shy person. In summary, Eve had a sense of self-possession. I did not experience her as particularly warm or forthcoming, but rather as quite withholding. The possible reasons for this and the nuances of our interaction will be discussed later.

7.2.2.2 The baby: Maria Milla Smit

I saw Maria very regularly in the first year of her life, in which there were many changes in how she behaved and how she looked. I will sketch some of this progression as well as convey my sense of her as a developing

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personality. I will make some comparison with recent Western (American) texts on infant development. Alice, Carol, Ms L and I found Maria a very beautiful child, with "slim ogies" (clever little eyes) (Observation 13, April 2005):

I see that she has a high forehead, plump, pear-shaped cheeks and full, pouty lips. (Observation 4, February 2005)

Maria increasingly looked like her father. She had a lot of dark hair from early on, which lay in soft curls on her head. She has long, dark eyelashes, a mole near her right ear, and a cute button nose. Her skin is darker than her mother's, especially on her arms and hands. Maria was always very well dressed when I went to observe her, in the sense of wearing what seemed to be her best or newest clothes. Yet sometimes the clothes were too big for her. She always looked better groomed than the rest of the family:

Maria is wearing a beautiful white cotton dress with little puff sleeves, a collar, and embroidered rosebuds on it. (Observation 8, March 2005)

Maria seemed to be a healthy child. During the observation period she had her vaccinations (at 4 weeks), which made her a bit grizzly, and a chesty cold, which her mother treated with paediatric syrup. She was also regularly and routinely fed gripe water (a carminative for babies containing alcohol), reportedly to help her sleep. Her most prominent physical symptom was eczema on her hands and feet. Her mother smeared a lotion on the itchy little bumps, which would form white peaks and weep when scratched, which Maria increasingly did, sometimes by rubbing her feet together.

At 23 days, when I saw her for the first time, Maria was asleep (Observation 3). She slept right through the observation hour at 4 and 6 weeks and at 3 months. Sleeping for several hours is considered normal for infants in the first 3 months (Lovejoy & Estridge, 1987). On a couple of occasions I even saw Maria sleeping on her stomach across her mother's knees. She seemed to fall asleep easily if rocked and patted quite vigorously, and especially if given the breast beforehand. From the first Eve commented that Maria was easy to settle after a bath and would generally sleep quite soundly for a predictable length of time. Her mother and a neighbour commented that she had a healthy appetite, and I also witnessed this. She was breastfed on demand and loved the breast, to the exclusion of bottles or dummies. She was given additional water and later some kind of milk (presumably formula) in a bottle, and was fed solids from very early on (9 weeks). Lovejoy and Estridge (1987) suggested, from a Western perspective, that solids are usually introduced into an infant's diet at 4 to 6 months of age. At the age of 1 year Maria was still being breastfed, but would also drink liquids from a cup when her mother was not available. Maria's great affection for "haar têtjie" (her breast) as it was called, was amusingly demonstrated to me when she was 6 months old:

"Hiers my têtjie, lekker têtjie…" ("Here's my booby, yummy booby...") Eve says, lifting her sweater and ducking her head in under it, towards her left breast. "Mwah-mwah-mwah!" Eve says, smacking her lips under the sweater, "Lekker têtjie!" ("Yummy booby!") Eve pops her head out again, still holding the material away from her body. Maria bends her knees, falling towards her mother's body, and grabs the neckline of the sweater. She puts her face in, so that only the top of her capped head is visible, and holds this position for several seconds, looking down inside the sweater. (Observation 21, July 2005)

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Maria seemed to me to be quite a small baby at first. Despite this, my perception was that she had a surprising amount of strength from the beginning. In my early observations there are many references to her physical power. For example, at 23 days I observed:

Maria lets out a brief cry, then makes a burbling noise and seems to be smacking her lips or making sucking sounds. She lifts her head briefly, dropping it back on to the bed with some force. Then she sleeps again. (Observation 3, January 2005)

Weiten (2004) showed that 50% of infants can do this by 15 days, and 90% by a month; therefore Maria's motor development in this area was within normal limits in Western terms. However, Lovejoy and Estridge (1987) felt it was usual for infants to raise their heads only "slightly" at this age (p. 8). Maria seemed to grow stronger very quickly, as I observed at 8 weeks:

Maria is almost immediately restless, pulling her knees up under her so that her back forms a convex shape, and shuffling her head against the mattress. Then she forcefully lifts her head up; I am quite surprised by this increase in strength. She drops it again, turning to face me... She turns her head again so that she is lying on her face, and starts a mewling cry, while working her feet against the mattress and tossing her head. She is edging jerkily towards the wall with her head. She then freezes and lets out an energetic, elongated, calling cry, with a choking quality to it. It is surprisingly loud. (Observation 8, March 2005)

Lovejoy and Estridge (1987) noted that "undirected" movements are usual within the first 3 months. Here, at 8 weeks, Maria seemed to be actively moving in search of something (presumably her mother, or the breast) and then stopping to vocalise when the movement did not yield what she wanted. From early on, Maria had a characteristic robust physicality. She seemed to enjoy discovering independent movement, and exploring:

Maria jerks her body away a bit, and turns her head and eyes to the right to look out of the door. She looks like she is craning her neck a bit in order to do this, and fighting to pull away from her mother's body. Eve stands Maria up on the bed between us and I am surprised at how sturdy her legs seem. (Observation 9, March 2005)

This ability to look around, directly at things, and at objects at the point of disappearance, is a milestone that infants usually achieve at 3 months; therefore Maria was slightly ahead of the norm here, at just over 2 months (Lovejoy & Estridge, 1987). Similarly, I saw Maria reaching at 3 months, which is considered a response that develops between 3 and 6 months (Lovejoy & Estridge, 1987). I observed Maria turning herself over onto her tummy at 4 months, which is within the norm (3-5 months) (Lovejoy & Estridge, 1987; Weiten, 2004). As she struggled to become more mobile, I noticed both her excitement and her frustration. I saw her pulling herself into a standing position in her pushchair at 10 months, which is within normal range developmentally (Lovejoy & Estridge, 1987; Weiten, 2004).

Maria was emotionally both demonstrative and responsive. From early on she showed a variety of easily discernible emotions and moods, most predominantly joy and delight, sometimes in quick succession. She smiled in her sleep at 5 weeks. Lovejoy and Estridge (1987) noted that infants normally smile responsively within the first month, and that their behavioural responses reflect a widening range of feelings by 6 months. Maria had a generally sunny disposition, and a winning smile that often completely enveloped her face. Here, she was 6 months old:

Maria is looking at me and breaks into a slow, open-mouthed smile. Her chin drops, and both rows of gums and her tongue are visible. Her eyes crinkle up. Her whole face is suffused with warmth and softness. (Observation 21, July 2005)

Maria began to make a characteristic wrinkled-up nose, while snorting in and out with a smile. The family called this a "niessie" (a little sneeze-nose) and Maria would apparently produce it on demand by 7 months, when encouraged to "maak 'n niessie" (make a little sneeze-nose) (Observation 23). Lovejoy and Estridge (1987) suggested that infants understand simple words like this by 9 months. Maria showed subtle facial expressions early on, like a raised eyebrow (aged 3 months). I could readily see when she was cross, suspicious, in a miserable or irritated state, or in a daze. Already at 8 weeks her mother indicated that Maria showed displeasure by producing a "lang lip" (drooping bottom lip).

Maria was assertive and determined, and could be willful about what she wanted. She could be quite persistent when she wanted to touch something that she was not allowed to, and was vocal about being denied it. To everyone's amusement, she shook her head side to side in a "no" movement by 8 months (Observation 29). Lovejoy and Estridge (1987) suggested that infants begin to shake their heads at a year. A neighbour commented (after the observation process) that Maria had quite a temper. Another mentioned that she complained when she could not get her way:

[The neighbour] spoke energetically and humorously to Maria, saying that she could not go out in her "karretjie" (her little car, or pushchair) today because it was raining, that she had to stay inside and was cross about that, that the moment she could not go out she cried. (Observation 35, November 2005)

Her mother made frequent references to her being naughty or disobedient:

Maria's right arm embraces Eve's neck. Eve pulls Maria back so that she can look in her face and says, "Onbeskof! Onbeskofte kinders gewiese, Mammie!" ("Rude! I've been a rude child, Mommy!") She re-adjusts one of Maria's booties, which is half-off: "Djy skoppie skoene af!" ("You're kicking your shoes off!") (Observation 11, April 2005)

When she did not like something, she made it known:

To my surprise, Eve is feeding her pumpkin! Her chin and lips are wet with saliva. Maria scrunches her eyes up and pushes a solid-looking bit out with her tongue, and Eve scoops it back in again. It seems to go down. Maria starts crying in a sudden, spluttering way. (Observation 9, March 2005)

Maria also seemed very sensitive to adult moods. For example, at 10 weeks I noted her response to an inebriated old lady who came into the house:

Aunt Lil jiggles Maria up and down. Suddenly Maria lets out a very distressed, energetic cry, with her head facing Aunt Lil's chest. I am amazed. Eve takes Maria back. Maria stops crying. (Observation 10, March 2005)

She seemed to like moving around and being a part of what was going on:

Maria raises her gloved right hand to her mouth and sucks on it, with her eyes closing and her head moving back. Eve says, "Willie die handjies onder die komberse hou nie, en dis koud…" ("Don't want to keep the little hands under the blankets, and it's cold...") (Observation 13, April 2005)

Eve's interpretation on a few occasions was that Maria wanted to be awake, socialising, and that she was put to sleep against her will, so that she sometimes fought it:

Eve peeks at Maria: "Djy maak my aan die slaap, Mamma! Ek willie nou slaap nie, en jy maak jy slaap…" ("You are putting me to sleep, Mommy! I don't want to sleep now, and you are making me sleep...") Maria falls very deeply asleep instantly. (Observation 16, May 2005)

Maria loved being taken for walks, either in someone's arms or, later, in her "brm-brm" (pushchair, also referred to as a "pram"):

[Piet] stops rocking and sits Maria up again. She looks down at the egg in her hands. "Willie slaap nie! Sê nie-e, willie slaap nie!" ("Don't want to sleep! Say noooo, don't want to sleep!") he says with a smile. "Wat is dit? Nog niks karretjie gery vandag nie! Wil jy karretjie ry?" ("What is wrong? Haven't been riding in your pram/little car today yet! Want to ride in your pram?") he says to her, looking up at me. (Observation 29, September 2005)

Overall, Maria seemed to be a contented baby. She was never particularly tetchy or fractious, and if she was, she was able to be satisfied and soothed. Characteristically, she did not complain much when undressed for a nappy change or a bath. It was very rare to hear what I described as her "looping" cry, namely a cry that built in increasing distress. I never saw her so distressed that being picked up or given the breast could not quickly console her. Generally, I found her to be developing resourceful ways of managing difficult states without fragmenting. She seemed resilient, and able to self-soothe:

Maria has gone back to sucking the cell phone toy and at one point bangs it against her head accidentally, in one of her flailing arm moves. She frowns very slightly and pauses for a millisecond, looking at it, before going on with her movements and sucking. (Observation 29, September 2005)

In time, Maria developed the ability to entertain herself for long stretches of time, exploring her body in relation to the objects around her. She surprised me with her very social attitude. She began to make word-like utterances at around 9 months (Observation 33), which is considered typical (Lovejoy & Estridge, 1987). Some of her first words were the names of her sister, the extended family and neighbours (for instance, the back neighbour and her father's niece). She also said "Mamma" and "oppella" (all finished). She would sit in her pram and smile at people crossing the yard. She made clear signs that she wanted to go to people whom she knew, while her father said in interview that she was not happy going to strangers. This sense of independence, or of being able to move away from the mother, has been described in the literature as being a feature of secure attachment (Ainsworth, 1969; Bowlby, 1969).

In overview, my sense of Maria was that she was an easy baby and a fast developer, with a secure attachment style that enabled her to explore and form relationships with people other than her mother from early on. She was also particularly emotionally responsive. She had a generally sunny disposition but a strong will. The antenatal clinic in Moretown reports that malnourishment and developmental delay is rare; there were no cases reported in 2006, for example. Where an infant is borderline underweight, she will be seen monthly at the clinic for supplementation. Colic is also very rare. A recent case in 2007 in which a breastfed baby cried a great deal turned out to be misdiagnosed; when the baby's feed was supplemented with bottlefeeding, the crying stopped and the baby's weight increased: in other words, she had been hungry (C.R. Williams, personal communication, March 13, 2007).

7.2.2.3 The father: Piet Smit

Piet has neat, rounded features, soft brown eyes, dark skin and a beard. He is grey and balding. Because his one leg is shorter than the other he walks with a severe limp. I noticed that he always wore the same cracked army-style boots without socks or laces. One of the shoes had a built-up sole. His head was mostly covered either in a woollen

hat or a small round Eastern-style cap. He has several homemade-looking tattoos on his hands and forearms. He often smelt like sweat and tobacco. I found him to be polite and friendly but also assertive. He was invested in demarcating what was his, in a territorial sense, and in gaining respect. This was revealed both in his attitude towards me regarding the observations and towards his neighbours, whom he kept at bay. I found him to be an astute observer and a critic. His general mood seemed to be less dissatisfied than Eve's. He had a calm demeanour and twinkling eyes. Subjectively, I found this attractive, perhaps because he was more approachable than Eve. In an interview he said that he liked to talk. He had an insightful and analytical way about him. I saw him inebriated in the late morning on three occasions. When he abused alcohol, he became bolder and could be confrontational (in fact, more so than his wife). It seemed that his use of alcohol enabled him to be more assertive, and he could be verbally aggressive. For instance, at one point a neighbour suggested that Piet was unfaithful:

A man's voice outside and to the right shouts, "Djy! Wanneer gaan djy nou jou hol-naaiery los, djy's nou 'n getroude man!" ("You! When are you going to stop your ass-fucking/fooling around, you're a married man now!") and to my relief, Piet lurches up off the bed and out of the door to respond to this. There is the sound of an argument in the alleyway, which gradually gets softer as Piet and the neighbour seem to be moving towards the street. Piet is saying that no-one will talk to him that way in his yard. (Observation 5, February 2005)

My sense of finding Piet attractive is interesting in the light of his reputation, and of his sexualised attitude towards me, which I will discuss later (it turned out that the neighbour's "fooling around" comment related to me). In general, I found Piet to be approachable and friendly but with a strong sense of gate keeping with regard to his home and family. It seemed that while Eve was ready to show her dissatisfaction with situations, Piet would harbour his and then make them known explosively when he was drunk.

7.2.2.4 The sister: Natasha (surname unknown)

Natasha (who turned 6 during the observation) seemed to me to be big for her age and older in demeanour than she actually was. Her nickname in the family is "Tietie" (Booby). I mostly saw her in her school uniform, which extended to school-colour ribbons in the ponytails at the sides of her head. She was often dressed in a rather neglected way, for example, there were holes in her trousers. She was helpful with the baby and on the surface seemed quite independent. She seemed to play an adult role in her family, in that she took on a second mother role for the baby:

Maria is getting a bit grizzly and starting to cry. Eve says, "Nou ja, gaan Tietie toe" ("Well, go to Tietie then") and hands Maria over to Natasha, getting up off the bed. Natasha holds Maria up to her face, and talks like her mother: "Stoute kinders gewiesie, ver-verslape…" ("[You've been] a bad child, asleep for long...") She wags her chin for emphasis the way her mother does when talking to Maria, with the same wide eyes and slightly frozen smile. (Observation 18, June 2005)

Natasha could be quite cheeky towards her mother. She was interested in and verbal about what her mother would buy for her in terms of food, clothes and treats. She was quite territorial about things that were hers, related to what seemed to be feelings of jealousy towards Maria. She had a cruel streak, which I particularly saw at play towards the baby when her parents were not around. Generally, while being quite active and tending to "perform" for the baby and for me, she did not smile much. She could also be quite thoughtful in a subdued way. My sense of her was of a child who was rather sidelined and who often sought attention from adults, and who could be mean.

7.2.2.5 Conclusion

In writing and re-writing the foregoing descriptions I have become acutely aware that they constitute a subjective account, filtered through my own experiences and expectations, and that there must have been particular things I did and did not notice. In other words, in a sense I am authoring or constructing this drama, with these characters, and it is not a factual account. It is also based on what I was allowed to see. The extracts cited above and in the following sections are as revealing about me as they are about anyone I was attempting to observe. A further point is that these descriptions are predominantly based on how I perceived the participants in relationship with me. Even when I was observing their interactions with each other, they were still in my presence and I was still seeing them through my eyes. Lastly, it has felt extremely difficult to try to separate a description of "character" from a causal explanation (or hypothesis) as to why someone was behaving in a particular way at any one time. For example, in thinking about Eve as a taciturn person, one invariably wonders why she might be this way - how does this trait relate to her current situation and her past? How does it relate to my presence? Can one really describe Piet as a man who hides his feelings without considering why he might not be forthright with me in particular?

7.3 The observation setting

I had limited information about the Smit family. In my understanding of the observation framework, as described by Bick, not much discussion occurs unless the mother initiates it (Piontelli, 1992). In fact, the consent form pertinently stated that I would not be asking any questions (see **Addendum C**). In our relationship very little information was volunteered, and conversations were truncated. My curiosity led me to encourage the interviewers (James and Carol) to find out more about the Smit family.

7.3.1 Background: A low-income family

I learnt that Eve's family was originally from Ceres, which is a rural village 150 kilometres north-east of Cape Town, known for farming mainly deciduous fruit. Her mother came to work and live on a nearby farm in the Winelands region. When she married Piet, Eve moved to Moretown, which is also in the Winelands. Eve had been living in Moretown for two years at the time of the present study. The family seemed to live on Piet's disability grant (which paid out monthly) and on part-time rural work that Eve found. During the observation period Eve was unemployed and initially stayed home to take care of the child. She later had jobs clearing rubble in the building of a nearby dam and cleaning the local primary school gardens. In the past Eve had worked in the vineyards, picking fruit, and this sometimes involved hard physical labour. She described in interview that all the bending hurt her back. During the observation period Eve also hurt her shoulder during the dam-building project. This, together with a long working day in which transport home was difficult, contributed to her eventually leaving that job too. Piet made jewellery and leather items by hand such as belts, cell-phone pouches and key rings. These items he sold at the local primary school and spoke of selling at a café in Moretown. It seemed that he sometimes received belts from the school as well, which he polished and sold. There seemed to have been some friction with the school in the past, where he may have been more connected in a part-time capacity previously. Natasha's grandmother (Eve's

previous partner's mother) contributed towards her school fees in instalments. Money was also needed for extra activities such as compulsory "computer knowledge".

Eve told me that she used alcohol (mainly on weekends) when her first daughter was small. This had led to the child's father's family reporting her to social work services, which wanted to take the child away. Eve indicated that this was part of a struggle with his family for the child. She had stopped drinking at that point. She did not have continuing contact with Natasha's father, but felt that he and his family should contribute financially and materially towards the child. It was unclear what the nature of her relationship with him had been; she referred to him as "daai klong" (that boy) and did not seem to know his surname. She complained to me about the quality of his family's contributions to the child (empty promises, not enough money, and second-hand clothes as gifts). Natasha went to stay with her paternal grandmother on her own at times, such as during school holidays. This may have partly been the result of a custody issue and partly a way of contributing to child support.

The observation process brought home to me the lack of services in the area for a family in such need. Piet, for example, got his medical supplies from a tertiary hospital in Cape Town, about 70 kilometers away. Neither Piet nor Eve seemed able to access appropriate social work services via the local clinic, either due to a lack of motivation, means or information, or a combination of all three. My experience was corroborated by a comprehensive, published survey of mental health and related services (WMHRP, 2000) which revealed that there was not sufficient mental health care of any kind for low-income populations in this region (see **Addendum A**). Existing mental health care was found to be fragmented, replicated, gender-blind (with little attention paid to issues specific to women, for example reproductive health and domestic violence) and inaccessible (due to lack of childcare facilities, difficult opening hours, no transport available and high costs) (Kruger, J. Lazarus, De Villiers & Spedding, 2005).

Eve indicated that the children's needs came first when they spent Piet's disability grant. Clothes were almost certainly second-hand. Furniture, I discovered, was made, salvaged, ostensibly "given by Eve's employers" (according to Natasha), or bought on "lay-by" (in monthly instalments). Poverty meant a lack of food and the family may have made use of the "sopkar" (soup car). I saw the family eating rice, potatoes, pumpkin, onions, tomatoes, porridge, biscuits, puffed corn (crisps), bread and fruit. Eve both baked and bought bread.

Natasha told me that her school gave each family a "Christmas box" with treats. I often saw the family rationing food. For example, one person at a time would get a turn to drink coffee. Eve once would not let Natasha have coffee, because she had already had some that morning. Instead, she let her finish the cup Eve had recently made for herself. It seemed that the culture of sharing what you have was also being inculcated in Maria early on:

Maria sits up and smiles. She still has a bit of biscuit in her right hand, which she is studying. Now she leans towards Natasha, and holds it out. Some bits drop on the carpet, which Natasha picks up and holds in her hand. Natasha smiles at her softly. Maria eats the biscuit piece. "Giee stukkie, Maria! Ek wou stukkie gehad het!" ("Give a piece, Maria! I wanted a piece!") Natasha says but without much energy. (Observation 41, December 2005)

There was rivalry about material goods and food:

"Wêla-kapêla, jy't nie chips gekry nie…" ("Na-na-na-na-na, you didn't get any crisps...") Natasha says up at Maria. I wonder if she ate them on the way home. (Observation 18, June 2005)

Crisps and an Easter chocolate for the baby were saved in "haar kas" (her cupboard):

Natasha returns with a small white packet with blue bunny-like shapes on it and Eve takes out some documents and a small book in a hand-stitched brown leather cover, which I figure out is an ID book. Half an open packet of puffed corn, with the top folded over, also comes out. Eve puts all of this on the bed nearest me. "Mamma, wat is dit? Wat is dit?" ("Mommy, what is that? What is that?") Natasha asks urgently, immediately seeing the chips. "Nou ja, vat" ("Well then, take it") Eve says. "Wag," ("Wait,") Natasha says, moving past me, with a hand on my knee. "Mens sê nie 'wag' nie, mens sê 'Ekskuus'," ("One doesn't say 'wait', one says 'Pardon',") Eve says, with her chin pointing straight ahead and slightly up, her eyes widened. Natasha picks the chip packet up off the bed and hugs it to the far side of her chest, while looking at Maria, in a dramatic gesture of "This is mine". (Observation 22, July 2005)

Food for the children seemed a priority:

Lil asks where the R20 is that she gave Eve. Eve says it is right there, Lil can have it back. She doesn't want the soutvis (salted fish), it was Lil who wanted it. Lil says she wanted to get it for the children. (Observation 10, March 2005)

She takes a rectangular plastic Tupperware bowl out of the cabinet and flicks the latch down to close it again. She puts the bowl down on the sink unit at the window, goes to the door and calls, "Suzie! Bringie goed dat ek kan klaarmaak! Ek gaan die pap maak…niee, dis virrie kind." ("Suzie! Bring the stuff so that I can finish up! I'm going to make the porridge...no, it's for the child.") (Observation 11, April 2005)

In the above extracts it seems as though both adults were more comfortable talking about the consumption of food in relation to the children than about their own hunger. They made it clear that the food was not for the adults. Having little meant being careful about children wasting medicine and food. This was a recurring theme across observations:

When Eve puts her down again, Maria starts crying in a cross, spluttering fashion. I see the v-shape of her tongue, as it vibrates with the cry. "Maar jy mors dan die melk!" ("But you are wasting the milk!") Eve says, in a genuinely irritated tone. (Observation 16, May 2005)

Eve grips Maria's head in the crook of her left elbow, holding her securely, and brings the spoon back to Maria's mouth. Maria straightens her whole body and legs, flipping off the counter. Eve's body is close though, and holds her there. "MARIA! Jy mors, jy morsie goed!" ("MARIA! You're wasting, you're wasting the stuff!") Eve scolds seriously, in a cross tone, bringing the spoon to Maria's mouth again. (Observation 26, August 2005)

Previous interventions in Moretown where snacks were taken (The Play Group, 2002; The Mother-Infant Bonding Group, 2003) led to papers that theorised about how poverty resulted in a sense of internal deprivation. For example: "These needs often appeared to be expressed in symbolic ways, for example, at the end of each session when refreshments were served, some of the women seemed to 'store up' the biscuits that were provided, for later" (Burmeister-Nel et al., 2004, p. 10). In 2004 I similarly theorised that the children fought about the biscuits I brought to the Play Group because "nothing ever felt enough". I held that the teachers took home the "Koeksisters" (a type of doughnut) I brought to a feedback session because they were rejecting my advice to them (J. Lazarus, 2003). In the observation process I thought that at times not having enough could lead to a sense of preciousness even where the commodity (like breast milk) did not have a price on it:

Eve puts Maria back on the breast, and she seems to suck momentarily and then relax into sleep again. "Maria, jy mors my melk!" ("Maria, you are wasting my milk!") Eve says with some sternness, but also a laugh in her voice. "Kyk hier hoe loop dit! Ek gaan my tete wegvat…as jy nie my tete wil hê nie, sit ek hom weg…" ("Look how it is flowing! I am going to take my boob away... if you don't want my boob, I will put it away...") (Observation 9, March 2005)

While interpretations about emotional deprivation certainly have merit, the infant observation process made me aware that it is dangerous to exclude the reality of hunger in interpretations that focus on not having enough internally. Without breast milk, you have to feed a baby something bought in the store. Sometimes a cookie is just a cookie and sometimes saving biscuits is just saving biscuits (the external is real). Similarly, a middle-class mother may not worry about her infant's oral exploration, but in a poverty setting this can mean damage to items that cannot easily be replaced. For the Smit family it seemed that not having anything meant that preciousness developed about material goods, even items such as children's toys:

Maria's head is turned away to the wall and her fists are up at her mouth. "Hey, wat maak jy!" ("Hey, what are you doing!") Eve says, pulling Maria's arm down and towards her so that it moves away from her mouth. "Kou jy die klere!" ("Are you chewing the clothes!") she says. (Observation 14, May 2005)

Maria reached out a hand and touched the yellow plastic tablecloth covering the TV unit. "Los! Los my goed!" ("Leave it! Leave my stuff alone!") Eve said petulantly, but with serious intent. Maria grasped the plastic. "Jy gaanie ding skeur!" ("You are going to tear the thing!") Eve scolded, taking Maria 's hand away. (Observation 36, November 2005)

In the latter example, it is interesting that Eve made a firm distinction between what was hers and what belonged to Maria, and was possessive about her things. This was a feature of the dynamic between all the females in the house: Eve and Maria, Maria and Natasha, and Eve and Natasha. "Alles gaan mond toe met haar" ("Everything goes to her mouth") was a sighed refrain I often heard from Maria's family. When I gave the children each a wrapped gift at the end of the observation period, Eve said that they would open them "later". At a post-observation visit some months later, I noticed that the cardboard in which Maria's toy had been packaged was preserved on a shelf against the wall. This is reminiscent of E. Gibson's (2002/3) observation in a low-income black family in which birthday gifts were saved for use later.

7.3.2 The physical environment: Three houses in one yard

A lack of money, education and opportunity translated into a particular living environment for the family, which I will describe here. The Smits' house was located in the back yard of Piet's niece's home (Lee). The latter was a small, established building: this was officially No. 90 Maroela Street. It belonged to Piet's deceased brother. Lee and her two brothers now lived there. Lee was a pretty, slender young woman in her twenties. Her one brother, whom I saw occasionally, was also of about the same age.

The house was set back from Maroela Street: there was another row of houses between it and the street. Access to the front yard was via a sandy space between two houses in the front row, where I used to park. A low wire fence and a small gate, which was always open when I was there, demarcated the front of the yard. There was a small, bent tree at the gate and a grassy verge along the inside of the fence, where some plants grew. Beyond this, the yard was constituted of a blackish sand, which was often raked. Barbed-wire fences taller than a person separated the plot from the neighbours on the left- and right-hand sides. **Addendum D** shows that there were 48 people living in 6 houses in the Smits' immediate neighbourhood (this information was gathered by interviewers working in the area during the latter half of the observation year).

Lee's house was made of brick and painted a dusty pink. The number "90" was visible above the door, which could be padlocked from outside. Inside, there were two rooms. One room comprised a sleeping area (which took up half of the total space), a narrow living area, and a kitchen section. The second room was a bathroom with a rough, unpainted built-in cement tub. In the kitchen section there was an old-fashioned wood stove. The bathroom had a curtain hanging in the doorway and there was also a room-divider curtain between the sleeping and living areas. There was a single and a double bed and a couch made up of two armchairs pushed together and covered by a throw. I once saw some wine bottles on a bookshelf in the corner. I thought I once saw a hand sprinkling water on the floor to control the dust. An outside tap at the front right corner of the house seemed to provide the whole yard with running water. I did not see evidence of other running water either in Lee's or the Smits' home.

Access to the Smits' home was alongside the alleyway on the right between the formal house and the fence. An alternate route was alongside the left of the house, where the alley was wider, but this seemed less used. The alleyway led to the back yard, across the length of which was strung a double laundry line. My first description of the surroundings was of the back yard, as I waited outside to talk to the mother during the first pre-birth visit:

Rubbish, empty ice-cream bucket, dead TV standing in yard. Vegetable garden! (Observation 1, December 2005)

At the outset there was also an unmoored toilet bowl in the empty space next to the back house, which soon disappeared. It seemed that living near refuse was an everyday phenomenon:

Outside, a man is sweeping tangerine peels away from the back shack's entrance into a mix of mud and puddles down its side. It is one of those reed brooms. (Observation 18, June 2005)

I was surprised by the small neat touches such as a short path from the gate, and the flowerbed that the Smits laid out next to their front door during the observation period. The Smits' house was constructed up against Lee's (the niece's) back wall. While the niece's house was built of painted brick, the Smits' home was made of rough, round wooden logs (except for the brick back wall) with a flat corrugated iron roof. It consisted of a single room with a room-divider curtain in the middle. There was a dirt floor, with off-cuts of carpet and linoleum laid directly over the ground. There were two small windows and a door. The house was approximately the length of two beds end-to-end, and in width about half that (approximately 4m x 2m).

In the backyard, its door diagonally facing the Smits' door, was another even smaller shack, which was occupied by other neighbours (a young couple and their two children):

The door to the back neighbour's shack is open, but I can't see anything. It is so small that I still wonder if it is a toilet. (Observation 19, June 2005)

The Smits' lifestyle was very weather-dependent. The weather is mentioned in almost every observation report, as it was in E. Gibson's (2002/3) observation of a black low-income family. Eve often commented to me what the weather report had said, citing what percentage chance of rain we could expect. When it was summer, the family often sat outside because their home, which had a corrugated iron roof, became bakingly hot. Because it was also quite dark and very small, washing, jewellery making, and socialising often occurred outside. However, shade was

very limited in the yard. When it rained, they could not go out, as they had no means of closed transport. When the weather was bad, it was very cold in the house, but the door was always open, seemingly to let light in. Natasha told me that when the door was closed at night, Maria cried for it to be opened. The family was confined to one room, especially when the weather was bad. However, at times I would find them in the front room (in Lee's house), and once I conducted an observation here, when Lee was taking care of Maria and Piet was in the back yard or in his house. I noticed that Piet sat in his niece's front room (or the yard) when he wanted to be away from the infant observation. Because the homes were small, they seemed to be shared spaces where necessary, used by different people at different times, also in terms of sleeping arrangements. The first time I was there, it seemed that many more people than just the Smits were sleeping in their house at night, and it was very crowded. In the second observation I got the sense that Piet, accompanied by an older woman, wanted to come in and use his house but that we were somewhat in the way.

There were gaps in the Smits' walls where the timber logs met each other. The roof often leaked heavily and there was no source of heat. I once saw the men clustered around a fire in a tin in the back yard. Rudimentary electricity was supplied by means of power lines, so that the Smits could run a single bulb in the middle of the ceiling. There was also a plugpoint for appliances. There were electricity cuts due to storms, and water came into the house under the door and even flooded the food cupboard one night. The roof dripped so badly that it seemed a fact of life and sometimes a bucket was not even put out to collect the water; it just dripped straight onto the carpet, or onto whoever was under the leak:

There is a dripping sound that I locate in a bucket full of water and white washing. I wonder whether the rainwater is being allowed to drip into the washing. (Observation 13, April 2005)

Initially there were only two single beds in the house. During the observation period the family bought a double bed that took up half of the house. During the day, the single-bed mattresses were put one on top of the other on one single-bed base. There was a cupboard with double doors, a television and a single hard-backed kitchen chair. The family acquired two identical dressers during the observation time: each had two drawers at the top and two doors below. One served as the kitchen unit and had several buckets and a two-plate stove on it. The other contained baby clothes in the drawers and had the television standing on it. They both stood near the door. There was also a clothes cupboard with double doors and the price still on it. I once saw a candle in a bottle. There were several large cardboard boxes in a corner.

Dishes were washed in a bucket on the kitchen unit. There was no oven, no sink and no taps in the house. Warm water had to be boiled in the kettle, which used electricity:

"Natasha, gaan vra daar vir Auntie Noelene vir bietjie kookwater, ek is nie nou lus vir ketel kook nie," ("Natasha, go ask Aunty Noelene there for some boiled water, I don't feel like boiling the kettle right now,") Eve says. I wonder whether this is a euphemism for saving electricity. Natasha obliges, but returns saying, "Sy sê sy gannie nou water kook nie, sy's biessig." ("She's not going to boil water now, she's busy.") "Biessig met wat?" ("Busy with what?") Eve asks. Natasha shrugs, "Biessig". ("Busy.") "Nou gaan vra daar agter by Syl, ek sien hulle kook water daar" ("Then go ask at the back at Syl's, I see they're boiling water there") Natasha returns from the back neighbours, saying, "Dissie water vir koffie nie, sy kook eiers." ("It's not water for coffee, she's boiling eggs.") "Oooh…" Eve says. (Observation 22, July 2005)

There was a top-loader twin-tub washing machine in the middle of the room, which I never saw used. It may have been broken or it may have been too expensive to buy the electricity needed to make it work. It seemed more of a symbol or a relic, and occasionally functioned as a table. There was a rudimentary coffee table made of an upturned bucket and a slab of melamine wood. There was no visible toilet in either house or in the yard; it seemed to be a shared facility some way away from the house. Bathing seemed to happen in a sink tub that was otherwise stored away somewhere. I once saw a neighbour washing clothes in the cement tub in Lee's front house. Otherwise, washing was done by hand in tubs outside.

The inside walls were dotted here and there with nails from which things could be hung, such as Eve's handbag, and a toy guitar. There were several washing lines strung just under the roof, on which washing would be hanging when it rained. I noticed a beaded decoration with porcupine quills around the bare light bulb, a plastic clock on the wall, and a few small shelves. The television reception was poor, operating from a portable aerial that was pegged to the curtain on the window behind it. Eve spoke of Piet having made a photo frame for a neighbour; Natasha showed me a complementary fridge magnet photo frame that was redundant because there was no fridge.

The environment was active and noisy. This was something that Maiello (1998), observing in a black South African township, also commented on. There were always several loud radios playing music or chat shows from the surrounding houses and from within Eve and Lee's homes too:

Three radios are playing, one from the back house, and the other two from either neighbour. All three have different beats and moods, and they compete in a cacophony. (Observation 21, July 2005)

One could hear shouted comments from the neighbours:

There is music pumping on a radio in the adjacent room at the front…Eve looks up and out the door and I follow her gaze to see a tractor driving past the pine avenue behind their back fence. A woman and a man come and go past the door; they seem to be living in what I thought last visit was the outhouse in the backyard. The woman calls to him, "Jy hou so van kak luister, jou ore is al langs jou gat!" ("You like listening to shit so much, your ears are alongside your ass by now!") (Observation 3, January 2005)

I commented in the above report that it seemed I was actually observing three families. One could hear voices through the timber walls, whether people were speaking in the front room or outside:

As I sit, I hear voices to my left, and glance past the open room-diving curtain to see if Piet and others are in the house. I realise they are either in the front room or to the left side of the house, and that I can hear them talking through the walls. (Observation 10, March 2005)

After a storm, there would be loud banging as people fixed their homes. Once I sat in an observation and felt the whole floor and the bed on which I was sitting (and on which Maria was sleeping) vibrate, as someone seemed to pound something substantial into the earth nearby, like a pole.

There were several pets in the yard: a large, slinking German Shepherd-type dog and a small, yapping one, which died towards the end of the observation period. Later, Lee acquired two small puppies and there were three kittens in the yard, which seemed at least in part to belong to the Smits. Pets seemed less cared for and cuddled here. Dogs

predominantly seemed to function as guard dogs. They were fed on scraps and seemed to scavenge wherever possible. I found the baby animals cute, only to realise that they were often the target of kicking and even throwing:

Maria starts to cry. Piet calls the little dog over, to distract her: "Waar's Trixie? Trixie! Trixie! Kom, Trixie!" ("Where's Trixie? Trixie! Trixie! Come, Trixie!") he says in a higher voice, speaking for Maria. Trixie comes tripling over and lies on her back at Piet's feet, showing him her belly. *That's* interesting, I think. Piet lowers Maria so that her feet dangle in front of the dog and swings her forward slightly so that her legs kick out. "Skop vir Trixie! Skop!" ("Kick Trixie! Kick!") Piet says. The little dog lies quivering, looking up into Piet's face. (Observation 29, September 2005)

The little kitten from last time snuck in, seeing me (with a hopeful air, I thought). It headed alongside the kitchen cabinet towards me, and then ducked under it. Another black one followed it in. Natasha told me she hates that cat. "Daai een, met die wit voete, ek vat hom sommer en gooi hom. Ek het hom teen die muur gegooi!" ("That one, with the white feet, I just take him and throw him. I threw him against the wall!") Natasha said, demonstrating throwing someone out at the door with her hand. (Observation 40, December 2005)

7.3.3 An environment for mothering in

I never saw Maria playing with toys except for a teething ring and a stuffed figurine that was more ornamental in nature. Even though Eve referred to the latter as "jou poppie" (your dolly), she was careful not to have Maria suck on it and eventually put it out of her reach. Maria's pushchair came with a plastic toy cellphone tied to the safety rail. There was no separate room or corner of the room for the baby as such. Maria shared a communal, utilitarian space in which there were sometimes dangers:

Eve unpacked the cupboard under the sink and I noticed a big open box of Rattex [rat poison] come out. I worried that this cupboard was at child level. (Observation 35, November 2005)

There was no cot or baby furniture. Before the pushchair was bought when she was 6 months old, there was nowhere for Maria to practise sitting except in a family member's arms, or by being held upright on the bed. The baby could never be put down. Maria slept with her parents. The whole family would have shared any wakefulness at night. Her mother created a degree of psychological space for Maria with a small rack of baby products and a drawer of her clothes. It seemed that a section of the hanging cupboard also belonged to Maria and the fact that the whole thing was referred to as "haar kas" (her cupboard) suggested that it might have been bought with her needs in mind.

Eve washed clothing in practically every observation. They used cloth nappies but had to resort to disposable diapers, which were considered a luxury, when the weather was too wet to get the cloth nappies dry. Washing baby clothes by hand while caring for a small baby who needed to be carried around was not easy:

"…Ek het nog niks doeke gewas nie…" ("...I haven't washed any diapers yet...") Eve says, scolding Maria gently. I say that Maria is keeping her busy, and Eve starts a bit to hear me, then nods with a half-grin while looking at Maria. (Observation 9, March 2005)

Washing days were weather-dependent. Large items were hung over shared fences to dry and Eve tried to maximise the power of the sun. Cleaning clothes in such a dusty environment was hard:

The female neighbour crosses after a while too, lifting a piece of dry washing that has fallen off the ground: "Hier lê my goed in die sand en die water!" ("Here's my washing lying in the sand and the water!") (Observation 9, 2005)

The impression I was given was that Maria was not allowed on the floor or the ground outside for hygiene reasons until she was nearly a year old:

Maria ramrods her body straight twice so that she begins to slide off Piet's lap. Piet holds her loosely in his grip, allowing this to happen. He looks at me with a headshake and a smile, a gesture that I copy. "Sy wil nou aan alles gaan vat. Sy wil daar onder gaan staan en gruwelik wees," ("She wants to go and touch everything now. She wants to go stand down there and be horrible,") Piet says, referring to the jewellery tree. I look at Maria's clean track suited knees. "Laat julle haar nooit daar onder…speel nie?" ("Don't you ever let her...play down there?") I ask, avoiding the word crawl. After a brief pause, Piet says, "Nie oppie grond nie," ("Not on the ground,") with a short, definite headshake. (Observation 29, September 2005)

The family eventually laid a blanket down on the kitchen area floor for Maria to play on, and then stuck down an uneven linoleum floor. Natasha was put on guard to see that Maria, who was crawling, did not go through the open front door to play in the dust outside. Maria was kept in her pushchair a great deal.

There was no way to regulate the temperature of the baby's environment. The house was draughty, and a neighbour suggested that this might affect the baby's health:

Aunt Lil says to Eve, "Dit trek baie by jou in, dis hoekom sy siek bly" ("There's quite a draught here by you, that is why she stays ill") (about Maria). Eve doesn't respond. It strikes me that there may be warmer shacks, and also, oddly enough, that this is Eve's house ("by haar") (by her). (Observation 26, August 2005)

When it was cold, Maria was dressed in multiple levels of clothing, with a hat with earflaps, mittens, and often inside a quilted baby sleeping bag - even indoors. Being cold and not having a heater sometimes meant the whole family stayed in bed:

Twice she says that Tietie (Natasha's nickname) is going to get so wet coming home from school just now. She asks Maria whether she will get into bed with her just now – Eve is getting under the covers - Tietie will get into bed with them too - it is too cold - "Dan staan ons vanaand op" ("Then we will get up tonight") Eve says, looking at me with a smile. I smile back at her. Eve says it would be nice to have a heater in here; it would be on all day (the front door is open and the light is on, I notice). (Observation 26, August 2005)

In summer Maria was often out in the full sun to the point that I worried about her. I would even move position at times so that my shadow fell over her face. I wondered whether I felt the heat more than she did, because she had become used to it:

I have seen her sleep like this in her mother's arms too. I am reminded of the first outdoor observation I did, when Maria also fell asleep in the sun. The top of Maria's head starts to glisten with an oily film. (Observation 29, September 2005)

Maria mostly napped covered by a square of netting, which, I soon realised, was intended to keep the flies off her. Even in winter, there were always flies in the house and the yard, and they often sat on Maria. Sometimes they bothered her and sometimes she seemed oblivious:

A fly crawls on the back of her neck, but she doesn't move. I wonder whether she has habituated to flies. (Observation 6, February 2005)

A fly comes to sit on her face and crawls to the left corner of her mouth. She moves her head slightly, but it sits stubbornly. She raises both hands briefly, and jerks her head to the left. More flies continue to sit on her, eventually waking her up. She

stretches both arms straight up past her ears, and waves them about as though reaching for something. (Observation 8, March 2005)

As indicated, the neighbourhood was exceedingly busy and noisy. However, I often observed Maria sleeping right through everything:

Maria sleeps while a loud radio plays nearby, and I think how used to this she is that he doesn't even hear it. I know babies who wake up when the phone rings. (Observation 29, September 2005)

7.3.4 Experiential learning about poverty

Belle (1984) commented that "without personally experiencing poverty it is difficult to comprehend the lives of poor women or to view the world through their eyes" (p. 2). Observing and in some senses participating in the scene opened up many aspects of the world of the poor for me. I gained a felt sense of poverty because I was spending long-term time in the family's home, among them, and relating to them, as they went about their daily lives. This meant that I could both feel physically and practically what poverty meant, but also that I gained an emotional experience of poverty rather than intellectual insight into it. For example, when the power was out one day, I observed that "There is something unusually desolate going on here today" (Observation 18, June 2005):

Suddenly, the light comes on. I go, "Aaah!" in understanding and relief. The TV has also sprung to life. I nearly say that the lights were out at our house for hours last night too, but don't. I think that they must have been watching TV this morning when the electricity went. (Observation 18, June 2005)

Writing up now, I realise they could have been without power the whole night (when the television was on). It is interesting that, perhaps for reasons of defence, this did not occur to me at the time. I felt that I also got a sense of how not having things could translate into considerable tension even in the simplest daily interactions within the family:

Eve opens the back of the toy, saying "Die ding se batterye is pap…" ("The thing's batteries are flat...") She takes the batteries off the TV and puts them in. I think that they probably got sold one with flat batteries at that price. Eve presses one of the buttons briefly and nothing happens. "Die ding is pap…" ("The thing is flat...") she mutters again. I wonder whether she put them in right. She struggles for a long time to try and get the battery lid back on. Maria keeps reaching for the phone. "Los! Los!" ("Leave it! Leave it!") Eve says, pulling her hands away. "Sy wil hom vat!" ("She wants to take it!") Natasha says. Eve replies, without looking up, "Laat haar vingers hierin vassit, dan sal sy leer" ("Let her fingers get caught in here, then she will learn"). I wince. "Mamma, ek kan dit doen," ("Mommy, I can do it,") Natasha says, taking the phone from Eve. "Los, jy gannie ding breek," ("Leave it, you are going to break the thing,") Eve says. Natasha turns the lid around and snaps it into place. "Daar!" ("There!") Natasha says, not too triumphantly. (Observation 22, July 2005)

There is a great deal of physical discomfort related to poverty. For example, I gained an appreciation for the way in which the weather conditions felt more extreme when one didn't have a weatherproof living space:

It is a sweltering day and I am not looking forward to being in the shack. (Observation 10, March 2005)

The weather is sunny in the city and cold out here – I wonder if I'll freeze in the shack. (Observation 17, June 2005)

Maria tried to slide off Eve's lap. "O, jy wil gaan olik wies. Jy wil gaan krap innie sand daar. Dis nog te warm, daar's noggie skaarre daar nie, kyk hoe warm is dit dan nog" ("Oh, you want to go and be bad. You want to go scratch in the sand there. It's still too hot, there's no shade there yet, look how hot it still is"). Personally I was cooking by now: the small amount of shade had moved and I had to lean in on my knees just to get my head in the shade. I considered confessing to Eve that I was pouring with sweat and asking if I could sit elsewhere. I had a thought about just bearing and being in the sun the way these people are. I surreptitiously looked at my watch, but the light reflected off it so harshly that I could not see the face. (Observation 43, January 2006)

I once got a migraine from sitting in just the winter sun for an hour (Observation 20). Sometimes the seat I sat on was so cold that I thought it might be wet. Water dripped onto my boot and my bag from the roof. Once I sat on an upturned crate, which became very painful after an hour. I always went to the toilet at a garage in Stellenbosch before the observation, because I could not work out where the toilet might be in Moretown (and did not ask), and in my mind it was not a place I would have wanted to visit. The stench of the neighbourhood always assaulted my senses on arrival:

As I enter the front yard, the smell hits me again, like garbage and sewerage and sweet rotting food. (Observation 6, February 2005)

I sometimes felt disgusted by the poor hygiene, the dirt and the flies:

The bed beneath me smells stale and I start getting the sweating, dirty feeling familiar from previous observations. (Observation 5, February 2005)

A fly buzzes loudly at my shoulder and I shake it away with irritation and disgust, thinking it is two flies mating. (Observation 6, February 2005)

At times the proximity of scavenging dogs, the baby, and shared food unsettled me:

"Mamma gee hierdie stukkie virrie hond…" ("Mommy gives this little piece to the dog…") Eve said, throwing the piece [of polony] off the floor out of the door. The big dog came and snapped it up. I thought with mild disgust that it was all mushy with baby saliva and now it was in the dog's mouth. (Observation 35, November 2005)

Lee comes out of the front room and throws a few chicken bones out of a plastic Tupperware lunchbox onto the ground. She makes a whistling sound and the small dog dives in, retrieves a drumstick, and heads off to the fence between the Smit yard and the right neighbours. I see it carefully crawling through a small hole into their yard, the bone held in its mouth. The large dog comes over after a while and chews one of the bones on the spot. Maria looks at it for a moment. I feel slightly sick. (Observation 20, June 2005)

In the latter example the combination of bones in the dirt, the dog's crunching teeth, and the fact that the dog's food had been human food a moment ago bothered me. There was no separation between processes. Similarly, the baby's messy eating and her nappy changing occurred in the same space, and without running water to assist either process:

I felt a bit sick, seeing the pink polony crumbs down the front of the baby-gro and thinking of the crumbly brown faeces crumbs in the nappy. (Observation 35, November 2005)

There was also no way to keep the baby's food separate from the heat and flies:

I glance around to see the source of the flies and notice a small margarine tub with some leftover scraps of rice and other food in it, standing on the upturned lid of a laundry basket next to me. Flies buzz around it. I wonder if they are beginning to relax about having me around here and seeing things the way they are. I also wonder why no one takes that away as it is clearly causing the fly problem. I am curious about the room and poke my head around the room-divider curtain: a rattle and a baby sheet are lying on the double bed. A baby bottle with a third of milk in it stands on the TV unit. In this heat - yuck, I think. (Observation 41, December 2005)

In short, I was perhaps used to seeing babies in a more controlled, even cosseted environment, which was tailored to their needs. I wonder in hindsight whether I was somehow invested in creating an experience of shared suffering;

I seemed to be unconsciously courting scenarios whereby I would be more rather than less physically uncomfortable:

It is very cold and I pack mittens and wear a scarf, but decide not to take a raincoat or warm jacket. (Observation 26, August 2005)

Despite two days of summer weather, I wake up to drizzle and it is cold. I am somewhat underdressed - no coat or umbrella. (Observation 30, September 2005)

I seemed to want to bear things rather than make them easier. In July 2005 I had a tuberculosis scare when after an episode of bronchitis I had a nagging cough that would not go away and I felt very depleted. I had a chest x-ray. This may, I think, to some degree have been about empathy, but possibly equally about fear - that I would be contaminated, in many ways, by what I was experiencing, and that I would never be able to leave it behind. My desire to run away can possibly be seen in the speeding fine I got when leaving a particularly difficult observation called "My grave" (Observation 20, June 2005). The anxiety about not having enough was contagious. I soon found myself worrying about wasted food:

"Mamma gee stukkie…" ("Mommy gives a little piece…") [Eve] said, picking up the stub of a polony roll in its red wrapper and slicing a thick piece off. She gave it to Maria. Maria took it gently but eagerly and put it on her tongue. A piece flaked off. She pulled the slice in two and fed herself with one hand while mashing and feeling the polony with the other hand. Her eyes were wide and occasionally she looked at me. "Lekker…issit lekker Mamma…" ("Nice…is it nice Mommy…") Eve said, washing the glass cups at the basin. Bits of polony fell onto the seat and floor. Maria went after a piece on the seat but her hands were full. "Daar laat val jy dit!" ("There you let it fall!") Eve said, when a big piece hit the ground. "Mamma gee nog…" ("Mommy gives more…") Eve said, cutting another big slice. I wondered whether feeding her small bits might be more economical and why Eve was not bothered about wasting this food. (Observation 35, November 2005)

Piet sits Maria on his lap so that she is facing me and says to Natasha, "Gie daar 'n biscuit" ("Pass a biscuit over here"). Natasha complies, opening the door under the kitchen unit but keeping it closed. Through the crack she removes a single round Marie biscuit and holds it out in front of Maria. Maria looks at it with widened eyes and then grasps it with both hands. She continues to look at it. Don't waste that, I think. "Eet jou biscuit…" ("Eat your biscuit…") Piet mumbles tenderly. (Observation 41, December 2005)

It was very painful to witness great need and not to be able to respond to it. I had many fantasies, some of them wild, about assisting the family:

If they can receive post here, I could mail them money anonymously, I think. (Observation 20, June 2005)

The KFM Christmas Wish List gets advertised on the radio - "Let us know about someone who you know of who is in need this Christmas and we'll see what we can do to help them". I start composing my letter in my head. Then I realise it is wildly unethical. (Observation 37, November 2005)

In hindsight there has been some debate about this. I have wondered about my reasoning here, and the involvement of the idea of ethics. It seems to have been the result of the many "hats" I was wearing within the study and in relation to the family. In terms of a clinical intervention (which this was not), giving clients material goods is frowned on in the strictest psychoanalytic model. Perhaps, unconsciously, I was at this point thinking of the family as a psychotherapeutic client of sorts. In research terms, giving participants money or food is more acceptable - but what would the impact have been if I had done this? In the infant observation literature this is simply not something that comes up. The non-interventionist stance in the classical observation model does suggest that this would probably be regarded as an unacceptable move, however. In community psychology terms, practical help as part of an intervention, and even as part of research, is quite usual. In retrospect my sense of being "unethical" reflects how

rule-bound I was in my role as observer. In my private life I found it difficult to be in spaces the Smits would have enjoyed and often thought of them with a pang at such times:

Later I have a fantasy of taking the whole Smit family to the beach for a day. It is lovely there. (Observation 38, November 2005)

Early on, I acted on my fantasy that I could rescue the family, unthinkingly, and had to be stopped in supervision. This happened when Eve indicated to me in Observation 9 that Maria's gripe water was finished and that they had no money to buy some more. There was a sense of urgency in my actions and thinking which met, I think, the urgency of their needs:

I almost forget to buy gripe water that afternoon, but do. I also buy an envelope as I want to send money along (R20? R50? How much?). I want to ask if we can pay the participant. (Observation 9, March 2005)

As mentioned, my personal safety became an issue during the observation period. From the beginning I felt uncomfortable about some aspects of my reception in the general community and by neighbours:

Stop to ask where is 90, over-familiar fat man insistently wants know who I am looking for, the person may not be home. (Observation 1, December 2004)

TV is on, masses of people lying down, man looks up at me suggestively. Could I get raped going in for an IO [infant observation]. (Observation 1, December 2004)

Lots of men sitting on sidewalks, one whistles at me, another tries half-heartedly to flag me down. (Observation 3, January 2005)

A young man sitting just inside the door of the front part of Eve's house says "Kan ek nie maar saamstap agter toe nie?" ("Can't I come to the back there with you?") with a lecherous grin. (Observation 3, January 2005)

I had encountered this response, of people whistling and making suggestive comments, before when I participated in a Depression Survey in Moretown in 2002: "At one of the bigger houses, a braai was on the go and a young boy was washing a smart red car. One of the male guests was inebriated and greeted me leeringly". It is noteworthy that alcohol was involved in this incident. Some sense of fear pervaded the observation process for me until the end:

I had some fantasies about finally being mugged, raped or robbed of my car at knifepoint as the observation process ended. (Observation 43, January 2005)

My fear was about being attacked violently, and specifically, of sexual violence. I worried that my car would be stolen or damaged, that my handbag would be snatched, and my car radio taken. I worried that the family's dogs would attack me. I worried that Piet could be in a violent fight (I imagined a stabbing, in fact up against my car) and that there was no visible police presence to turn to. In summary, I often felt wretched, worried, helpless, afraid, disgusted, stoical, relieved to escape, guilty, and in pain during the observation process.

7.3.5 The community

Here I will try to describe in general the kind of community that the Smit family lived in. My experience was limited to the immediate neighbourhood and to what I heard people saying about others. I observed that Moretown seemed to be "a forgotten community", by which I meant a small, marginalised place that few people knew about:

A radio is blaring loudly off to the right. Looking at the pine trees through the doorway, it strikes me that without the many radio noises this place would be forlorn and feel forgotten. I wonder whether the music brings life and contact with the outside world and whether it is an antidote to depression. (Observation 27, August 2005)

There were signs that this was a patriarchal community in which men were catered for by women and women had to be wily to keep something back for themselves:

Suddenly, Eve laughs while looking outside. After a pause she says, "Jy stiek hom diep weg! Ek gaan myne ook wegstiek!" ("You tuck it away deeply! I'm going to hide mine too!") and the female back neighbour says, "Dis nie 'n hotel hierdie nie!" ("This is not a hotel!") I smile and am very curious to know what was hidden (Money? Food? Something sexual?) and want to ask, but don't. (Observation 9, March 2005)

The neighbour says indignantly: "Wiet djy wat sê hy vir my? Hy sê ek moet eers vir hom koffie maak, dan gee hy my 'n skyf! Dink hy dis 'n hotel!" ("Do you know what he says to me? He says I must first make him coffee, then he will give me a ciggie! Does he think this is a hotel!") and I think, "Feminism in Moretown". (Observation 11, April 2005)

The rain subsides and Eve goes to stand at the door, looking out. She is wearing a nice pair of slim-cut pastel-blue trousers that I covet. A neighbour is saying something to her about a match. In a coarse English voice, she says, "I don't have any." He is going on about "warmmaak" (warming her up) and she laughs, jeeringly. (Observation 13, April 2005)

In the latter example the neighbour was making suggestive comments about ways to keep warm. Eve stated in the first observation that her husband wanted her to stay home and care for the child, and in her third interview that he didn't want her to have too much contact with the neighbours. These impressions accord with the findings by Burmeister-Nel et al. (2004) that there is an oppressive, patriarchally dominated hierarchy in the community of Moretown, in which women are excluded from the upper echelons. One of the themes that came up in the Mother-Infant Bonding Group was stereotypical gender-role tasks, which the women were expected to perform: "general care of the household, for example, cooking meals, cleaning the house, washing laundry, in addition to caring for the infant" (Burmeister-Nel et al., 2004, p. 6). In my observations of the Smit family, it was clear that Eve's "work" (as she referred to it) was to see to the house and the infant. I also got the sense that Lee took on some of the care giving of the child when Eve could not, rather than Piet.

It seems revealing then that men in this community responded to me by sexualising, denigrating and objectifying me as a woman. Apart from my own sense of personally being in danger, there were various indications that Moretown could be a dangerous community, especially for women and children. There may possibly have been spousal violence:

The male back neighbour crosses the yard with his back to us, to his house. Eve watches him with hooded, suspicious eyes and a serious manner and I wonder whether he beats his partner. (Observation 9, March 2005)

Noelene (the pregnant back neighbour) walked past the door and looked at me. I greeted her but there was no visible response. She looked cross and I wondered whether she was having a fight with her husband. (Observation 36, November 2005)

During the infant observation period one of the local churches hosted a workshop on domestic violence, which many of the women in Maroela Street attended. This accorded with my own experience as a woman that this was a potentially dangerous environment in which violence, including sexual violence, could realistically occur. It seemed that the frustration and pain of living in such difficult conditions could have translated into the neglect and perpetration of violence on children, who were the least powerful members of the community. For example, the child of a single mother next door had a large burn in the middle of his forehead one day. The research assistant who accompanied me at the time (Alice) got to know the boy somewhat over time and said he was often unwashed. She felt sufficiently concerned to report the matter to her supervisor. There were indicators that the neighbours generally used smacking as a punishment, perhaps unfairly or in anger at times:

Outside, the back neighbour shouts: "Weg daar!" ("Get away from there!") I look up to see the baby with her hands at the bucket where the neighbour has obviously been doing the washing (there are big splashes of water in the dust in that area). The neighbour rushes over to the baby and smacks her on the hand, then lifts her up by her arm and carries her over to the doorway of her own house, out of my sight. I hear the baby start to cry, and the neighbour imitates this sound mockingly: "Wah-wah, djy maak moles en dan huil jy" ("Wah-wah, you cause trouble and then you cry"). She goes back to the bucket and starts washing the clothes. (Observation 9, March 2005)

It seemed that alcohol abuse was common and may have been a widely accepted aspect of life in Moretown. Alcohol may have played a part in the physical abuse of children:

Meantime, a woman in the left neighbours' yard is skelling (scolding) increasingly loudly. She starts by saying yes, laugh, she is going to come over there and "klap daai gevreet" ("smack that mug of a face"). I think fleetingly that she might be talking to me, because I am intermittently smiling and laughing at things Maria is doing. But I know Piet will protect me and I am safe here. She uses very violent language: "Vandag maak ek haar VREK!" ("Today I am going to KILL her!") Something about how she is going to go and find someone and exactly how she will strike her through her face. "Julle hou my vir 'n POES!" ("You think I'm a CUNT!") she says. Something about drinking beer, about why she drinks (and I suddenly think she must be drunk). "Jou ma se POES!" ("Your mother's CUNT!") What a stereotypical cliché, I think, it is actually used. "En die ergste van alles is dat julle KINDERS is, julle's laaities wat soe maak!" ("And the worst of all is that you're CHILDREN, you're youngsters who do this!") she says in a slightly plaintive tone. Good grief, I think, she is talking to a child like that. (Observation 38, November 2005)

There were stories of sexual violence towards children:

[Aunt Lil] asks me if I have heard of the baby aged one-and-a-half who was raped. I nod, thinking of the newspaper story, but also wondering if she means someone in the community. She says that she told the man at her house there, "Ek maak jou dood!" ("I will kill you!") She says it in my face as though I am him. (Observation 10, March 2005)

What I saw and experienced in Moretown accorded with some of the existent information gleaned through the needs assessment process so far. The needs assessment reports between 2002 and 2004 noted the prevalence of domestic violence, as did the interviews conducted as part of the Farmworkers' Project in the area in 2001. Another frequent theme was alcohol abuse, including mothers drinking. The WMHRP interview schedule specifically asked mothers about "changes in terms of lifestyle" in the first few days postpartum, including substance use. The antenatal clinic in Moretown reports that babies with Foetal Alcohol Syndrome (FAS) are occasionally seen. For example, there was a case in early 2006 (C.R. Williams, personal communication, March 13, 2007).

The physical and sexual abuse of children was also an ongoing concern that had initially come to light in the needs assessment in Moretown in 2002. We came to hear of the Eye On The Child Project, whereby concerned members of the community, including some teachers, volunteered their own houses as safe houses for children and kept an

informal eye open for signs of abuse. A teacher explained to me that if they immediately called social services in, parents stopped sending their children to school. When I conducted the Play Group at the primary school in Moretown in 2002, I felt concerned about sexualised behaviour towards me from both male and female children, as well as hearing comments by a child that he could not take his clay home because if his hands got dirty he would get hit. Rape, specifically the rape of children by an older male figure, was a theme that came up in Play Group. The needs assessment report in 2002 also highlighted that a lack of stimulation for the youth and serious mental illness such as personality disorder, psychosis and depression were prevalent (J. Lazarus, 2005).

7.3.6 Conclusion

One of the themes that came up continuously in my analysis of the reports was the evidence of poverty in everything I saw. I witnessed and to an extent felt the physical and emotional effects of poverty. This resulted in a very vivid record that can indeed be called a "thick description" because it describes poverty from the inside out. By this I mean that just sitting in an infant observation situation without taking notes or asking interview questions is a very different experience. Instead of asking questions about poverty and then trying to itemise it, one endures aspects of it and then describes that experience.

It seems that the environment particularly demanded my attention because of who I was. Because of the many differences between us, including our socio-economic status, I experienced the surrounds as something very different to my own (novel and unknown) and therefore very noteworthy and interesting. I was curious about how things worked and how people lived under these conditions, because I did not know. This extended to wondering (during observations) how and where so many people slept in such a small room, and why the bed stood on bricks and was padded with Styrofoam near the head (Observation 5). One could say that I started observing poverty, whereas I had set out to observe an infant. I observed the environment with the same amount of rapt attention and described it in the same detail that I would an infant when observing. In this sense my observation was reminiscent of Winship's (2001) observation of whole groups of children, in which the observation space seemed larger. It could be argued that I was in effect observing wider conditions and experiences, and the community as a group.

As noted in a previous chapter, M.J. Rustin (1989) acknowledged that the observer's interests shift, and that she should be free to take up whatever seems most important in her experience of the family. However, he seemed to mean emotional aspects rather than details about the physical environment. At times it became hard for me to concentrate on the baby because the environment I was observing in was so compelling. Especially in the beginning, it impressed itself on me all the time. My attention "wandered" easily (Observations 6 and 7). The environment was more interesting than, for example, the sleeping baby (Observations 3 and 6). While the environment never became something I did not see (even when I deliberately tried to ignore it at times), it did gradually, after many months, start feeling less foreign. For example, in Observation 27 I refer to "the old twin tub" and describe the smell as "familiar".

As a result there is a great deal of description of the physical environment in the reports. It is unusual to see this as a focus point and hence there was some objection to this phenomenon in my work from Mrs K. Most infant observation accounts emanating from middle-class homes are able to overlook the milieu as unexceptional in the

drive to observe the infant. On the other hand, as shown in Chapter Five, E. Gibson's (2002/3) observation of a low-income black family in the American South also contained descriptions of the house and the area and people around it. Like Winship (2001), I noticed and recorded sounds and smells. One of my goals was to consider the impact of the physical environment on the developing internal world of the infant. Therefore it could be argued that I was particularly interested in the physical surroundings in the current observation. Nevertheless, my declared intention was also to conduct an infant observation along Tavistock guidelines. One of the results of allowing myself to "take in" the physical aspects described here was that I felt the way in which the socio-economic matrix permeates every aspect of the infant's experience, even from before birth (Piontelli, 1989; Winship, 2001). At 7 weeks I seemed to comment wryly on this as I watched a crying Maria inch her way across the bed to a makeshift piece of insulation along the wall:

I watch her, thinking that her life has begun here in this place and this is where she will lie and cry, up against this piece of wood. (Observation 7, February 2005)

7.4 The contact

In retrospect it was possible to discern certain developments in the infant observation process. These centred on shifts in my experience of observing. Contributing to these shifts was the development of my relationships with the parents, the infant and the community. A brief overview of these shifts will be given below. After that a description and analysis of the various relationships will follow. The narrative account (story) below is ordered by chronology, in phases that were marked at analysis stage. Again, it seems significant in retrospect that the phases do not describe the baby's development, but rather situational and relational developments between me and the adults I encountered.

7.4.1 First meeting (Observations 1-4)

The first four observations, from December to February, formed an introductory phase. In retrospect it is clear that at this stage I was negotiating with the community about the groundrules of our contact. My early reports seem rather tentative, superficial and non-committal. It is almost as though I was trying hard "just to watch". In fact, the title of the first report, taken from the mother's words, was "Net om te kyk" (just to watch) but seems rather ironic, considering that the first two lines of the report were:

What to wear, decide to go as myself, decide driving in to Moretown to keep rings on. Cannot remember her name now, despite saying it a lot to her in meeting (20 mins). (Observation 1, December 2004)

Besides just looking, then, I also noted my discomfort about how to have this first meeting: Should I "go as myself" and what would that do to the observation? Why was I erasing the participant's name from my mind? In Freudian terms, what was the meaning of these contemplated and actual omissions? (cf. Kruger, 2006). I immediately felt the complicated dynamics of the situation in subtle and direct ways. For example, in the first pre-birth visit Eve waived my offer to meet with her husband to discuss the observations. She said that she had told him about the visits and that it was "not a problem". Later in the same visit, when I asked for a phone number for the family, she called an older man in, whom I described as reeking of alcohol and being intrusive. He gave me his cell-phone number on a

scrap of paper. I worried fleetingly that this might be the father: if he were an alcoholic, then this family should not be a part of the study, based on the exclusion criteria:

Later, driving home, I wonder whether that kind of drinking counts as problematic or normal around here. Assistant C would have checked this out - did someone not disclose, or is it just not worth mentioning? (Observation 2, December 2004)

I confirmed in the second observation that this man was indeed the father of whom we had spoken. He was again not in the house during the observation. I greeted him on my way out, apologising for the mix-up and referring him to the consent form that laid out what I was doing there. We were therefore never formally introduced. Nor did I consider "changing families". I proceeded with "observation proper" but, inexplicably at the time, left the fourth report incomplete.

7.4.2 Crisis (Observations 5 -6)

On a sweltering day in February a crisis occurred. In the reports this is starkly expressed in an ironic contrast of titles: "Butterfly…butterfly" (Observation 5) and "BLOED" (BLOOD) (Observation 6). I went from an easy observation where I was "more relaxed about going to observe today" and "rapt and smiling" to see the baby breastfeed in her outfit with a beautiful embroidered butterfly on it, to an observation in which the father, who was again drunk, confronted me. Halfway through my observation of the sleeping baby, Piet could be heard arguing with a neighbour outside:

I lose track of her movements and after a while I suddenly hear Piet shouting, at a distance, "Daai vrou loop nou, dit sê ek vir jou!" ("I am telling you, that woman leaves now!") A cold hand grips my heart, as it dawns on me after a second that he is talking about me. I try to convince myself that he must be talking about a neighbour, perhaps the one he was accused of sleeping with? But then I hear Eve shout at him, "Hey, jy! Jy! Moenie jou kom snaaks hou hier nie!" ("Hey, you! You! Don't try to be funny here now!") and it sounds like she is threatening him to protect something. There is silence and I shuffle on the bed, trying to sit comfortably and also keep my arms in front of my body. I prepare for Piet coming in to throw me out and imagine how I would leave with dignity and tell Eve I'll see her again next week (maybe this consistency would be comforting to her). I would say next week might be a better time. (Observation 6, February 2005)

My early allegiance to Eve (and perhaps hers to me) can be discerned here, although it is not clear what had happened between Piet and Eve. When Piet did enter the room, he sat next to me on the bed and a long discussion, which later became a monologue, followed:

Suddenly Piet comes in, very unsteadily, and sits down on the bed next to me. He is very drunk and reeks of sweet liquor, combined with a fecal smell. As he sits, his upper body lurches forward half-across me. His eyes struggle to focus. He slurringly asks, "Hoe gaan dit?" ("How are you?") and I say very well, how is he. He says, "Nee, dit gaan goed, daar's nie fout by my nie" ("No, it's going well, I have no complaints/there's no problem with me") and looks at my breasts. I am wearing a strappy blouse (which I considered not wearing and now regret having on). (Observation 6, February 2005)

I have the sense that Piet is not stupid, even though he is drunk, and that he is watching me to see if I am patronising him at all. Sweat runs down Piet's nose and his breath comes at me in nauseating, stinking waves. Early on, he slaps me on my bare upper back, which is also wet with sweat. (Observation 6, February 2005)

My anxiety and the Piet's sexualised manner are evident. Piet wanted to know why exactly I was coming every week. He asked whether I had held the baby and commented that he always forgot my name. Initially his tone was charged and confrontational, but it became calmer as I kept eye contact and tried to listen and respond:

He goes on: Some people say, APARTHEID – ek het nie 'n saak met partheid nie, vir my kan jy bruin wees, jy kan swart wees, jy kan… (I don't have an issue with apartheid, to me you can be brown, you can be black, you can…) (he can't seem to say the word white). Dis net velkleur, as ek jou sny (It's just skin colour, if I cut you) (he runs an index finger down my upper arm), wat kom daar uit? (what comes out?) (I don't answer, so he does: BLOED (BLOOD)). So is dit met enige velkleur. (So it is

with any skin colour). Toe Mandela nog president was, Mister Mandela, het ek tot daar in sy huis gegaan, ek het vir hom gesê, ons is almal dieselfde. Binne is ons almal mense, ek's 'n mens, jy's 'n mens. So, u kan maar kom - u is net 'n mens, ek en jy is dieselfde. (When Mandela was still president, Mister Mandela, I went right into his house, and I told him, we are all the same. Inside we are all people, I am a human being, you are a human being. So, you can come - you are just a human being, you and I are the same.) A pause. We sit next to each other on the edge of the single bed, knees forward, heads turned in towards each other, looking into each other's eyes. (Observation 6, February 2005)

7.4.3 Make or break (Observations 7-12)

Having survived Piet's attack, a period followed in which I felt that the observations were under threat. Piet disappeared for a few observations and then could be found sitting outside under a tree, with a civil smile for me. However, my promoter was concerned about the confrontation and research assistants (and Ms L herself) intermittently began to accompany me in the car. I also changed the way I dressed:

I dress in a modest T-shirt which is too warm for the day. (Observation 10, March 2005)

A group of youths in the front neighbours' house began to catcall me as I arrived:

I put the crook-lock on and get out with just my keys (my bags are in the boot). Without looking up, I am aware of a lot of charged male attention in the front neighbours' yard. I glance up briefly and throw out a blanket "Goeie more" ("Good morning!"), without making specific eye contact. "Hallo!" ("Hello!") says one voice, comically high. "Koebaai!" ("Goo' bye!") pipes another. Some adolescent boys with a bike near the road make whistling noises. I am very aware of being watched in a sexual way as I walk to the house. I can hear them making comments but not what they are saying. I enter the front of the Smit yard and notice a small patch of wet sand in my way. I wonder whether it is urine. I look at my watch as I head to the alleyway, to show the youths behind me that I am here on business. I stride down the alleyway, turn the corner into the empty yard, and knock on the Smits' open door, saying "Goeie môre!" ("Good morning!") It seems very dark inside and there is no sign of life. Where did Eve go? I feel panic - I am here alone with those guys out front. After a while a small voice inside says, "Kom maar binne" ("Come inside") and I leap in. (Observation 11, April 2005)

In Observation 10, an inebriated old woman came into the house and engaged me:

The woman keeps her skirt raised, showing me a cut up her abdomen. I glance at it briefly as she clearly wants to show me this, but I try not to look at the same time. She says they cut it all out. She stuffs the wallet back into her underwear and sits down right next to me again. Her movements are energetic and exaggerated. I guess she is in her early seventies. To my relief, Eve has returned to sit on the bed and now says mildly, holding Maria up at her neck, "Ant' Lil se tabak het uitgeval…" ("Aunt Lil's tobacco has fallen out…") (Observation 10, March 2005)

I worried about the message that being accompanied would send to the family, but it seemed an imperative step for the observations to continue. We tried to fashion a solution as we went along: simply having someone sit in the car was dangerous and uncomfortable for that person (as well as not much use to me). As a temporary measure, however, this helped me to feel less vulnerable. Our thinking was that someone would be physically present to protect me if necessary. I also tried keeping a cell-phone on me once during an observation, with the accompanying person's number on speed dial. This was abandoned when the phone rang, feeling like a disturbance (Observation 7). I turned it off without answering. Several people sat outside in my car at this time, with varying degrees of success:

James is glowing with sweat in the car with the door locked. (Observation 8, March 2005)

I put the key in the door, wondering whether Frank will get a fright. He has two red spots on his cheeks and talks about how noisy and busy the environment is. I laugh a lot, listening to his spirited descriptions, but also feel despair: no one understands. (Observation 12, April 2005)

As I move towards the car, I see that Ms L has the window wide open and is talking to an older woman with a small child. I feel filled up and safe. (Observation 13, April 2005)

I felt very alone and fantasised that someone would come into the room and observe with me. The unspoken question in my mind and in the minds of the neighbours and the family at this time seemed to be whether I would stay or give in to the collective pressure from them and give up on the observations. There were unconscious communications in the observations about this reflected, for example, in the titles of the reports: "As jy wil uitgaan, gaan uit…" ("If you want to go out, then go out…") (Observation 7), "Say it together, say it for always, naturally" (Observation 8), "As jy nie my tete wil hê nie, sit ek hom weg" ("If you don't want my boob, I will put it away") (Observation 9), and "Hello and Koebaai (Goo' bye)" (Observation 11). The latter is a bleak reference to Athol Fugard's play of the same name, in which a neurotic man and his prostitute sister meet up again after a period of estrangement. This two-hander is about their futile attempt at connecting despite their disparate worlds.

Perhaps a bit anxiously, Eve seemed to begin waiting for me to arrive:

I head down the alleyway purposefully and as I reach the top of it, Eve moves around the corner of her house, as though to look down the alleyway. I feel she has been waiting for me. She is holding Maria, who is dressed in white and pink, over her right shoulder. She starts slightly, then smiles a half-smile. I say, "Goeie more" ("Good morning") and she returns the greeting in the same words. (Observation 10, March 2005)

7.4.4 Myself, here (Observations 13-20)

Ms L then suggested that the WMHRP interview some of the neighbours. Ms L, Carol and Alice then did so over some months. The reasoning was that by including the surrounding community we would become more of a known entity, which would defuse the danger. The result was that the catcalls stopped abruptly and eventually I travelled alone again from October onwards. I felt I could be more myself when Alice came along:

I give [Alice] my keys and move off to the Smit's house without my bag, feeling relaxed. I have not dressed-down as much today, and feel myself. (Observation 16, May 2005)

There was a new admission of the mutuality of our relationship. I allowed myself to hold the baby for the first time in May. I saw the whole family together in observations several times consecutively. The baby also became more of a focus in the reports. At the same time, the infant observation seminars seemed increasingly out of touch with my struggles. In retrospect I can see that in order to admit to the fact of "myself, here", and the complexity that entailed, I unconsciously began to distance myself from the seminars emotionally. I was taking strain, felt very tired, and became ill at this time.

7.4.5 Love (Observations 21-30)

What most clearly characterised this phase of the observation process was the way in which there were even clearer (more conscious) feelings of love towards Eve in my reports. By this I mean the kind of meaningful, empathic bond that is often experienced in a therapeutic setting. We had a sense of unspoken but deep connection. At times the intimacy of our time together in the room is very poignant in the reports. I also began to dream about the family at this point. I felt a lot more settled in the environment and more myself, although I was never completely relaxed:

There is something very peaceful going on here with the potato peeling and the jewellery making and the washing and me just sitting here in the midst of it, and I look down past Piet to the other houses with their neat block-like yards and try to feel what it is like to live here. I wish I had a garden where I could sit outside when it is sunny. At one point I think two people in the right neighbours' yard are talking about me - let them, I think. (Observation 29, September 2005)

I started rescheduling so as not to miss observations when illness and holidays occurred, even if this meant travelling unaccompanied. The reports increasingly became longer. Eve started getting part-time work from September onwards (Observation 28). When she worked, she would leave the baby with another family member (Lee or Piet) to be observed. Meanwhile, I felt rather silenced and unseen in the observation seminars.

7.4.6 Thick description (Observations 31-43)

By this phase I had in a sense cut myself loose from Mrs K and the seminars, although I still attended. I was not asked to present any of the last eight observations in seminar. I felt freer to respond more spontaneously to what I was observing and experiencing, and also to honestly record whatever it was that I was seeing (and all aspects of it, including how we were relating to each other). Retrospectively I entitled this phase "thick description", because I felt that the complexity of the whole picture, individual and social, internal and external, was allowed to exist in the reports at last. I began travelling to observations alone again. I decided not to write up one of the observations at all (Observation 34, at which Piet and Maria were present).

Eve was intermittently absent from nine observations due to work in the last phase of the observation period. Many of my observations were therefore with Piet and Maria, or Piet, Maria and Natasha. There were several observations outside in which neighbours and extended family members (particularly Lee) played a role. At times I still felt overwhelmed. However, my confidence in the environment had grown:

Eve did not follow me out to chase the dogs away. As I left I thought that if that small dog attacked me from behind I would kick the living daylights out of it and shout, "Hei!!!" ("Hey!!!") I got into the car and reversed. A gang of young men milled across the road towards the front neighbours' yard. I purposefully made eye contact with the last one to cross in front of my car and greeted him. He nodded back shyly. (Observation 35, November 2005)

Ten observations from the end I felt that I belonged in some way:

I look down at the empty pram with hope (of what?), and then up at (Piet). I have a quizzical expression and the interchange becomes quite humorous. "Weg!" ("Gone!") Piet says with a smile, throwing his hands up. The men all laugh and I say, "O nee, dit sal verskriklik wees!" ("Oh no, that would be terrible!") with a smile and mock horror. Piet goes into the front room and I hesitantly follow to the door, wondering if he means me to follow - is she in there? Also I feel I have a right to follow and go in there boldly if Maria is there. (Observation 33, October 2005)

There is no phase marked as a termination one, in the sense of a working-through or tapering off: the observations abruptly stopped. In overview, it took twelve months and a great deal of friction and discomfort before I started to feel settled and accepted observing in Moretown.

7.4.7 Conclusion

Already from this brief overview of the observation process, it is clear that I encountered events that are rare in published observation accounts, and specific to this context. Twice inebriated adults, including the father, challenged me in the home. I was whistled at and received suggestive comments from neighbours and members of the wider community on several occasions. Such events made it difficult to observe the infant. Mrs K thought that I might be in a state of hypervigilance. The history of interracial violence in our country and the crime, linked with poverty, that is the legacy of apartheid, thus inevitably entered the observation space from the first. The measure of having people along with consideration for my safety impacted on the observation on several levels. Because my tension levels were reduced, I could enjoy the observation hour and the report-writing more. I was better contained and could even begin to think humorously about my predicament:

Three interviewers are coming with me today: Ms L, Alice and Carol. Better still, Carol calls to say we can go in her car. I am being driven to an infant observation! There is much laughter about the double meaning in that when I say it… (Observation 18, June 2005)

As we turn in at Maroela Street, I say exasperatedly to Alice: "Daar is altyd mense wat reg oor die pad staan net voor hulle huis!!" ("There are always people standing right across the road just in front of their house!!") The men slowly disperse and we park. A young man from the left front neighbours' stands at the fence and says "Hallo" ("Hello") suggestively. I return the greeting sarcastically, *sotto voce*, for Alice to hear, then laugh briefly at myself. (Observation 27, August 2005)

In interview Eve expressed the idea that the neighbours did not find my visits so strange because they themselves had been and were being visited. The contact that Ms L and Alice had with the neighbours (via interview) while I observed seemed to make me a more known factor in the community, and the sense that I was in any real danger subsided. I also believe that the emotional support gained by having someone along with me (at least to the door) enabled me to bear what was a very hard process, and to keep at least some focus on the baby. Beyond this, the presence of the interviewers seemed to impact on my relationship with Eve in both positive and negative ways that I will discuss in the following section.

7.5 The relationships

In this section I will describe the important relationships in the observation process. I will start with a discussion of the way in which I was related to, because this felt like a core aspect of the observations. In **7.6** (the discussion) it will be shown that the relationships with me were an important source of information in terms of needs assessment. I will start by presenting the chronological development of my relationship with the mother, which felt like the most central relationship. My relationship with the baby seemed an extension of this. My relationships with the father and the sister will be mentioned but not focused on here. In describing familial relationships, I will also concentrate on the relationship between the mother and child. However, on reflection it is interesting that I have chosen to represent this aspect, which is traditionally the focus of infant observation accounts, last.

7.5.1 The mother and the observer

The possibility of some kind of connection with Eve was discernible to me from the start, and this excited me about the project (perhaps partly because I am a therapist). In the pre-birth visit, amidst much trepidation, I found myself hooked by Eve's pleasure at the length of the observation period, while I had expected a year to seem too long an obligation to the participant:

Mevrou leer oor babaitjies so. (Madam learns about babies like this.) Pleasure, (Jana:) jaar is lank, ([a] year is long,) (Eve:) ek stel belang (I am interested). Cannot say why when I ask, or how she feels about it, only that she has agreed...I was getting excited about this, watching her pleasure at the thought of me coming every week for a year and the way she looked at my wedding rings, chin at hand, I seemed to be showing her. (Observation 1, December 2004)

In retrospect it seems possible that Eve wanted to be in my presence, and within the scope of my attention, in some way. For example, during the first observation after the baby's birth, we sat together for an hour, waiting for the baby to wake up:

I feel a sense of panic and ask Eve what she normally does when Maria sleeps. She says, Ek hou my maar besig (I keep myself busy). I say, Moenie laat ek jou stop om aan te gaan nie… (Don't let me stop you from carrying on…) and she laughs mildly and says, My werk is al klaar (My work is done already). (Observation 3, January 2005)

In my presence, I imagine that Eve seemed to be performing something about her personhood, in relation to my own:

Eve absorbedly studies her wedding rings (which I have not noticed before). She pries them off slowly with a frown, sucking air in over her lips. They seem too small and come off with great difficulty. There is a pale line where they were, and I think about her washing clothes in the sun. She examines the finger, holding her hand close to her face, and rubbing the line. Again, this seems somewhat exaggerated and self-conscious, and something of a show for me. I notice a small stone on one of the rings. (Observation 3, January 2005)

Already in the first pre-birth visit then there seemed to be a process of mirroring and comparison going on, related to the ways in which we might be similar, or not. As I did, Eve wore two wedding rings, albeit with much smaller diamonds. At our first meeting, while she was looking at me, I seemed unconsciously to be showing her my rings (with my chin in my hand) and later I sat watching her, as she seemed to make a fuss of showing me her rings. I often drew parallels between us in the reports:

Eve comes in to get a peg-bag out from the cabinet under the TV. I think that I have a similar one. Hers has lace on it. (Observation 11, April 2005)

From outside, she opens the window, hanging the peg-bag on the frame of the glass. I think that I have the same brass window fastener as she does (I have just shined mine up). (Observation 11, April 2005)

There is lots of washing in the Smits' back yard (I can see it down the side from where I am sitting) - blankets and lots of bedding. (I put my washing on the balcony before I came here). (Observation 29, September 2005)

While we lived in such different worlds, I seemed to be perpetuating our points of similarity, however small, throughout the year. Yet the differences were inescapable. This mutual process of comparing oneself to the other is interesting in both social and unconscious senses. We lived on such vastly different socio-economic planes that I may have tried at times to ease my discomfort by minimising that, and Eve may have been trying to impress me. In

part, I was surprised that there was any similarity at all. It comforted me to notice these things because it counteracted the fear that came from such utter strangeness (in other words, it was a defensive process). But, again in hindsight, it suggests that on a deeper level a process of identification was possibly set in motion between us.

Despite our almost immediate connection, our first contact with each other was not, as an introductory phase might suggest, a time in which we got to know one another better and increasingly became more comfortable in each other's presence. While our connection was discernible to a degree, Eve simultaneously sent me a great many contrary messages, verbally and non-verbally. She often looked surprised or shocked to see me, as though she were unprepared, which she was not, seeing as I came at the same time and on the same day every week:

I am shocked to see her again, she looks unfamiliar, those wide-set bug eyes. (Observation 2, December 2004)

I glance to my left, looking through the open door into Eve's house. To my surprise, she is sitting on the edge of the bed facing the open door (where I have sat twice before), breastfeeding Maria. I greet and she nods almost imperceptibly. Her face is blank, with a vacant but slightly shocked expression. (Observation 5, February 2005)

I look up and greet Eve, by looking into the door. She seems shocked to see me and greets back in a half-tone. (Observation 9, March 2005)

In other words, every visit seemed like a first contact. In the above extracts my own feelings of surprise and shock are also evident. My initial visits felt like an invasion of the home. This word, together with "intrusive", comes up regularly in the early reports. For example:

I sit down on the edge of the second bed again, like last time, wondering fleetingly whether this is an imposition. (Observation 4, February 2005)

…she says *Sy moet maar kom wanneer sy wil* (She must come when she wants to), over the whah-whah looping cry of a very young baby. Suddenly I feel v intrusive. When I say she can choose, she says tomorrow, but I can't so in the end I decide anyway, it is the day after and she chooses 11 a.m. again…I had hoped to be there a few days after birth but in retrospect I would probably have felt v invasive. But I also feel slightly irritated that I missed the birth and wonder if they had the date wrong. (Observation 3, January 2005)

It was noted in Chapter Five that many observers worry initially that the family will find the visits intrusive, therefore this was not an experience unique to my observation in this particular context. The fact that I experienced this worry for around ten months does seem noteworthy, however. There was a sense in which giving birth was something private that Eve had to finish before I got there:

Eve: Yes, that is... I finished in January. (**I:** Mmm..). The first week in January she wasn't here, so she asked me if I am done (**I:** Mmm..). So I told her I am done. That was the first week in January, the second week of January I was done... then she... s...the third... the second week in January she came... At that time the child was already here (**I:** Okay..). (Interview 1 with Eve, March 2005)

On the other hand, Eve may not have known exactly when the birth would be. Even though she gave me a due date, it is possible that it was an estimate, and erroneous. Unexpected pregnancies and births, and women not knowing they were pregnant for some time, were themes that came up previously in the WMHRP interviews with mothers in this community (Kruger & Van der Spuy, 2007). The experience of observers having been misinformed about the due date, possibly because the date had been miscalculated, was noted in the infant observation literature (S. Briggs, 1997b). In her South African observation Maseko (2001) even recorded not being informed about the birth

at all, despite the family's promise to do so. Nor did Eve talk much about the birth, except to say that the pain had been bad. This emphasis on the pain of birth to the exclusion of other kinds of description was also a common finding in the study on maternal mental health in Moretown (Kruger, in press) as well as in the Farmworkers' Project in the area (Kruger, 2005b). Other infant observers working across socio-economic divides in other countries have also noted that they ended up knowing little about the birth (Piontelli, 1985, 1992).

Despite our connection, my predominant experience was not in fact of feeling overt warmth from Eve. For example, in Observation 4 I noted that Eve barely looked at me as I arrived, and did not respond verbally to my greeting. Yet in Observation 6, when Piet was drunk, it seemed to me that she was trying to protect the observations by calming him down, bringing him food, and even entreating the neighbour he was arguing with to bring things to a close so that Piet could settle. I noted her response to the charged interaction between Piet and me that followed:

During the conversation she first busies herself at the kitchen unit with her back to us (as though not really there), then sits on the edge of Maria's bed close to the twin-tub and me, puts up the volume on the TV, brushes out her hair, and eventually settles in to a half-lying position behind Maria, at the far wall. I meet her eyes three times: once, just after she has put the TV volume up with the remote - her eyes are wide and shiny. The second time, she nods as I look to her on the issue of keeping contact after the observation (see below). Thirdly, as she is brushing out her hair - she casts a glance up at the ceiling with a fed-up expression (near the end, as Piet is showing me his scars). (Observation 6, February 2005)

It is even possible that Eve had wanted to deliberately keep Piet away from me at the start of the observation process so that he would not endanger the visits. Similarly, in Observation 10, it felt as though Eve intervened when the inebriated old woman made things difficult for me:

Lil is still half-sitting on me and grabbing me now and then. Her grip is hard and I wonder if I will bruise. In agony about the situation I am in, I fixate on the interesting elastic contraption that keeps Maria's new nappy on. I consider leaving. But I won't be chased away. "Ant' Lil, laat ek nou sommer vir Ant' Lil iets vra, dan hoef ek nie vir Piet te vra nie, waar is die kindersorgkliniek?" ("Aunt Lil, let me ask Aunt Lil something now, then I don't have to ask Piet, where is the childcare clinic?") Eve is smiling slightly, as though to communicate to me that she is trying to distract Lil. Lil says in muted tones that it is at the fire-station, and Eve says she thought so. (Observation 10, March 2005)

Here, it again felt as if Eve was communicating with me non-verbally. She seemed to try to distract the woman, so that she would leave me alone. I felt that this empathic behaviour was not necessarily out of loyalty or kindness to me, but was perhaps aimed at making the situation more bearable for me, so that I would stay, and come back again. In the next observation, when the youths in the front neighbours' yard began to catcall me, I again had the sense that she was again trying to protect me, or at the very least, protect the observation visits:

At the car, I hear urgent kissing sounds directed at me from inside the front neighbours' doorway. One guy says to another, "Sy wag jou! Sy wag jou! Sy wag jou!" ("She's waiting for you! She's waiting for you! She's waiting for you!"). I ignore this and get in the car, not locking the door, but thinking about it. I pull out with purposeful slowness. Then I see Eve, holding Maria in her arms. She is standing some distance away, just inside her gate, and I smile, largely for the sake of the youths. I want to wave but don't. Eve is looking in my direction but is moving and half behind a small tree, so we don't have eye contact. She seems to have come to see me off even though she was breast-feeding. It suddenly occurs to me that she may have come to see that I get away safely, and I feel afraid. I fantasise that she would rush up, hitting out and pulling my attackers off me, while shouting and scolding. (Observation 11, April 2005)

I began to see Eve as my rescuer in these difficult early observations. One could argue that she needed my practical assistance and for this reason did not want me to be chased away. However, she also seemed to show some disappointment when the Easter holiday came up:

She gestures, saying, "Dan kom Mevrou weer die week daarna" ("Then Madam will come the week after next again") and I say no actually, it is the "Pase" (Easter) and I am going away. She says Oh yes, the Thursday and Friday are a holiday. She is talking brightly, interrupting me, as though to show me she knows these things. I say the week after is a university holiday and so I will not be coming then. I won't see her for 2 weeks. But I'll come the Wednesday after that. She repeats this. After a pause I ask whether that is all right with her. She says, smiling shyly, "Dis reg so…dis mos te verstane." ("That's all right…it's understandable.") I am surprised by her choice of this word as it suggests my absence is an inconvenience. (Observation 10, March 2005)

It seems that Eve was disappointed to lose the visits themselves, in other words, something about the quality of the time spent in them with me. My surprise at this is interesting: it shows that I did not feel particularly wanted there by Eve. Instead, she often gave subtle non-verbal signs that I was actually a bit of an annoyance and that she was doing me a favour. She often frowned at me and looked at the clock, for example. This stance added to my sense of misery. In terms of Eve, I therefore felt very strong positive feelings and intensely negative feelings by turn.

Two months into the observation process, Eve began to complain to me of the poor quality of care she felt Natasha's father and his family had shown. She bemoaned the cost of essential things for Maria such as gripe water:

Eve comes back with the whole tray of baby products, putting it down furthest away from me, at the pillow. She takes out the bottle of gripe water, holding it up, and saying that it is almost finished. She says when her first daughter used it, it was R8 and now it is nearly R20. She looks for my response, and I say "Sjoe!" ("Gosh!") (Observation 9, March 2005)

This kind of chatter was unusual, and in the end, as I was leaving, led to Eve's asking if I had "'n paar sente" (a few cents) to spare. More generally, there was a lack of open, easy communication between us. Our conversations were typically awkward and rather truncated. The lack of easy chatter added to my sense that Eve did not trust me or really want to share anything with me. It is also possible that this kind of easy chatter was not a feature of this community. The WMHRP found, for instance, that among low-income women in Moretown and surrounds there was a general discourse of secrecy and repression rather than a discourse of disclosure (Kruger, in press; Kruger, 2003, 2005a; Kruger et al., 2005; Kruger & Van der Spuy, 2007). Piontelli (1992) noted about the mothers in her foetal study that "sharing or not sharing important information was considered to be in itself a significant feature of the observation" (p. 16). In the long run, Piet was more openly and spontaneously communicative towards me about the baby than Eve ever was. Even with him, there were many awkwardnesses and misunderstandings. In interview, Carol struggled with a similar sense that she could "get nothing out of Eve". She became quite exasperated, and later wondered, as I had, whether there was something she was not doing right:

I:.. Is there anything you want to tell me? That I.. maybe haven't asked or (**Eve:** Uh-uh) that you think is important..
Eve: I didn't want to ask anything.
I: Okay.. Nothing to say.. (**Eve:** Uh-uh) or to tell me..
Eve: Uh-uh, nothing.
I: Nothing?
Eve: Uh-uh. (Interview 2 with Eve, June 2005)

Because Eve did not talk to me, I felt rather unaccepted and unwelcome, as though I were not wholly approved of. About Carol however, she spoke in openly positive terms, leading me to remark with some relief but also a hint of envy:

I also want to congratulate Carol for having made a warm impression (for having got approval). (Observation 9, March 2005)

However, in interview she in turn gave Carol the same experience of being hard to connect with, and spoke positively of me.

By March it is clear in the reports that I had genial feelings towards Eve. The way I saw her, for example, changed:

I notice that Eve's face is thinner, and glance at her tummy, which also seems smaller. As she talks, there is a new energy in her face that almost makes her attractive. I notice how large her eyes are. (Observation 10, March 2005)

It seems significant that this animated quality came into her face when she was talking to me. This suggests that something about our connection was enlivening to her (rather like her "smiling more" when I entered the group welfare meeting at the church), but also that our growing connection may have helped me to see her more clearly. I have had similar experiences with clients in therapy. In the observation context it is also possible that Eve became beautiful to me through my moving away from a stereotyped idea of her. I entitled this observation "This love has taken its toll on me..." referring to the fact that coming to see Eve meant braving the attacks by Aunt Lil, the neighbouring youths and Eve herself.

The drama of presentation and looking continued between us. For example, the reports track the way I would prepare for the observation from early on. Presumably Eve would do the same, because the house and baby were always immaculate. In interview she commented that she always finished her housework early on those days. I, meantime, stood at my cupboard wondering what I could wear that was modest, warm (or cool) and not too expensive-looking. When we came together, there was inevitably a mutual visual sizing-up of each other, which implicitly involved judgments of sorts:

She looks up to glance at my dress (an old one which I have resurrected) and to my surprise, shifts back on the bed a bit so that I can sit on it too. (Observation 9, March 2005)

Maria looks at me underneath her mother's chin. Noticing this, Eve says, "Wie's dit? O, dissa mooi antie…dissa mooi antie daai…" ("Who's that? Oh, it's a pretty aunty…it's a pretty aunty that…") and I think about Eve glancing at my dress earlier. (Observation 9, March 2005)

What I did not mention in the observation report was that when I got dressed in the morning I consciously chose to wear (resurrect) this dress because it reminded me of the kind of pinafore over a T-shirt outfit that I had seen Eve wear. It was also a bit tatty. Simultaneously, Eve may have been emulating the way I dressed:

I notice that Eve is wearing a nice soft red sweater, which she now lifts. She pushes a white lacy bra cup down under her left breast and says, "Kom! Kom!" ("Come! Come!"). (Observation 9, March 2005)

Eve is dressed in a yellow T-shirt and a floral skirt (similar to mine last week) with a slit and a petticoat. (Observation 10, March 2005)

I noticed a shift in my relationship with Eve when I became more relaxed as a result of being accompanied to observations. She began to laugh more freely and gutturally at some of the things Maria did, with real, deep-seated enjoyment. The following observation, when Maria was 3 months old, occurred after my promoter had accompanied me to meet the mother and child:

She stares at my red jersey, my hands on my lap and my trousers. She watches the fly crawling on my trouser-leg. Suddenly, while looking into my face, she utters a word-like sound, with an up-inflection on the end. Her eyebrows move up together, and her whole body also moves upwards for a second in a small explosion of energy as the word comes out. Eve and I both laugh, Eve making a long, rasping guttural sound I have not heard before. (Observation 13, April 2005)

However, I also wondered about the meaning of Eve's frowns when she watched me arriving with Alice, Carol or Ms L (who went to other homes in the neighbourhood). Eve seemed rather suspicious about the people accompanying me. She would enquire whether Alice or Ms L had come along (Observation 27). She seemed to want to work out exactly who was going where, and to do what. I wondered whether she had some sense of ownership of me. Having me may have felt special and the idea of sharing me did perhaps not feel good. She also might have worried that we would ask other people about her and her family. I had a sense that she punished me:

Eve turns to me and asks very directly, "Waarheen is die ander witmense wat saam met Mevrou gekom het?" ("Where did the other whites who came with Madam go?") "Hulle is straatop om onderhoude te doen…" ("They went up the road to do interviews…") I reply, gesturing. Eve nods. "Daai ander vrou het gesê sy gaan nog dié maand by my omkom, sy't gesê sy kan kom wanneer dit my pas" ("That other woman said she will still come round to me this month, she said she can come when it suits me"). "Sy sal seker bel om 'n afspraak te maak…sal sy kan deurkom?" ("She will probably phone to make an appointment…will she be able to get through?") I ask, thinking of the many times I have tried to call and could not get through. "Mevrou het mos die nommer?" ("Madam's got the number?") Eve asks. I confirm, and Eve fetches the cell phone and charger from the cupboard, plugging it in near the kettle. She hands Natasha the light brown, seemingly hand-stitched leather cell phone pouch and tells her to put it away, which Natasha does, in the cupboard. I am amused that Eve seems to be immediately charging her phone in readiness for Carol to call. (Observation 18, June 2005)

In the above extract, her rare use of the word "witmense" (whites) felt jarring and hurtful towards me. Eve seemed to be claiming her interview time with Carol quite assertively. I felt that her first absence from an observation might have been retributive as it followed the first visits in which I was accompanied. One interpretation could be that her first absence, together with her baby, was in angry, jealous response to the new people interviewing in the neighbourhood. Of course, on another level, employment was of itself important. Either way, I seemed to be something that the Smit family had, which others did not:

I: Do you think.. these types of visits that Jana is making to you.. do think it is a good thing for the community..? Do you think..
Eve: Yes.. it's good.
I: Why is it good?
Eve: For me it is good.. because it's the first time that they.. it is the first time that I.. with her [Natasha].. I didn't have such things.. such visits (I: Yes..). It's only with her now.
I: Yes.. Do you think it would've been different if you had visits with Natasha?
Eve: Aahh.. (As in "yes").
I: How would things have been different..? How would.. it have been different...?
Eve: It would've been different because... back then.. with her.. what-do-you-call-it.. back then we stayed on the farm, we didn't live in Moretown yet (I: Mmm..). Then such people never came up there to us...
I: So you think.. that it will help other women?
Eve: Mmm..
I: How will it help them..? What do think it will give them...?
Eve: I dunno.. (She suddenly speaks very softly and mumbles).
I: Okay... okay... (Interview 2 with Eve, June 2005)

Here, it may have been hard to verbalise what it is I brought - or Eve may have been silenced by the thought that others could have me too. It seemed too painful for Eve to talk about the potential benefits of my visits for other people in the community:

I: Do you think.. say we have to.. do Jana's type of visits here with other women in Moretown, what do you think should be different? Is there something you think should be different, that, perhaps that.. we could change about.. about the visits..
Eve: If she herself were to come?
I: Or one of the others or she herself.. what do you think should be different?
Eve: I can't really say.
I: But wasn't there something you noticed that you'd thought you'd like to.. you think, if we did this again, you would've liked it in this way.. (Natasha is speaking inbetween the whole time and trying to get Eve's attention).
Eve: But visiting someone else?
I: Yes.
Eve: Well it wouldn't be a bad thing, hey.
I: Okay.
Eve: It is just that.. she must do her job (**I:** Uh). I can't do anything there about (**I:** Uh..) about those things.
I: Okay.. But if we.. say for instance, uhm, someone else, not Jana, must.. must visit another woman like you, visit another mother (**Eve:** Mmm), and do the same type of thing, what do you think.. should be different about the visits…? (Interview 3 with Eve, January 2006)

Eve seemed reluctant to entertain the idea that anyone else could also have a visitor like me. By the last interview it seemed to be specifically about me: she did not want me, whom she had known for a year, to now go and visit other women too. She was more able to think about another visitor going to her neighbours' homes, but to share me seemed too uncomfortable to contemplate. In a rather fatalistic tone she seemed to be saying that she couldn't really stop me from visiting others, however. Her lack of critical comment shows her disempowerment. In another example of how we functioned as a special benefit, Eve commented with pleasure on having had a *second* visitor, who was interviewing in the neighbourhood, but who also came to meet her:

Eve: But he.. whatsisname that woman.. that.. what-do-you-call-it.. uhm uhm uhm.. that other woman.. that biggish one that works with her.. she has also come along with that.. with that (**I:** Yes..), came to see where I live and.. what the child is doing.. and all those things.. (Interview 2 with Eve, June 2005)

It also seemed to me that Eve was jealous when Natasha got my attention, and tried to get rid of her as much as possible:

Eve asks (hopefully?) if Natasha is going to play outside now, Natasha shakes no, Eve seems uncomfortable with her staying in here now. Then Eve shifts over on the bed, I ask if I may sit, and do. I introduce self to Natasha, who says nothing. (Observation 2, December 2004)

Natasha crosses her legs over and twists her body around, looking at me briefly. I smile at her. Eve says, "Natasha, jy kan lekker loep speel…jy gannie heeldag in my oep mond staar nie" ("Natasha, you can go off and play…you are not going to stand and stare into my open mouth the whole day") (Observation 20, June 2005)

In addition, Natasha wanted her mother's attention above the baby:

(Eve) lifts Maria up to her neck and puts the breast away, snapping her bra-strap. She inserts a finger at the top of Maria's leggings, into the nappy. Speaking for Maria, she says, "Mamma't sommer vir my twie broeke aangetrek, dubbeld aangetrek, want diss koud, diss koud" ("Mommy dressed me in two pairs of pants, dressed me double, because it's cold, it's cold"). Natasha copies Eve's tone and words again, and Eve gives her a stern warning glance. Natasha says, "Mamma moet ook vir my twie broeke aantrek" ("Mommy must also dress me in two pairs of pants"). She is hanging over the pushchair again. I glance at her jeans. "Vir wat, jy's dan nie 'n baba nie," ("What for, you're not a baby,") Eve says. "Maar ek is - Mamma, ek spring sommer hier in," ("But I am - Mommy, I'll jump right in here,") Natasha says seriously, referring to the pushchair. "NATASHA!" Eve says, very firmly, with her eyes up to the right corner and a single jerk of her head to the right. Then she holds her head very still: "Gaan so aan, Piet gaan jou nou-nou kom slat…" ("Carry on like that, and Piet will come spank you

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in a moment…") Kissing Maria on the cheek, Eve says (talking for her), "My Pa - my Pa - my Pa gaan jou kom slat!" ("My Dad - my Dad - my Dad will come and hit you!") Natasha goes outside briefly. "Natasha, hoekom is jy nie vandag skool toe nie?" ("Natasha, why aren't you in school today?") Eve asks, without sounding like she is genuinely asking for an answer. Natasha doesn't answer. I think how strange it is that a mother does not know why her child stayed home from school, or that a child can decide. Then I wonder whether this comment is for me, that there is a good but hidden reason why Natasha did not go, or that Eve doesn't care if Natasha skips school? (Observation 22, July 2005)

Thus the jealousy about my attention on the baby seemed to mirror Natasha's jealousy about her mother's attention on the baby. I noticed in the above that Eve seemed to want to put Natasha in a bad light in front of me, by pointing out that she was skipping school. I had once before asked why Natasha was not in school and had seemed to put her on the spot when I did so. It seemed that Eve wanted to attack my relationship with Natasha and portray her negatively. Interestingly, Natasha also tried to alter my positive view of Maria at times (for example, telling me that the baby swore). This dynamic, of showing someone close to you up in front of the white authority figure, was also present in the community more broadly (discussed later). It must have been hard for Eve to know that Natasha had me completely at the end of the process, when Eve was absent for work. In interview, she denied any connection between us:

I: Okay.. Okay… And Natasha.. what did she think of Jana?
Eve: Uh.. No, she wasn't here at that time.. She.. she'd.. gone visiting at that time (I: Okay..). She wasn't at home.
I: Okay.. Okay… So she didn't.. know Jana very well..
Eve: She had seen her before, but.. she wasn't, the last few times she wasn't here when Jana was here (I: Okay, okay). She only came home on Tuesday.
I: Okay.. okay. Did she go stay with other people.. for a bit?
Eve: She was at her grandmother's (I: Oh, okay), went visiting at her father's mother.. her father
I: And did she ever say anything about the visits, what she thought.. or.. she did know that.. that Jana came..
Eve: Mmm-mm, she didn't ask anything. (Interview 3 with Eve, January 2006)

Yet in a previous interview it seemed more that Eve was just not interested in discussing Natasha's feelings about me:

I: Okay... okay... And what does Natasha think of these visits...? What does she think..?
Eve: I dunno..
I: What does she say about Jana..?
Eve: Mmm-mm.. she has asked me, now what woman is this, then I said this woman comes to look at the child (I: Yes..), comes to watch what the child does and.. Then she asks.. me what does the woman do with the child, then I said the woman just watches what the child does.. (I: Mmm..), how she plays.. everything she does... (Interview 2 with Eve, June 2006)

Eve continued to take care of me in small ways that seemed to form a buffer between the environment and me:

I reach for my bag and get up, whispering, "Baie dankie, Eve…dan sien ons mekaar weer volgende week…" ("Thank you very much, Eve…then we'll see each other again next week…") Eve looks up at me with wide eyes and a slightly surprised air, then nods. I turn to leave the room and she follows me, saying something. As we step outside, I say, "Skies?" ("Pardon?") and she says, "Net die honde keer…" ("Just stopping the dogs…") She walks ahead of me, and I say, "Dankie…Moet ons so omgaan…" ("Thank you… Must we go around this way…") We walk back the way we came. (Observation 17, June 2005)

Occasionally Eve smiled at me, almost in spite of herself:

[Eve] slowly turns her head towards me, keeping her body angled away. She is wearing her usual slight scowl. I say, "Ons het mekaar so lanklaas gesien!" ("We haven't seen each other in such a long time!"), to which there is a slight smile, still with the scowl, and her head ducked, with eyes downwards. (Observation 16, May 2005)

It is very comfortable sitting on the chair, and I have a great view of Maria's sleeping face. It is completely still and relaxed. She seems bigger to me, or more mature/established/settled in her features, and as Eve crosses back past me, I say, "Sy lyk vir

my elke week groter!" ("She seems bigger to me every week!") Eve makes eye contact with me, with one eyebrow slightly raised and with a half-smile pulling up only one side of her mouth. Her eyes are wide. I experience this as positive. She goes outside without saying anything. (Observation 17, June 2005)

Eve is looking down at the ground. "Goeie môre!" ("Good morning!") I say. "Môre…" ("Morning…") Eve mumbles, looking down with a slight smile. Well, a greeting, I think. (Observation 22, July 2005)

I was again quite surprised by this. It is important to reiterate that though there are signs in the reports of her positive feelings towards me (corroborated in interview), Eve very seldom let me feel any evidence of this. It remained a difficult time, perhaps because of the unprocessed, unspoken material between us. By contrast, when both mother and baby were absent and there was no observation, I noticed how liberated I felt, even though I had made the trip for nothing and still felt compelled to produce a report:

I feel absolutely elated…I have a lot more energy for the rest of the day than usual and feel much less tired. (Observation 15, May 2005)

I felt that Eve teased when she felt relaxed enough to do so, and I gauged it as a development in our relationship when she teased me in Observation 18 about our scheduling problems. Here she indicated that she would have to miss an observation due to welfare collection for Maria:

At the cupboard, Eve says "Ons gaan volgende week Stellenbosch toe, so ons sal nie hier wees nie." ("We're going to Stellenbosch next week, so we won't be here.") "O" ("Oh"), I say, "Dan kom ek weer…" ("Then I'll come again…") "…Die *volgende* week" ("The *next* week") Eve finishes for me, smiling mildly and gesturing with her hand. I feel a bit disappointed, so I say "Ek hoop julle gaan iets lekkers doen? Op Stellenbosch?" ("I hope you're going to do something nice? In Stellenbosch?") Eve smiles in a quizzical way, looking into my eyes: "Ons gaan die geld haal…vir haar…ons kry nog nie vir die ander een nie…" ("We're going to get the money…for her…we're not getting for the other one yet…") "O ja" ("Oh yes") I say, realising that the collection time is on a Wednesday. I almost suggest coming on another day, but don't (we have never done this). I want to enquire further but don't want to get involved in a discussion about the welfare. "Dan kan Mevrou 'n bietjie rus" ("Then Madam can rest a bit"), Eve says with a smile. "Lyk dit asof ek dit nodig het, Eve?" ("Does it look like I need it, Eve?") I tease her (and myself). She laughs gutturally, throwing her head back and showing all her teeth. It is such a nice connection that I repeat, "Lyk ek dan vir jou moeg, Eve?" ("Do I look tired to you, Eve?") (really wondering if I do, and knowing that I am). Eve laughs uproariously again, saying nothing. The smile goes right into her eyes. I suddenly wonder whether Eve can see what a strain this observation process has been on me. (Observation 18, June 2005)

One of my responses both to the deprivation I encountered and the difficulty of the relationship with the mother was to give a gift of photographs. This was not a technique I had ever come across in a standard infant observation report. However, I was later interested to read that Piontelli, who used video and ultrasound in her observations, also went to some trouble to send her participants copies of any photographs she took, "and people were very pleased to receive a precious souvenir" (A. Briggs & Piontelli, 2006, p. 205). In retrospect, Eve was the first person to introduce photographs as something important when she showed me Maria's baby album in Observation 4. This was reminiscent of Grier's (2002) observation wherein the toddler showed family photographs as a way to introduce her to the "inner circle" (p. 115). In fact, in Observation 39 Natasha showed me the album again (in the absence of her parents), as well as her own school photographs.

Initially Alice had taken some photos in the neighbourhood for herself, and also, on request, with my camera (for a conference presentation I was doing about my Play Group intervention in Moretown). Eve asked about it, at which point I said the camera was mine and that I could take some photos of them too if they wanted. I initially took a few photos of Eve and the baby. Interestingly, Eve initially positioned Maria some way off from herself, intimating that I was only interested in photographing Maria. The light was bad in the room due to the weather. Eve was absent in the next observation and I took multiple pictures of Maria alone in the sunshine. Eve then pointed out that they did

not have any good pictures of Natasha in her school uniform. She seemed always to insist that both children get equal benefits, as when she stressed on more than one occasion that she wanted to apply for a disability grant for both Maria and Natasha, even though Natasha was not directly related to Piet, who had the disability. I then arranged to come later to take photos in which Natasha would be included. Alice, who was nearby, got me to be in a few as well:

I: Yes. Did you take a lot of photos?
Piet: Yes, we took quite a few photos (**I:** Mmm), there where she.. stands with Jana and (**I:** Mmm), do you understand now (**I:** Mmm).. She will want to know who this is (**I:** Mmm) and who that is
I: Is that why you took the photos, a bit so that she can see or is it (**Piet:** No) for you as well because you
Piet: Jana too the photos herself (**I:** Is that so?). Yes, she took the photos herself (**I:** Yes), and then she gave us some of the photos (**I:** Yes).. There, she's on the photo, and that other little one, what's her name, also with the long hair (**I:** Mmm), I don't really know her, can't get to her name now (**I:** Mmm), who was also with Jana.
I: Is it? Alice perhaps..? The, the girl from the University?
Piet: Yes. (Interview 3 with Piet, January 2006)

Eve also got me to stand in a picture with both of her children, and the pushchair. I felt that the gift of the photos in turn impacted on my relationship with Eve:

I get up and thank her, saying "Mooi bly" ("Keep well"). She says "Okei!" ("Okay!") quite naturally and in a friendly tone. She stays sitting on the bed. I open my umbrella on the doorstep and look back at her from outside. "Mevrou kannie nou gaan nie, dit reën te veel!" ("Madam can't go now, it's raining too much!") she says with a laugh, from where she is still sitting on the bed in the semi-dark. At first I am not quite sure what she said. Then it strikes me what she may actually mean. Writing up, I wonder whether she was teasing me as well. "Moet ek so omgaan, Eve?" ("Should I go this way around, Eve?") I call, meaning the other way, as the alleyway is sodden. "Ja, gaan so om!" ("Yes, go that way!") she says, and I do. I feel filled, moved, and amazed. (Observation 26, August 2005)

This was just after I had arranged with Eve to come and take the photos of Natasha. It seemed that when I was able to be myself more, and behave in small ways that were spontaneous and genuine, Eve trusted me more. I felt in the above extract that she was unconsciously asking me to stay longer. It seemed that giving the gift somehow made me more human. Eve may have felt more able to acknowledge our connection after it because I had made an opening move of showing care. This may have gone some way to counteracting the unspoken suspicion about me. In retrospect, it seems that I was more able to "be human" at this stage because I had freed myself from the dictates of the observation seminars by then. By Observation 26 I had moved through a phase I later marked as "Myself, here" in which I felt that I was more overtly admitting to who I was, and who my participants were, within the current context.

Like reassurance in a therapeutic space, the effects of my gift were short-lived, however, and my action ultimately ineffective (cf. Casement, 1985). I could not change who we were, and the complex way in which I was regarded, in order to be liked. My action did, however, help me to increasingly understand what some of the obstructions in our relationship were about. It also had inherent problems: Lee, whom Alice and I had both photographed, indicated that some young man had taken her photo away from her and that she needed another. Two children whom I did not know once came to the window when I stopped, asking me to take photos of them. Even the left neighbours directly indicated through the fence that they would like a photo of themselves, and indirectly, by making loud comments that their baby was in fact "die model van Maroelastraat" (the model of Maroela Street). In other words, once I started taking pictures, everyone wanted one, and one did not feel enough. My action had an effect. I had let a non-interventionist stance slip and had met poverty with a material response of sorts. In terms of

both the classical observation module and the psychoanalytic frame, my action would not be encouraged. Having taken the photographs, I was therefore acutely aware that Mrs K would probably not approve. I took them to a seminar once to show the group and even mentioned that I had them with me, but then did not share them. I only presented three more observations to the seminar group following my taking of the photographs.

The following three extracts from Observation 27 have been cited at some length to demonstrate the pinnacle of my unspoken connection with Eve, most often expressed in glances at each other, which were almost like mutual gazing:

Eve comes back in, looking up and making eye contact with me. "Dis koud!" ("It's cold!") she says with a fleeting half-smile that barely moves her lips. Its real quality and the eye contact make me feel we will be all right though. "Ngh" I say. Eve leans her back against the TV unit and looks out of the door. I feel compelled to watch her, and do so unashamedly. She is wearing a tall, multicoloured fleecy beanie, a striped soccer shirt with a collar, jeans and cracked white shoes that are downtrodden at the heel, and white socks. She holds her hands clasped up at her chest, while looking out of the door. The light falls across her face, which is turned to the doorway. I suddenly want to take a picture of her, and almost ask to, but then don't. I imagine that it will be a dark picture and not show what I want it to. "Hierrt! Weg is jy! Trixie!!" ("Shoo! Get away with you! Trixie!!") she suddenly shouts out of the door, without moving. I can't see the dog but am enlivened by the action and sound. I hope someone will come in to talk to and engage Eve somehow. (Observation 27, August 2005)

In her peripheral vision, Eve is aware that I am watching her. I lie back on my elbow again, feeling that I should be Observing The Sleeping Baby. Maria looks much the same, lying perfectly still. I turn to Eve again. She is looking out of the door with glazed eyes. Her rings are on the hand held up closest to me. She claps her hands softly, rocking her body backwards and forwards a bit, as though cold but not really in thought about what she is doing. I really want to ask, "Eve, is dit okay met jou dat ek hier is, dat ek nog kom?" ("Eve, is it okay with you that I am here, that I still come?") but don't because I know I just want her to reassure me that she needs me and that I am wanted. I also want to talk into this tense silence, breaking it and laying things open. (Observation 27, August 2005)

It was while reading this particular observation report in the post-observation analysis phase that I contacted the family again to arrange a follow-up visit:

Eve returns from behind the curtain and leans up against the TV again. She looks up at the ceiling and I follow her gaze - it is to some rusty water droplets hanging off a section of the corrugated iron. She is still clapping softly and swaying, now in tune to the loud beat of the radio next door. She mouths along with the song's words. It is a hip-hop version of a song by Sting. She knows the words, but is not completely sure of them: "Every move you make, every breath you take, I'll be watching you. Oh can't you see, you belong to me? How my poor heart aches with every step you take." She looks out of the door, but her peripheral vision is on me. I watch her singing. I feel amazed and think I must make this the title of the obs. The little puppy from a previous obs scavenges in the back yard. Eve ignores it. A second radio blares a competing tune, equally loudly. Eve ignores it and sings on, clapping her hands softly. (Observation 27, August 2005)

My interaction with Eve in this period was increasingly characterised by "moments of meeting" (Stern, 1998b, 2004). This phrase describes an interaction that creates a new implicit, intersubjective understanding of the relationship and permits a new "way-of-being-with-the-other" (Stern, 1998b, p. 300). In my relationship with Eve, these felt like moments of more obvious connection. I found that in time I made less apologies for being myself:

I am wearing rings and a pashmina and I just don't care. (Observation 27, August 2005)

I take my sweater off because we are sitting in the full sun and I am determined to be comfortable (remembering the migraine I developed the first time I did an obs out here). (Observation 29, September 2005)

I began dreaming about the family: significantly, that the mother and child were standing in the sun looking at me, both smiling splashily. My tiredness continued, however, and I began to look forward to the end of the observation process. This was partly related to my struggle with the seminars at the time and partly to the fact that the moments

when Eve was most overtly warm towards me occurred against an ongoing backdrop of what felt like failed connection:

Eve gets up and goes to stand in the doorway, looking around the house corner down the alleyway. I gather my keys and camera and stand there for a second. I move towards her and she turns, looking back at me with an expression of surprise. "Dis my tyd!" ("That's my time!") I say, "Baie dankie, Eve. Is volgende Woensdag reg met jou?" ("Thank you very much, Eve. Is next Wednesday all right with you?") She nods. I step out and she says, "Dis nat daar - " ("It's wet there - ") (meaning the alleyway) and mumbling something about "keer die hone" ("stop the dogs"). She stands in the doorway with her arms crossed. She is flinching, her head half sticking out into in the drizzle. I say, "Moenie jy uitkom en natword nie, ek sal regkom." ("Don't you come out and get wet, I'll manage.") I look into her face and she smiles at me: a genuine, open, warm smile with eye contact. I leap all the puddles down the alleyway. As I get into my car, I see her coming out - what is this then? I unwind my window, thinking she wants to say something to me. But she goes into the right neighbours' house. I drive away, and feel like bawling my eyes out. (Observation 25, August 2005)

It felt very painful to be looking to Eve for connection without my gaze being returned. The stronger the connection between us, the more difficult the situation seemed. As mentioned, each time Eve was absent due to work, she left the baby for me to observe. It seems significant that she did not deprive me of the child at this time. It was as if my care for the baby continued to do something important for Eve, even when Eve herself was absent. This echoed a similar experience in the Mother-Infant Bonding Group run in Moretown in 2003:

> We started the last meeting with our two most consistently attending members absent, disappointed that we had not had the opportunity to formally say goodbye. About 15 minutes into the session, two children knocked on the door of the prefab teacher's room, which had served as the group's home. They had brought a message with the infant one of them held awkwardly in her arms: the group member who had attended every meeting, had found work and would not be able to attend the session. The child handed the group member's baby to us and sat down on the floor to wait for the end of the meeting. (Burmeister-Nel et al., 2004, p. 16)

Perhaps unsurprisingly, it was in this period in the observation process that the baby emerged more strongly in my reports. It was also a revelation to me to experience how I felt when Eve was absent, but the baby was present. These observations were much less exhausting. Simply watching the baby was easy by comparison:

I wave to Maria with my right hand, going "Ta-taaa, ta-taaa, Maria!" ("Bye-byeee, bye-byeee, Maria!") She watches me intently, moving her eyes between my hand and my face. I am copying the fingers open-and-closed move I saw her mother make. I turn around and walk to my car, meeting Alice en route. Alice waves at people down the street as we drive away. I feel so relaxed and good that we slowly drive out via a new route, almost ending up in a cul-de-sac. I make eye contact with people, nodding. (Observation 24, August 2005)

I have a very peaceful time writing this observation up... It feels like I am going to be watching Maria's adjustment to losing her mother - something I know and observed in the UK. I am looking forward to going next week. (Observation 29, September 2005)

Yet I felt Eve's absence, and thought about her during observations, which I linked to the baby's longing for her mother (but not, at the time, to Eve's possible longing to be around me):

It is very strange without Eve here. I think about sending her a message with Piet, about how I miss seeing her, or to say hello to her from me. (Observation 29, September 2005)

However, I later discovered that I was present to Eve in my absences, just as she was to me in hers. Unbeknown to me, she enquired about me at this time, asking Piet to describe our observations to her, and how Maria was responding to me these days:

Piet: The things is this, this.. most of the time it is.. I will tell her what the child's reaction is (**I:** Mmm), to her (**I:** Mmm), to Jana I mean and that type of thing (**I:** Mmm). How she laughs at her and (**I:** Mmm).. (Interview 3 with Piet, January 2006)

Eve could never, however, tell me directly that she had missed and would miss me. That was left for me to verbalise towards the end of our process together. The ending seemed to come unexpectedly, in the same way that Eve had often looked surprised when I stood up at the end of observations:

I said, So vandag is my laaste besoek aan julle…en ek is baie treurig daaroor, Piet. (So, today is my last visit to you…and I am very sad about it, Piet.) I looked towards the front of the house, far away from his face, as I said the latter. When I looked back, Piet nodded with an open expression, like he knew. He also acknowledged my feeling somehow in this gesture. I keep wanting to write that he looked vulnerable, as though the gloves were off - a little astounded or shocked, even. There was something very sincere about his manner. (Observation 43, January 2006)

The ending seemed traumatic and almost too uncomfortable to negotiate. I seemed to be carrying the feelings about it for us all from quite early on:

Eve looks at the clock and I do too. It is almost a minute past the time to go. I feel tremendous regret and some pain. "Hoe gaan ons maak, Eve?" ("What are we going to do, Eve?") (Observation 26, August 2005)

I am not ready for this (the last obs is later this morning). (Observation 43, January 2006)

Questions about ending had in fact come up at the start of the process. Piet anticipated the termination as early as Observation 6 when he had asked me (when inebriated) whether they could come to my house to spend the day there once the observation process was over. There seemed to be a wish in this that the observation could go on forever. It seems significant that the report in which I most prominently described a sense of connection with Eve was undated (unusually, it is the only one without a date). Unconsciously, I may have wanted to avoid the fact that implicit in our connection was the fact of our parting. Using this as a clue, I can in retrospect realise that admitting connection may have been frightening to Eve, because it opened her up to the pain of ending. It is documented in the infant observation literature that mothers who need emotional support or containment will sometimes use observers for this function, as described in Chapter Five. However, in this case the need seemed to be not related to insecurity about mothering per se (Eve mothered confidently), but to the ravaging emotional and material effects of poverty on all aspects of the family's life. It was hard to mother under these conditions particularly, and my presence there seemed to have mattered. This made it feel almost impossible to leave, and as researchers we struggled to find a way to do so:

It strikes me reading the notes I made while we spoke last night that even Ms L does not quite know what to do. She says I will know what to do. (Observation 43, January 2006)

I suggested occasional post-observation visits. In interview, Eve expressed regret that I would no longer be there:

I: Mmm.. Do you feel a bit different now that this.. whole year.. with her every Wednesday.. you've had time [with her].. different as a human.. different as a person..?
Eve: I feel a bit different, yes.
I: Yes..? In which way do you feel different…?
Eve: That she can't come anymore (**I:** Mmm..) and can't come every Wednesday anymore… (Interview 3 with Eve, January 2006)

Eve expressed the idea that she felt different when the observations were over. Her words describe her sense of loss. Eve had talked to Piet about her feelings and he had consoled her about the inevitability of the parting:

I: Uhm, when you and your wife talk about the visits, about what, about what do speak, what do you say to each other?

Piet: You see, last time my wife said to me.. she feels, she feels quite a bit sad now that she's going away, and the child is getting used to her and all those things (**I:** Mmm), so I said yes but it, we can't therefore (**I:** Mmm), it has to, it has to happen (**I:** Mmm). She can't for, for the rest of the child's life (**I:** Mmm) come to the child every time, do you understand now. (Interview 3 with Piet, January 2006)

Eve relayed her sadness by saying that it was the child who had become attached to me. Despite telling Eve that a lifelong connection was impossible, Piet had himself perhaps unconsciously expressed his own wish that it could be so, in his labelling me a "second mother" and "godmother" to me, his interviewer, and a friend (the latter post-observation). In interview, he expressed the wish for continuing contact so that they could tell the child who this observer person in the photographs was. At the end neither of the parents seemed able to accept that the observation was over:

I: Yes.. yes… Okay… How is li.. your life different for you now? How.. in, in which way is it different for you now that she doesn't come..? You know now every Wednesday that she won't be coming.
Eve: Aaahh.. (as in "yes"). But.. but, but but but.. She didn't say when she will be coming. She just said.. she will.. I don't.. know now.. if we should phone her and say when she can come or what (**I:** Yes..). But.. she gave me the number (**I:** Okay) so now I don't know when she'll be coming again (**I:** Okay). We'll probably have to call her to say that she can come. (Interview 3 with Eve, January 2006)

They did in fact try to call me, two months after the observations had ended. Piet told me that his wife had asked him to try and contact me, to say that I could come back now:

I: Now that is over uh, do you think you'll miss it, do you think it is going to be very different for you..?
Piet: No, it won't be different.. it's like, like.. when we spoke with her.. it felt to us that she could come to us anytime (**I:** Mmm), we told her it's not a problem if she wants to pop in (**I:** Mmm, mmm, mmm).. (Interview 3 with Piet, January 2006)

Piet could not talk about missing me and said the visits ending would not matter much to him, but in the same breath reiterated that they were not really over:

Piet: Like I, I told you actually, she'd.. we actually [told] her, she actually asked us (**I:** Mmm), if she one day, once in a while could come pop in, so we told her yes (**I:** Mmm). But for me it won't be different. (Interview 3 with Piet, January 2006)

On one level then there was no ending. I mentioned personally being sad about leaving towards the end of the process. Perhaps because I had taken this step, informed by an intersubjective sensibility rather than an infant observation one, the last observation was marked by a sense of the parents' acknowledgement of me:

"So, Eve, vandag is nou my laaste besoek aan julle…" ("So, Eve, today is my last visit to you…") I said. She looked up at me with a torn expression, in which I thought I read some fear. "Ek voel baie treurig daaroor" ("I feel very sad about it") I said and she smiled with a burst of energy and recognition, seeming pleased that I had said that. She came out of the house and wiped the chair that was standing against the fence with a damp cloth. I knew she was doing this for me. "Dankie, Eve" ("Thank you, Eve") I said. I felt awkward, wondering what the neighbours would think of her wiping the only chair for the white woman to sit on. The neighbours were in the yard behind the fence, a slight way off, so this was not a theoretical consideration. "Geluk met Maria se verjaarsdag!" ("Congratulations on Maria's birthday!") I said, and Eve nodded and smiled. "Wil Mevrou in die skaduwee sit?" ("Would Madam like to sit in the shade?") Eve asked. "Ja dankie," ("Yes, thank you,") I said. "Dis dan so warm innie son," ("Because it's so hot in the sun,") she said. She put the chair facing the pram, in the small block of shade cast by their house. In this way I was sitting outside, near the doorway, with Maria just to the left of the doorway, also in the shade. I had put my bag, after a moment's decision, inside next to the door rather than in the dust. (Observation 43, January 2006)

In her openly emotional responses and concern for my comfort, Eve seemed to be revealing her bond with me more overtly than ever before. Our relationship felt close and almost intimate in these final moments. I was grateful for the quality of this in a last observation, and it felt like a gift. I realised that while there was no happy ending, there

was a degree of mutual trust and acceptance of each other, despite our vast differences. There had been some development in our relationship. We had borne its difficulties, which felt hard to do at times, and the relationship had held.

In overview, my relationship with the mother can be characterised as intensely ambivalent. It seems that while Eve, for example, felt one thing, she might say another or behave in an opposite way towards me. In her intensive, exploratory study of a small number of women living in poverty, Belle (1982) noted that over months of fieldwork strong relationships developed between the researchers and respondents. Similarly, a bond grew between Eve and me, but one that was more readily discernible in retrospect, after analysing all the material. Despite moments of mutuality and connection, I also often noted a sense of disengagement and disconnection, and even overt attacks on being linked in any way. This added to the difficulty of the project. My experience stands in sharp contrast to Maseko's (2001) intracultural observation of a black South African family, in which the family made overt gestures regarding their attachment to her, such as visiting her in hospital. It is also different to Maiello's (1998) experience, which was that her Xhosa participant was suspicious and withdrawn in a first encounter, but soon relaxed when Maiello spoke about having children and grandchildren of her own.

7.5.1.1. Mother observation

It was not hard to watch Eve. I found myself very compelled by her from the first, but uncomfortable with this due to the demands of the observation frame. This is not unheard of in the literature, but is resisted. M.J. Rustin (1997) noted that the mother may seem a more rewarding object of interpretive procedures than the neonate, but that the "most important object which is available for observation and inference is the mother-in-relation-to-her-infant, the mother-baby couple" (p. 104). Similarly, as noted in the previous chapter, Mrs K's flyer for the seminars held that "particular emphasis is placed on an attempt to describe the infant's emotional and psychological experience as manifested in all aspects of his/her behaviour and early relationships". In other words, observers should ideally focus on the baby or the relationship, but not on the mother in particular (and certainly not the house). Despite such prescriptions, Bick's original injunction to dispense with note-taking during observations, because they formed an obstacle to assimilating the mother's emotional states, suggests that from the first it was recognised that some focus on the mother was inevitable (1964). She was traditionally constructed as an object of interest by virtue of her link with the baby, however (M.J. Rustin, 1989). It is interesting that locally Maseko (2001) struggled with the same issue to an extent, framing it as the mother's need for her attention.

Despite my sincere attempts at adhering to the frame, I often ended up watching Eve anyway. In a sense, Eve won my attention, more so than the baby or the mother-baby couple. Retrospectively, I have wondered whether there was some unconscious rivalry towards Maria for my attention, just as there was more overt rivalry towards Natasha. My watching Eve seemed to give her pleasure:

She lays Maria down on her side near the back wall, facing me. She takes the baby blanket from the pile and covers her, then stands up and pulls the edge of the bed's blanket up over Maria too...Eve sits back down again, looking up and catching me looking at her. I smile at her. She frowns slightly, with a mild smile in her eyes. (Observation 25, August 2005)

Here, Eve was looking at me looking at her. It seemed natural and a relief to me when the sleeping baby could be put out of the way, and my attention could freely move to Eve. When Eve left the room, my attention routinely wandered to the environment as the second most interesting thing:

After a while Eve goes to the door and looks out, peering around the corner down the alleyway. I watch her, and then tear myself back to Maria. The blanket rises and falls quite quickly. I lay back on my elbow so that I can see her face - snub nose; dark eyelashes that make it look like she might be peeking through a slit at me. Forehead very smooth, face very still. I sit up again. A radio is blaring loudly off to the right. (Observation 27, August 2005)

However, Eve and I were both aware of my declared intention to "watch the baby". At one point she even expressed this to Aunt Lil, who was urging me to talk to Eve:

"Did you talk to her? Did you?" Lil asks me again. I say I am here to watch the baby grow. Eve says, "Ant' Lil, sy's eintlik hier vir die baba, nie vir my nie. Sy kom kyk na die baba" ("Aunt Lil, she's actually here for the baby, not for me. She comes to look at the baby") (Observation 10, March 2005)

My awareness of trying to reconcile my fascination with the mother with the project of infant observation was expressed, for example, in ironic exasperation in the title of this report (August 2005):

(Infant?) Observation #27 of - Who exactly? Maria is 7 months, 3 weeks at this point.

"Every move you make, every breath you take, I'll be watching you"

My struggle with the frame in this particular area seems diagnostic, in a sense. It may have indicated where the most pressing need lay. In other words, the baby was possibly less compelling because she was quite well buffered from the environment by the mother. The mother, on the other hand, may have evoked more anxiety in me due to the unconscious transmission of her own needs:

Eve stands up with the clothes she has removed and moves towards the door. I keep watching Maria and feel relief that Eve is going about her business a bit. (Observation 10, March 2005)

In this early observation I may have felt the pressure of Eve's needs, but still wished that she would move off and leave me to observe the infant, in accordance with the frame. In a later observation, Eve was breastfeeding. I increasingly found myself wanting to watch Eve independently of the baby, but felt I should only do so when she was relating to the baby, who was meant to be my central focus:

I feel I can look properly at Eve (legitimately?) for the first time now. She is wearing a pink doekie (head scarf), an attractive dusty pink top, dark navy trousers and tan two-tone shoes. The doekie (head scarf) is back a bit on her head so that some hair is uncovered. She looks out of the door with a slight frown, listening. There are voices she is trying to make out. I look out of the door and back again. I wonder what it's like to breastfeed in front of an open door and any passing neighbours like this. Eve yawns, clapping her right hand quickly in front of her mouth. The wind whistles in the pine trees outside. It is a lovely sound. Eve looks at the clock. (Observation 17, June 2005)

It seems significant that I was able to wonder about Eve's experience, mothering in a place like this. Unlike my experience with the baby, it felt quite natural and easy to move into a state of reverie about the mother's experience. When she left the room, my attention did not typically return to the baby, but to aspects of the environment that *Eve*

had to negotiate, such as damp walls around the bed (Observation 5). The baby did not care about damp walls, but Eve very much did, and perhaps for this reason I did too.

In retrospect, I can see that what was unbearable about this South African observation was not the primitive experience of the child at all, or at least not while the mother was present in the observations. What was most noteworthy was my experience of suffering something in relation to the mother. In this all *her* suffering may have been communicated. Later, when Eve was absent, I could see the baby better. When I observed Natasha and Maria alone for the last few observations, I was depressed by seeing two children in such circumstances - without toys, and with Natasha relating in spiteful ways to Maria and to the pets. What was difficult then was not so much the relationship with me, but actually seeing the effects of poverty on the children in an unmitigated way. I felt that without the mother there I saw and felt the impact of this much more. It is possible that she had worked hard to show me that poverty did not make a difference to her child, but now I could see that it did, especially as time went by. It may have been a sign of greater trust that Eve began to leave me with the children. Her presence can be seen as a kind of gate keeping, much as she initially kept the cupboard doors semi-closed when getting something out in front of me. Later, I was allowed to look right into the food cupboard (perhaps into the heart of poverty).

7.5.2 The baby and the observer

My relationship with the baby was free of some of the tensions that characterised my relationships with the parents, the sister and the wider community. Perhaps because it was the least complicated, it was also less compelling and became less of a focal point. It did however have a particular meaning for the family, and herein, retrospectively, lay its chief importance.

Initially I felt worried about Maria. I had some fear about her vulnerability within these particular surroundings, and how the harshness of the environment might impact negatively on her:

Her face is being pushed into the bed and her head is edging towards the wall (and a piece of wood in the dip between bed and wall) and I worry she will bump it. (Observation 7, February 2005)

I check the space at the bridge of her nose and confirm to myself again that she definitely doesn't have foetal alcohol syndrome. (Observation 17, June 2005)

In the early reports, there are consistent comments about how small Maria seemed to me at first:

[Maria] is so tiny that I almost said so when I sat down. She looks like a soft dolly. (Observation 6, February 2005)

At first I also worried about her right eye, which seemed to turn inwards in a slight squint, but which luckily began improving by 7 weeks and had rectified itself by 9 weeks. I feared she could stop breathing (Observations 3, 6 and 17). I developed eczema under my own chin, possibly partly in empathic response to her eczema. This is interesting because the only other time I have ever experienced eczema (on my hands) was while I was observing a toddler in London. It is possible that something about the vulnerable experience of observing babies activates a kind of second-skin response in me (cf. Bick, 1968). While I worried about Maria, I also felt that I could in some way be harming her myself. This was a quite unrealistic fear, such as when I had flu at one of the pre-birth visits:

Anxious fantasies about making the unborn child ill. (Observation 2, December 2004)

Here, Maria sat on my lap:

Eve makes sucking noises with her mouth and then clapping noises with her hands. Maria just keeps staring at her, and staying still, without any particular expression. I wonder if she is afraid. (Observation 16, May 2005)

Natasha came up behind Maria and gathered her hair up in her hands, pulling it towards the ponytail. "Sy's bang vir…" ("She's scared of…") (inaudible). I thought she was saying Maria was scared of me! I asked Natasha what she was saying and she said, "Sy's bang vir hare kam!" ("She's scared of having her hair brushed!") I nodded, relieved. (Observation 40, December 2005)

In time a more distinct, reality-based relationship developed between Maria and me. As is often documented in the infant observation literature, it was characterised by curiosity and warmth. Maria seemed to reach out to me at only 5 weeks:

Suddenly Maria looks straight at me and reaches out her right hand, almost straightening her arm. Eve looks at me (with what feels like pride) and I stay focused on Maria, with an intake of breath and my mouth in an "Oh" shape. (Observation 5, February 2005)

At 8 weeks she already seemed to be peeking at me:

Through a hole in the netting I can see something moving: I think it is her eyelid opening and closing, and it feels like she is looking at me from under the netting. (Observation 8, March 2005)

From early on, she developed a way of staring at me quite as much as I was staring at her:

Her eyes roll to the right side as she looks out of the door, and then she looks back and right at me. I smile at her and her facial muscles move very slightly into a smile but then don't. She is watching me very intently, looking into my eyes. (Observation 9, March 2005)

At 3 months she began to propel herself towards me:

[Eve] lays Maria back flat on the blanket next to me, pulling the pillow out of the way. Maria immediately looks towards me, while chewing both gloved hands, which are up at her mouth. She kicks her legs over to me, which has the effect of slowly sliding her body towards me. (Observation 13, April 2005)

At the age of 4 months she made it clear twice in one observation that she wanted to come over onto my lap:

After a while Maria starts animating, making word-like noises and exclamations. "Angh!" Maria says. "Ungh", Eve replies, as though in agreement. This exchange occurs three times, with Maria still watching me. Maria makes a small, energetic upwards motion with her whole body. Eve laughs, picking her up and hugging her, saying "Jy kan nie oorspring nie! Jy kannie daar gaan nie!" ("You can't jump over! You can't go over there!") and this makes me feel sad. Eve returns Maria to her sitting position next to her mother's thigh. (Observation 14, May 2005)

Maria continues to look me directly in the eyes. It seems to me she has been watching me with fascination for 45 minutes. She repeats the earlier upward burst of motion, and then lets out a small cry, with a frown, while still looking at me. Eve laughs: "Hulle willie vir my vat nie, Mamma…hulle willie vir my vat nie…" ("They don't want to take/hold me, Mommy…they don't want to take me…") Maria lets out another brief cry, and Eve picks her up and holds her with the front of her body to her chest: "Wat het ek gedoen Mamma? Ek is dan net 'n ou babatjie, net 'n klein babatjie, en hulle wil nie vir my hê nie, willie vir my vat nie…" ("What did I do, Mommy? I'm just a little old baby, just a little baby and they don't want me, don't want to take me…") I feel terrible and say, "Dink jy sy wil oorkom?" ("Do you think she wants to come over here?") and Eve nods, smiling and saying "Ja" ("Yes"). I want to hold out my arms but don't. (Observation 14, May 2005)

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This seemed to be a comment from Eve that my reluctance was noted. It was from cues such as these from both Maria and Eve that I eventually held Maria on my lap a couple of times. What is interesting is that my connection with the baby was never attacked, except in a peripheral way by the sister, Natasha. Apart from actively "performing" for my attention, Natasha made negative comments about the baby when her parents were not in earshot:

Maria crawled over to Natasha, who stood her up by holding her hips from behind. She smelt her bottom, asking her if she was wet. "Jou ass stink…" ("Your ass stinks…") she said so softly I almost missed it. (Observation 39, November 2005)

Eve's worry that I would take the baby away from her seemed to be a way to express Eve's fear of possibly being hurt and victimised again in relation to me. The question of whether I really cared for the child seemed to preoccupy the parents' minds:

[Eve] is mumbling and I have to ask her, "Ekskuus?" ("Pardon?") She says, with a slight smile, that Maria is one month old today: "Sy's mos die tweede gebore" ("She was born on the second."). This feels like an admonishment that I have not remembered. I say that that's right, of course, and congratulations. (Observation 4, February 2005)

Eve looks at me to see what my face is doing as I watch Maria. I am smiling. Then I look up, make eye contact with Eve, and smile at her too. (Observation 8, March 2005)

One interpretation might be that in encouraging my relationship with the baby, the adults in the family were unconsciously encouraging me to care for them: if I really knew the baby and the baby really knew me, I might really know them. On the other hand, and in the same vein, it was in Natasha's interest to discredit the baby and exert power over her, so that she herself could win my attention.

7.5.2.1 Presenting the baby

Throughout the observations, both parents, and to a lesser degree the sister, showed the baby off to me. It seemed that the baby was a valuable thing. Part of this pride may have been connected with my expressed and visible interest in all that the baby did. Eve seemed keen for me to see as much as possible of Maria in my first view of her:

I say, Kan ek loer? (Can I peek?) and Eve smiles, pulling back the lace at the top and then the whole covering (turns out to be a quilted baby blanket) to show Maria… (Observation 3, January 2005)

Suddenly [Eve] scoops Maria up by pushing her right palm under Maria's body. She turns Maria towards me as she lifts her, and her left hand comes up to support Maria's body. The result is that I finally see the front of Maria. Maria frowns slightly and pulls her shoulders up. I smile as I see her face and peripherally see that Eve is glancing up to see my response, and also smiling. I want to look at Eve in that moment, but purposefully keep my eyes on Maria. I say, "O, sy's pragtig!" ("Oh, she's beautiful!") and Eve says, "Daar's die ou gesiggie nou" ("There's the little face now"). She lays Maria on her back, saying, "Lê nou oppie ruggie" ("Lie on your little back now"), with Maria's face turned a bit towards me. (Observation 4, February 2005)

It seemed to me that Eve often made comments or did things to point to the fact that Maria was always well dressed in the observations:

Suddenly [Eve] calls out of the door: "Noelene! Jy's nie al een wat 'n kort rokkie aan het nie!" ("Noelene! You're not the only one who's got a short little dress on!") Shadow across the door and the woman I saw upon entering the yard comes in, casting a greeting at me. She bends over to kiss Maria on the cheek and feels her dress between her fingers, while Eve says it was a present from someone. (Observation 4, February 2005)

Eve would even dress Maria in two different outfits during one observation:

Eve says, "Is warm, Mamma, is warm" ("It's hot, Mommy, it's hot") and changes Maria into the two-piece, which consists of a sleeveless top and matching shorts. The fabric is a tiny red check and Maria looks lovely. Eve tucks the edges of the short-sleeved vest in at the armholes. She holds Maria on her lap so that she is facing me. (Observation 8, March 2005)

Later, when she was crawling, her parents were careful to keep her clean:

Natasha said that she was going to wipe Maria's hands and mouth. She said she was going to wet a facecloth and briefly left the room. Maria glanced after her once and then continued to sit on the carpet, exploring her hands and the cupboard door without seeming concerned or looking at me. Natasha returned and wiped Maria's mouth, which Maria did not complain about. "Hande oek, het my ma gesê…" ("Hands as well, my mom said…") Natasha muttered. (Observation 40, December 2005)

The whole family wanted me to be aware of her developmental strides. They drew my attention to the fact that she could talk, wave goodbye, dance, and that she was getting teeth:

"Na!" Maria said clearly, looking down the side of the pram at the floor. "Na!" Eve said, in exactly the same firm tone, while carrying on with the unpacking. "Na is by die skool, Na is weg…" ("Na is at school, Na has gone…") Eve said, referring to Natasha: "Ta-ta Na, ta-ta!" ("Bye-bye Na, bye-bye!") "Nan-na!" Maria said and I shook my head in wonder, knowing that Eve was watching me. After a while I saw Maria sitting very still with her right fist up in the air, looking at her mother and opening and closing her fingers in a wave. I smiled and looked at Eve to find her looking at me with wide smiling eyes and an air of pride. (Observation 35, November 2005)

Eve said, "Dans! Dans!" ("Dance! Dance!") and bopped her upper body and head in a swaying rhythmic motion while smilingly looking at Maria. Maria looked back at her but did not move. "Wil jy nie dans nie? Dans vir Mamma!" ("Don't you want to dance? Dance for Mommy!") Eve said, repeating the motion. Maria swayed ever so slightly and Eve looked at me. I shook my head with a smile. "Wys vir die antie, twee tandjies…" ("Show the aunty, two little teeth…") Eve said, allowing Maria's body to turn to me and her knees to bend so that she was at eye level with me. Maria's mouth was hanging open in a half-smile. I made expressions of wonder and delight even though I could not see anything. Eve pushed Maria's lower lip down and I could very slightly see two pale ridges in the bottom gum at the front. I exclaimed some more. (Observation 35, November 2005)

7.5.2.2 Fostering the connection

While my relationships with Eve, Piet and Natasha were all characterised by mixed feelings at some point, Eve and Piet seemed to want Maria to connect only positively with me. The relationship between Maria and me was fostered at all times. For example, it is interesting that the parents were so consistent about having the baby there for me to observe. The first observation at which Maria was absent was in May, the second one in August, and the third the following January. Therefore she was present at 40 out of 43 observations over 12 months. This consistency is quite remarkable and a significant finding. One might have assumed (as I in fact did at proposal stage) that where there are pressing social problems like poverty, a family would have little patience with something like an observation process. For example, when I conducted the Play Group in Moretown, none of the parents arrived at the "Meet The Parents" afternoon (J. Lazarus, 2004). However, a high degree of interest and compliance was noted in other projects in the same community: for example, there have been few dropouts by interviewees in the WMHRP (Kruger, in press) and attendance by the children at the Play Group was excellent (J. Lazarus, 2004). In short-term group therapy with female farmworkers, Kruger (2000) found that the women valued

the experience and could talk about themselves using symbols and metaphors. The difference seems to be that the interviews, the Play Group, the farmworkers' group and the observations all offered the participants something therapeutic and worth having, namely a keen interest in them as people.

In comparison to the baby, the mother in my observation was absent 13 times (present at 30 out of 43 observations). The mother's last 10 absences were, significantly, in the last 4 months of the year and we can speculate that, while this was a period in which she again sought and found employment, her absences might also have partly been linked to the upcoming termination.

In interview the parents seemed to suggest that Maria was particularly animated when I was around:

Eve: She.. she always plays when the woman comes around.. when the woman comes she plays and she laughs (**I:** Okay..). And she goes on (**I:** Is that so?) with the woman. (Interview 3 with Eve, January 2006)

I: Mmm.. What do you think the visits meant to Maria? Do you think it meant something to her or..
Eve: She felt all right when the woman came around, then she played with the woman (**I:** Mmm..) and she laughed with the woman.. She grew used to her (**I:** Yes). And when she was here.. when Jana came here, then.. and she looked at Jana like this and then she laughed, she knew (**I:** Is that so?), she knew who it was.
I: Okay.. And now that the visits are over, do you think her life is going to change again?
Eve: I don't know now how she feels about that (She speaks with a laugh in her voice).
I: (She laughs too). Okay.. So it sounds as if she was quite different (**Eve:** Mmm) than.. than normal times.. everyday times… Okay… (Interview 3 with Eve, January 2006)

In interview both parents spoke eagerly about my connection with the baby, more easily than about their own connection with me:

Piet: Yes, she was already, like I told you last time actually as well, she was already tuned [to it] in such a way that, Wednesdays, Jana comes (**I:** Mmm), do you understand now (**I:** Mmm).. And, and my little daughter was already, was as well (**I:** Is that so? Could you see it?), as I saw her, when she sees her, when she saw here she is arriving, then she was already laughing *because why* she knew who this was coming. (The interviewer laughs). *Because why*, she's small, hey, but she knew (**I:** Yes), she knew exactly, it is (**I:** Yes), the person that's coming to her (**I:** Geez, that's *amazing*)... (Interview 3 with Piet, January 2006)

I: And do you think, do you think you are personally going to miss it or your wife or the little one is going to miss it, that every Wednesday there are those regular.. you know, that regular visit?
Piet: I think the little one will perhaps miss her, you understand (**I:** Mmm). I know she will still.. she's still small at the moment but we don't know what is in her thoughts (**I:** Ja), in her little mind (**I:** Mmm, mmm), you understand.. *Because why* she knows, she has got to know her by now (**I:** Mmm), you understand and got used to her (**I:** Mmm). I don't know, but for me it's not a (**I:** Mmm).. a strange thing or (**I:** Mmm), do you understand what I
I: So for you personally it is not going to make too big a difference in your life (**Piet:** No), now that, now that it is ending.. (Interview 3 with Piet, January 2006)

One interpretation could be that the feelings the parents attributed to the baby may have alluded to their own disavowed feelings: perhaps they too had a sense that I was coming, very specifically, to (and "for") them, that we had a bond and that they would miss the visits. While they were often quite cool in their reception of me, they spoke in amusement of the way the baby eagerly anticipated the visits:

I: Yes, I see. Okay. How do think it was for the baby, what do you think it meant to her..?
Piet: It meant a lot to her, when she saw Jana, and she already exactly knew her, knew her car (**I:** Is that so?). When she saw, when she was sitting in the front, and she saw her, and that car comes in, then she was already laughing (**I:** Is that so?), then she would stand straight up in the pram, then she's already looking.. (Piet speaks with a smile in his voice and the interviewer chuckles along).

I: Uh, that's very cute. So you think it has, it obviously meant something to the little one..

Piet: Mmm... When was it, I said, yesterday yes, yesterday I said to her, Jana's coming, I go out, [she] goes peeping there with (Piet and the interviewer start laughing). I said to my wife look there, she already knows what one is talking about.

I: Geez, oh, so you've just said it and

Piet: Yes, and then she went and peeped around the corner.

I: So it looks like there's quite a bond developing between the two of them. (Interview 3 with Piet, January 2006)

As mentioned, Piet repeatedly expressed the idea that I was like a family member to Maria. This accords with Maseko's (2001) intracultural observation in a black family where, like me, she was referred to both as part of the extended family and a visitor. It seemed important to the parents that the baby acknowledge me in return. At only 7 weeks Eve already began intimating that Maria was noticing me:

Eve puts Maria across her lap so that she is facing me. Maria's neck is wobbly; her head falls forward and her right arm sticks upwards clumsily as she is being moved. Her eyes are open and less squinty than when I last saw them. She focuses on the back of the room, between the curtain-dividers behind me. Eve says, "Rokkie, Mammie! Groot rokkie!" ("[A] dress, Mommy! A big dress!") and absent-mindedly picks at some fluff on Maria's dress. (Observation 7, February 2005)

In other words, Eve turned Maria's face towards me, and then interpreted that Maria was looking at my dress when in actual fact she seemed to be looking past me. Similarly, Eve persistently interpreted Maria's stares as an interested wondering about who I might be:

[Eve] holds Maria on her lap so that she is facing me. Maria looks around and to my relief I see that her eyesight is much improved (less squint) and she focuses well. She seems to look right at me and I smile at her. She looks just like her father, and I struggle to imagine what she will look like as a girl toddler. Eve can sense that Maria is looking at me and says, "Wie's dit? Wie's dit?" ("Who's that? Who's that?") while looking down at the top of Maria's head. (Observation 8, March 2005)

Maria seems to be looking at me, but also not. Her gaze is in my direction but off my face. She keeps very still. Eve looks up at me and I smile without looking away from Maria. Eve says to Maria, "Wie's dit? Wie's dit, huh? Wie's die Antie? Wie's die Antie?" ("Who's that? Who's that, huh? Who's the Aunty? Who's the Aunty?") - on and on. (Observation 10, March 2005)

At one point Eve even spoke positively of me on the baby's behalf, as cited earlier when she indicated that Maria was looking at the "pretty aunty" in Observation 9. Eve was surprised, amused and delighted by the way in which Maria soon began to respond to me. As mentioned, she made comments on Maria's behalf about the fact that I did not immediately take her into my arms. It seems she wanted me to be close to Maria:

Maria is still watching me, and her face erupts in a series of smiles, alternating with stares. She holds her body very still. She waves her outstretched arms up and down, and then bounces upwards in an energetic spurt with a sudden word-like sound that is almost like a laugh or an exclamation. I have seen this routine before! Eve laughs with a spontaneous machine-gun giggle from her gut. Maria is still busy with intense eye contact and arm-waving. I say, ducking my head to look Maria in the eyes: "Wil jy vandag weer oorkom? Miskien kan ek jou vandag bietjie vat? Ek het laas so sleg gevoel…As dit okay is met Ma?" ("Do you again want to come over here today? Maybe I can hold you a bit today? I felt so bad last time… If it is okay with Mom?") Eve is laughing open-mouthed and nodding, and I hold my hands out. Eve lifts Maria into them. (Observation 16, May 2005)

I took Maria onto my lap on this day because I had, in the interim, presented the observation at which I did not hold her, and was advised by Mrs K that when the impetus came from the baby in this way, I should respond. I remember a sense of permission and relief. It is possible that I was adhering too zealously to the rigidly non-interventionist "observation rules" that I held in my own mind. In this instance Mrs K's advice, among other factors at this stage, may have helped me to feel more confident about acting intuitively. Here, Maria was sitting on my lap:

Eve lifts a bottle from the counter behind her and shakes it from side-to-side. It is a quarter full with milk. "Hier's jou melk!" ("Here's your milk!") she says, smiling. I think that Eve wants me to feed her! (which I would love to do. But I also feel panicked!). I say, "Is dit tyd vir haar bottle" ("Is it time for her bottle"), leaving it up to Eve to say I should give it to her if she wants to. "Dis nog yskoud…" ("It's still ice cold…") she says, shaking it, and putting it back. (Observation 16, May 2005)

It is interesting that the parents could encourage Maria to do something that they themselves could not. In the above extract, Eve's comment about the cold milk may have been an unconscious communication about my reluctance to hold and feed Maria (I may have seemed cool and aloof). In the same vein, I wanted to connect, but there were so many obstacles, including my fear (panic). When I did hold Maria and she sat very suspiciously on my lap, Eve found this very amusing:

I hold her under her arms and scrunch my top body down a bit so that our eyes are in line. She is still staring at me. Looking at her, I say, "Jy kyk vir my…Dis nie net ek wat vir jou kyk nie…Ons kyk vir mekaar…" ("You're looking at me… It's not just me looking at you…We're looking at each other…"). My heart is beating fast and I am perspiring slightly. Eve is still laughing. Maria is looking at me, holding her body very still and doing nothing. I think that we must make a funny picture, with this mutual, still staring. (Observation 16, May 2005)

Maria is very light. She sits very still, looking ahead of her. Eve giggles and calls out, "Noelene! Kom kyk hoe gaai-erig sit die kind!" ("Noelene! Come see how full of nonsense the child is sitting!"). I wonder what that means, and say, "Nou is jy so stil…Is jy skaam?" ("Now you are so quiet…Are you shy?") to Maria. After a while, I rub her back with the flat of my hand, and then adjust my right arm so that she can feel it across her back - to make her feel more secure, I reason. Natasha comes around my left and goes, "Boo!" at Maria. Maria's whole body jerks in surprise. It is just like an adult reaction to fright, and I laugh loudly and uninhibitedly, saying "Sy't geskrik!" ("She got a fright!") Eve laughs too. (Observation 22, July 2005)

The episode in which the baby sat on my lap felt like a genuine moment of meeting, in that Maria's apprehensive air seemed to express the unspoken material between the rest of us, namely that I was a white person and a stranger in their world. Our relieved laughter was an acknowledgement. It seemed that our unexpressed feelings about each other, related to difference and fear, could most comfortably be put into the figure of the baby. Even the wish to harm one another could be expressed in Natasha's somewhat mean action towards Maria. Holding Maria made me feel nervous, and I always gave her back quite quickly. Unconsciously, I could express my broader anxiety, about not knowing this particular environment, in my awkward handling of the baby. Similarly, when Maria was shy of me, Eve commented on it, thus putting "shyness" or fear of strangeness, into words between us:

Maria is looking at me and breaks into a slow, open-mouthed smile. Her chin drops, and both rows of gums and her tongue are visible. Her eyes crinkle up. Her whole face is suffused with warmth and softness. I smile back. She ducks her head into her mother's neck. "Issie babba nou skaam?" ("Is the baby shy now?") Eve asks her. Maria straightens up again, peering at me past her mother's head. Her eyebrows are slightly raised, and her mouth hangs open. Another big smile spreads across her face. (Observation 21, July 2005)

Those around her perceived my connection with Maria as very positive. Subjectively, I felt much more connected to the mother. The baby seemed the repository for all that was positive about my contact with the family, and our relationship was always encouraged. At the same time, we seemed to unconsciously use her as an outlet for expressing our own feelings of nervousness about our contact.

7.5.2.3 The irrelevance of the baby

At times I experienced great satisfaction during and after observing. Tellingly, these moments were constellated around the baby: I experienced pleasure when I was actually able to enjoy her, together with the parent who was present. Here, for example, I saw the baby awake for the first time:

I am thrilled but also shocked to see her awake, and to see the breast, and the feeding, all at once in the open door like this. I slip in and sit on the chair I have been eyeing during the last two observations. It is deeper in the room, and I feel like I am really "inside" now (and literally, in the darkest corner, away from window and door). I am rapt and smiling. (Observation 5, February 2005)

My sense of "really being in there now" is revealing: I had a wish to observe the baby, but for the full first four observations, the focus point had been anywhere but on the child, because the various aspects of her environment had simply been too compelling. My experience was often that the baby was not what was most interesting here:

I wish that [Maria] would sleep the whole hour. I try to look at her and think what her experience must be and cannot really. Then I realise she is in the luckiest position of all - as she is unaware of the things that trouble the adults and even Natasha. "Baby wake up!" I think, remembering an early observation. One day she will wake up to the circumstances of her life. (Observation 40, December 2005)

In this near-final observation I was musing about how little I had been interested in "the developing internal world of the infant". After 40 observations I realised I did not have particular insights into how Maria felt or saw things. Earlier in the process I had noted the absence of any real psychoanalytic insights on my part about the baby's internal world:

Maria is standing on her mother's lap, looking at me. Now she breaks into a large, open-mouthed smile. I think that she is able to do this because her mother is there; her mother is giving her something that makes my presence ok. (Is this my first spontaneous psychoanalytic insight since the start of this process?) I feel delighted and amazed to see this. (Observation 23, July 2005)

In fact, I generally wished that the baby would just sleep. In the literature, it is well documented that observers can become both over-identified with the baby and defended against the primitive feelings that observing an infant evokes. While these interpretations could be made in my case, it is also possible that the baby seemed irrelevant because what was most pressing and painful in the observation were all the things that she was not yet aware of. In other words, the sleeping baby felt somewhat besides the point in this context. And it may even be better to sleep in such dire circumstances. It is interesting that the WMHRP found that among low-income women in Moretown there was a pervasive tendency not to acknowledge feelings, thoughts, actions, decisions and conditions that could be construed as problematic (Kruger et al., 2005). Instead, it was found that individuals tended to deny, repress or suppress painful or anxiety-provoking issues or issues that were associated with feelings of guilt and shame. This tendency was thought not simply to relate to a conscious decision to keep secrets, but frequently had to do with what may be understood as an unconscious survival strategy. In the light of this, my lack of interest as an observer in the baby seems a somewhat sacrilegious admission but an interesting fact.

It was very hard to concentrate on the infant while there was so much else going on in the environment that demanded my attention and sometimes made me feel afraid. The baby was not able to become a person or a

presence for me until I was more settled in the community - specifically, after people began to accompany me there. When I felt safer, I found that I was more able to see the infant and preoccupation[2] with the baby became more possible for me. It is possible that this contributed to my acting more spontaneously and intuitively, to the extent of picking the baby up:

Maria continues to look at me, as though seeing me for the first time. There is an element of raptness and surprise in her expression and stillness. She smiles at me again. The smile suddenly floods her face with softness; her eyes swim with warmth. There is something unusually peaceful and subdued about the atmosphere here today, and I wonder whether the weather plays a role. (Observation 13, April 2005)

Here I may unconsciously have been attributing my own sense of discovery and ease to Maria (and consciously, to the weather). I was more able to be present because in a sense the action of the WMHRP acknowledged my reality and responded to it. Theoretically speaking, one could say that they operated from a position of empathy about the relational difficulties I was experiencing in Moretown, rather than trying to interpret the inner conflicts (either in the baby, or in me, or both) that may have given rise to my difficulties. In Observation 19 I even played briefly with the baby, enjoyed her very much, and described her as beautiful, despite ongoing tensions in the environment. At the same time the importance of other aspects besides the baby, such as my relationship with the family, continued to be prominent. This suggests that what needs to be taken note of in such an infant observation in a low-income community may be something other, or more than, the infant.

In the seminars it was noted that the baby was somehow absent in my reports (which I did not agree with). The seminar members felt they could not get a sense of her. I responded by periodically trying hard to get more involved with observing her, with little success:

I had to force myself to look at Maria, thinking "Reverie…reverie…" when in actual fact I wanted to turn and look for Eve out in the yard or look around the room. I wondered whether the other baby observers in the group get all reveried about their babies and can't take their eyes off of them, getting completely absorbed in a sweet-smelling baby bundle…I watched her breathing. It was quite rapid. I imitated it to feel what it was like and it made me a bit anxious. Two competing radios were playing very loudly outside. I heard a man shooing a dog in the back shack and it yelped very long and painfully as I heard it rounding the side of this house. A woman's voice commented that that dog only wanted to be in the house; it might have been Eve. I saw that it was the nice-looking young man from earlier who had presumably kicked the dog. I thought of course the dog wants to be in the house, because it is so hot. (Observation 36, November 2005)

Here my wandering attention is noticeable: the mother, the heat, and the violence of the neighbourhood (the environment) again won out, and perhaps would always do so. It is interesting that, while the mother/baby/observer interaction often gave me pleasure during the observations, I disliked writing about the baby the most in the reports. In retrospect I think it felt irrelevant - a mindless recording of baby detail when my real interest lay in the relationships with the participants within our context. Thus baby observation became a kind of empty work. And yet I faithfully attempted very detailed descriptions of the baby in the reports (see, for example, Observation 19). I seemed to want to prove, somewhat defensively, that I could observe babies like anyone else. But when reading the reports retrospectively, the baby detail at times seems like a meaningless extra, as though I were simply fulfilling the requirements of infant observation with it.

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[2] Winnicott (1956) wrote about "primary maternal preoccupation" as the absorbed quality of attention needed both by infants and analytic patients (Khan, 1992, p. xxv). This concept is presumed to have affinities with Bion's concept of reverie (Rycroft, 1995). It is suggested that observers, in their close attention, mimic the mother's absorption in her child.

7.5.3 The community and the observer

I found out a great deal about the community in the way they related to me as an observer. Again, there was a complex response to me. When asked about how her family and neighbours viewed my visits, Eve said:

I: What do the neighbours think.. and the people around here, when Jana comes to visit you every week? What do they say, do they ask you.. what these visits are about?
Eve: Uh-uh, they don't ask me.
I: Nothing?
Eve: The one that stays here.. what's-her-name.. (**I:** Mmm..), the people also used to always come to her. She also has a child (**I:** Okay..). They also used to come to her.. (**I:** Okay..) what-do-you-call-it.. the people.
I: So it doesn't sound, it doesn't sound as if it's a strange thing.. for the people around you? (**Eve:** Mmm..). They are quite used to.. the people who come around.. (**Eve:** Mmm...) okay... And how do you think... uhm.. I mean.. is there anyone who said something or.. asked something about the visits?
Eve: No Madam.
I: Nothing.
Eve: Uh-uh… (Voices are faintly audible in the background). (Interview 1 with Eve, March 2005)

I: Mmm... I just quickly want to look here... (She talks very softly and more to herself, sounds of paper being moved around on the table)... What about your.. your other family members.. what do they say.. what do they think?
Eve: They.. don't know that Madam and them comes to me.. (Interview 2 with Eve, June 2005)

I: Mmm... So are the neighbours still.. curious?
Eve: Uh-uh.. They're not curious, because those people also come around here to them..
I: What do they think about the people who.. who come?
Eve: I dunno.
I: They don't talk about it.
Eve: Uh-uh. (The baby laughs).... (Interview 2 with Eve, June 2005)

There are many possible ways to interpret this information. On one hand, it paints a picture of the Smit family as living in quite an isolated way, in a community in which people kept to themselves, in the face perhaps of a lack of privacy and a sense of danger. Previous interviews had revealed a general tendency not to talk about anything in this community. Equally, Eve may not have spoken very freely to the interviewer about others' response to me. At one point she indicated that the neighbours did in fact ask about my visits:

I: Okay... And what do the neighbours say..? I.. I know.. we now come with a lot of other people.. she now comes with other people who talk to the other neighbours.. What do they say...?
Eve: They have asked me what that woman comes and does here by me, then I said no, the woman just comes and sees [what].. I do.. whether the child.. progresses a bit and so on and (**I:** Mmm..), what does she do here by me (**I:** Yes..). Then I say no she comes here to me to.. come have a look.. at the child here and (**I:** Yes..) what-do-you-call-it.. (Interview 2 with Eve, June 2005)

Eve indicated that having white people along to interview or visit you was not an uncommon thing in Maroela Street. By the time of the second interview, the assistants who accompanied me were interviewing all the neighbours. Eve may also have been referring to the interviews conducted in Moretown by the WMHRP since 2002 as part of the research into maternal mental health, in which all mothers were interviewed (**Addendum A**). Eve's comments lend support for the idea that becoming a known presence in a community is an important principle for intervention and research which can minimise risk. In retrospect, this was an effective strategy for making the observation process safer.

7.5.3.1 A precious commodity

The neighbours seemed to see me as someone who could give something, on many levels, including the financial and the emotional:

One of the youths in the front neighbours' yard asks me for a R2 in an undertone. I pretend not to have heard this and drive away. (Observation 10, March 2005)

Lil continues, forcefully: "Is jy sielkundige?" ("Are you [a] psychologist?") (I say I am a *student* in Psychology). A *student*, well she wants me to come talk to Riana, Riana there by her. I must come and visit there too. Someone used to visit her just like this once. I say unfortunately I can't. While she is talking to me, I glance up at Eve and see she is smiling secretly and conspiratorially, while looking down at Maria on her lap. Lil grabs my arm, hooking in with me. I fear she will try to drag me off to her house in the next moment. She leans back on me with her body-weight, half-lying on my right arm and shoulder as though I were a piece of furniture. (Observation 10, March 2005)

It is possible that having a baby was seen as a way to get the attention of home visits by an infant observer:

I realise three babies were born in that one small yard this year. (Observation 42, January 2006)

It was also well-known by then that mothers who were pregnant in this community would be interviewed by the WMHRP. It is interesting to note that Eve again fell pregnant 8 months after the end of the observation period, and that the baby was reportedly planned. Piontelli (1992) noted in her study of foetuses that "the observations seemed in fact to be perceived as extra care and extra attention given to just a few privileged mothers" (1992, p. 15). It seemed that where there was competition for scarce resources, visits by an observer became a precious commodity about which there was some envy in the neighbourhood. Once, when I parked the car, children clustered around it:

As I get out, I greet 2 small girls alongside the front neighbours' house, and one of the young men there too. Behind me, I hear the children calling: "Kom na *my*! Kom na *my* toe!" ("Come to *me*! Come to *me*!") and I think this must be to us as a group? Now I think it might be about their connection with Alice. (Observation 18, June 2005)

On another occasion, when Alice was interviewing the front neighbour and I was sitting in the car outside, the right neighbour approached me to ask what she was doing:

I say that I am a student and that Eve has kindly given her permission for me to watch her baby grow for a year, so that I can learn about how babies develop. The woman listens with a patient, intelligent manner and kind eyes, but without smiling. I say Alice is doing interviews to get people's stories because she thinks Maroela Street is a very interesting place. Well, she says, Alice should come over to her house to listen there too. (Observation 15, May 2005)

When I gave Eve information about where to apply for a grant for Maria (which I got by phoning the local clinic), I was asked by the left neighbours to "come and see them too". Eve mediated between us and I gave them the same information, but there was, I felt, some envy about who was getting grants, and for what. Eve later questioned the legitimacy of her neighbours' claims:

She says, "Hulle maak nou dat die mense daai geld teruggee, die wat claim en *kan* werk vir hulle kinders…" ("They are now making those people give the money back, those who claim and *can* work for their children…") She says this with a low, slightly cross or disgusted tone. I realise that she may not like the neighbours applying for disability when there perhaps isn't really one, while her husband has haemophilia. (Observation 13, April 2005)

In another instance, after the welfare came around in the observation hour, Eve and a neighbour discussed the general issue of grants:

The old woman [Tant' Vera] asks what they are doing here, and Eve says they are making a record of everyone who is getting a grant. "Dis eintlik goed," ("That's actually good,") Tant' Vera says, saying that the old people die, and the families keep getting grants for them years afterwards. She makes eye contact with me, and I nod slowly. "Dis verkeerd," ("It's wrong,") Tant' Vera says. "Dis verkeerd," ("It's wrong,") Eve says, looking down at the floor in front of her. (Observation 26, August 2005)

In retrospect I can hypothesise that the sense of threat I felt emanating from the front neighbours may have been connecated with a vendetta between these two houses. The youths in the front house may have challenged and tried to unnerve me in order to scare me off, because they may have felt the Smit house was receiving something they were not and they were intent on spoiling it. In the following extract I spoke to Eve about her maintenance claim for Natasha. It is interesting that she knew so little about it and had not pursued it, considering that the claim in the literature is often that people have babies to get maintenance (Kruger, in press):

Eve follows me all the way to my car. I turn back to her. She has her shoulders hunched up against the fine, misting rain that is falling. Maria's head is covered by the blanket. "Good luck môre, Eve," ("Good luck for tomorrow, Eve,") I say. "Hung?" she says, not hearing. She is grimacing slightly against the rain, her teeth bared. "Good luck môre, ek hoop alles werk uit vir jou" ("Good luck for tomorrow, I hope everything works out for you"). "Angh," she says, with a single nod. I get into my car. The front neighbour I saw earlier gives me a hostile stare as I reverse. I drive away with deliberate slowness, to show that I will not be chased away. (Observation 22, July 2005)

We can hypothesise that the catcalls stopped after the neighbours were interviewed because they too were now receiving some kind of attention, or that there was a broader, more "democratic" connection. There seemed to be an underlying struggle in the neighbourhood, and perhaps the greater community, for material goods, power and attention. This may have been less of an issue in the wealthier parts of Moretown. But in Maroela Street, which was one of the poorest streets in the township, people seemed very divided in terms of what they had. In their Mother-Infant Bonding Group run in Moretown in 2003 Burmeister-Nel et al. (2004) similarly noted such in-group differences and competition despite residence in the same community. Interestingly, in the case of their group, this competition manifested as a need to experience competency as a mother, "by focussing on the progress and developmental success of the infant" (p. 12). One wonders about the ramifications of having two white women as the group facilitators. In the Play Group there were power struggles among the children about who would get most of my attention (J. Lazarus & Kruger, 2004b). I theorised that where resources were so scarce, and emotional deprivation was rife, my attention was a commodity worth having. It may be that attention is always worth having, even in wealthier settings, but it does seem to become a premium commodity where poverty reduces, for example, parents' ability to be attentive to their children. It feels significant that in the infant observation process, these themes again came up: Who had me, and the attention and power (of the white world) that I brought? Was I a status symbol?

7.5.3.2 An authority

There was a sense in which community members seemed willing on the surface to help one another, but were equally ready to turn on one another in order to get something, sometimes in acts of betrayal that were about reporting to the (white) authorities. Despite the fact that she was a close family friend, Aunt Lil came into Eve's home and embarrassed her in front of me:

Eve is looking at Lil with pursed lips and hooded eyes, in a sulky, foreboding expression. She looks cross, as though done in, rather than disapproving. (Observation 10, March 2005)

Despite describing herself as having known Eve since she was born, Aunt Lil seemed to try to portray her in a negative light in front of me:

[Aunt Lil] says to Eve, "Hoekom doen jy nie meer moeite nie? Gaan jy geld kry vir hulle?" "(Why don't you make more effort? Are you going to get money for them?") Eve says yes, she is going next week to try. "Vir altwee die kinders?" ("For both of the children?") Lil asks and Eve says, "Vir altwee die kinders, vir altwee…" ("For both of the children, for both…"), nodding her head with a pout and looking at me from below lowered eyelids. Maria yawns and Eve squashes her cheeks in. Lil says, "Jy verniel hulle. Ek gaan die welsyn roep…" ("You neglect them. I am going to call the welfare…") and looks at me with one eye shut, in a theatrical wink. She holds this pose until I finally look at her. (Observation 10, March 2005)

While this was clearly a comment about my perceived connection with the welfare, as a powerful white person and "student of psychology", it also obliquely referred to a phenomenon in the community in which one's neighbours or even family members could report one for child neglect, as had in fact happened to Eve. Aunt Lil's comment referred to the fact that Eve used to drink after the birth of her first child. This event and Aunt Lil's comment made me realise that Eve may indeed have had some capacity for child neglect, stemming out of the sense of hopelessness, powerlessness and inertia (and possibly depression) that accompanied living in conditions of poverty. In the section in which I discuss Eve's mothering (**7.5.4**) I will show that my observations supported this possibility.

7.5.3.3 A dangerous figure

While there was a level of acceptance of me in the neighbourhood over time, I remained a figure that could either be harmed or do harm in some way. There are endless references in the reports to my care not to drive over some or other child or animal with my car:

Around the corner, a woman pulls her child closer when she sees my car and we make eye contact. I nod and she nods back. I think: Don't worry, I won't run over your child. (Observation 38, November 2005)

On one level this was a real and practical concern in a community without many cars and many small children on the roads. On the other hand, it may represent my sense of myself as having the capacity to do great harm in this community, which was linked to our socio-political history. White people did cause great harm to communities such as the one I was observing in. I was regarded with a degree of suspicion from the first observation and was very much watched:

Adult peering past boundary wall/fence to see me entering the yard. Ek sien net oë wat loer (I only see peering eyes). (Observation 2, December 2004)

Five small children standing in the road opposite the Smit house. They gather quickly to the furthest side of the road and several sit down as I turn in near them; they are all looking at me. At their different heights they look like Meerkats, all heads turned to me at different levels. (Observation 8, March 2005)

When I was observing, neighbours and family mostly stayed away:

Someone outside catches [Eve's] eye and she re-focuses, then almost imperceptibly inclines her head to the left, in my direction. She smiles and says, "Kom in, julle!" ("Come in, you guys!"). I have the sense that there are two or three males outside. There is a brief shuffle and whisper and then they disappear. (Observation 5, February 2005)

It is possible then that behind the attacks on me by the youths there in fact lay a fear of me. Apart from the harm I irrationally felt I could do to Maria, I had a sense that I could frighten neighbours generally if they came across me unexpectedly:

I consider going in to the back half of the room to sit on my chair, but fear that someone will not know I am there then and will come in and get a fright. (Observation 8, March 2005)

Aunt Lil even seemed to suggest that I was a threat to the integrity of Eve's family:

"Do you want Piet? Ek maak hom dood (I'll kill him)…Do you! Do you!" She says she is going to her house now. I nod, hopeful. "This is *my* family. My *family*. I'll be here. Do you hear me? Do you?" I say, "When I visit, sometimes you'll be here." (Observation 10, March 2005)

The suggestion here seemed to be that I might use Piet for sexual ends. This may also have had to do with Piet's reputation for being unfaithful. In other words, I was posited as someone who might harm Eve and exploit Piet. The pervasive sense of fear in my relationships in this community generally is an important source of information about what the community itself, and the observation family in particular, may have experienced both historically and currently.

7.5.4 The mother and the baby

I will present the mother-infant interaction by focusing on the qualities of Eve's mothering. This can be seen as occurring along continuums of particular themes. The question arises whether Eve possibly suffered from some form of depression.

7.5.4.1 Assurance and self-doubt

Overtly, Eve did not seem to lack confidence in her mothering; she seemed self-assured, as though she knew what to do. I never detected in her a sense of inexperience or panic related to caring for her infant. This may have been because this was her second child (her first having been born when Eve was only 19). The underlying assumption here is that a good mother knows what her baby's needs are and meets them effectively and speedily, thereby reducing frustration and creating containment. A less experienced mother might not know what her baby's cries mean and how to respond to the baby, and might become flustered by her inability to soothe the child. Such misattunement has been described in the infant observation literature. When Lee, Piet's twenty-something niece, gave birth to her first child near the end of the observation process, I had a chance to compare her mothering with Eve's:

Lee is trying to get the baby to latch on to the breast, which it does occasionally - but then it pulls away and cries in between. Writing this up I realise I have never seen Maria put up such a performance. Lee's breast is tubular with a large areola around the nipple. I feel a bit intrusive standing there. She looks down at the baby, helping it to latch on, glancing up as I speak. I can't remember if it is a boy or girl. It all feels a bit distressing and tense. (Observation 42, January 2006)

Even observing Lee when she was babysitting Maria was revealing:

I also realise that the above obs was the kind I expected to see from the beginning - a preoccupied, misattuned, busy mother - but never have till now. In fact Eve has been the opposite. (Observation 30, September 2005)

I realised I had never seen Maria struggle to latch on to the breast. On the contrary:

Maria is very grizzly and soon starts wriggling and crying again. Eve immediately puts her back on the same (left) breast, saying "Hier's die tete…" ("Here's the boob…") and Maria drinks, with her eyes scanning out to the left side along her mother's body. Her whole body relaxes. (Observation 8, March 2005)

It was remarked on in the seminars that Eve "put the baby to sleep in a heartbeat":

Maria starts to grizzle, making a complaining, whining sound. Eve returns and picks her up, holding her up at her shoulder with her back to me again. Eve is looking out of the door. She starts singing in a low voice, while swaying her upper body and patting Maria hard on her back. Maria watches me. Eve peeks at Maria, saying "Djy's vaak, djy!" ("You're tired, you!") I can't really see this. Maria's cheek is resting on her mother's shoulder, squashing one eye closed. I wish Maria would sleep. I wonder whether I am over time on the observation, but don't want to be rude and look at my watch. I look anyway; 15 minutes to go. Eve extends the length of the swaying motions, and Maria's eyes start to close. She opens them again once, and then falls asleep. Eve lays Maria on the blanket, wrapping her up in it. Then she lifts her into the sleeping bag and zips it up. I worry that Maria will wake up, but she is out cold. Eve positions her close to the far wall, with her feet facing me. (Observation 13, April 2005)

In the above extract, Eve could see that the baby needed to sleep when I, as an outsider, was not able to detect this. Through holding and soothing her, and using her voice to communicate with her, she created conditions under which the child could fall asleep (she assisted the child to make this transition). She was able to know, in a way that I could not, just what the baby needed, and she gave it. Maiello (1998), who observed a Xhosa family in an urban township, also noted the mother's use of humming, swaying and singing as a way to soothe her child. I have already commented on how quickly Maria was soothed, as a rule:

She leans forward and lifts Maria up from behind by putting her hands on either side of Maria's body. Maria's body is stooped and soft. She has stopped crying immediately. (Observation 6, February 2005)

In her comments to others, and to me, Eve indicated that she knew her baby (as early as 23 days), and could predict her behaviour:

[Eve] says, Sy slaap altyd lekker na sy gebad is (She always sleeps well after she's been bathed)… [Eve] says, Sy sal seker so twaalf uur wakker skrik (She'll probably start awake at around twelve o'clock) (when the obs ends)… (Observation 3, January 2005)

Eve leaves the room and Aunt Lil moves off with her. Eve says "Ungh-ungh, sy sal nie nou huil nie (she won't cry now)…" over her shoulder. I am left alone, watching Maria. (Observation 10, March 2005)

We could say that Eve was able to provide a level of responsiveness, both to physical and emotional needs:

[Eve] gets up and leaves the room. I am left alone with Maria. Maria angles her eyes and head slightly in the direction of the door. Then she looks up at the ceiling, and I glance up twice to see what she may be seeing (I notice rust patches on the corrugated iron). She has a luxurious yawn, angling her face away from the door. Then she lets out a calling cry and Eve comes back in. Eve feeds her again, on the same (left) breast. (Observation 6, February 2005)

I often saw that Maria used the breast, which was readily offered to her when she was grizzly, for comfort and to aid her in falling asleep, rather than for food:

Maria latches on immediately and makes loud sucking sounds. Eve is holding her body with both hands touching, and looking down at her. Maria's arms are stretched out along her body in a relaxed way. The sweater looks cosy, so close to Maria's head. Suddenly Eve laughs: "Nou slaap jy!" ("And now you sleep!") Maria's body has gone motionless. (Observation 9, March 2005)

Her ability to "perform the tasks of motherhood well" (successfully soothing the child) in front of me may have given Eve pleasure (a performance of her own competence). At the same time I thought that underlying this was insecurity that she would in fact be judged as *not* good enough. I will discuss this at length when I consider the dynamics of our relationship. Because Eve was intent on showing good-enough care, it may have been harder to let me see the other side of the continuum, namely any confusion or self-doubt she may have felt as a young mother attempting to care for an infant under very difficult circumstances. Was it too difficult, in the face of the power imbalance between us, to admit that there were things that she did *not* know?

7.5.4.2 Space and abandonment

Eve went to some trouble to demarcate a space for her baby (often physically, with a blanket) in which something different and private could happen away from the harsh surroundings in which she lived. This seemed to make up for the lack of a nursery or even a cot. For example, she was protective of her child in physical ways:

Maria starts a protesting, almost choking cry, with her eyes squeezing shut. "Gee die kind hier!" ("Give the child here!") Eve says, "Wat doen jy aan die kind? Sy huil net as sy by jou is!" ("What are you doing to the child? She only cries when she's with you!") She takes Maria and lifts her up to her face, giving her a long, held kiss on the cheek. Maria stops crying as soon as her mother takes her. "*My* baba…dis *my* babaitjie die…" ("*My* baby…this is *my* little baby…") Eve says. (Observation 18, June 2005)

Eve prevented Aunt Lil, who was inebriated, from holding Maria, after she had done so earlier and the baby had started crying:

Eve won't give her over, saying "Ant' Lil maak die kind seer…" ("Aunt Lil, you are hurting the child…") Aunt Lil grins, waving her arms, and says, "Ek vat die kinders sommer so, ek vat hulle rof!" ("I grab the children any old way, I handle them roughly!") as though this is her way. (Observation 10, March 2005)

Aunt Lil gets up and Eve says, "Ant' Lil kannie hier binne rook nie!" ("Aunt Lil, you can't smoke in here!") To my relief Aunt Lil leaves the room. (Observation 10, March 2005)

Sometimes it seemed to be more about creating a safe psychological space:

Outside (possibly in the back yard), an argument was ensuing and a female neighbour said, "Ek moer jou! Ek ga' jou *moer*!" ("I'll beat you up! I will *beat* you!") Eve frowned slightly while looking down. Maria turned and looked out of the door. "Hulle praat nie me' jou nie…" ("They're not speaking to you…") Eve said softly to Maria. (Observation 31, September 2005)

At the one end of the continuum, Eve seemed to want to keep Maria very close to her in order to keep her safe:

Maria looked at me. She shook her head at me and I copied the gesture. Eve laughed, and so did I. Maria shook her head again and I responded. We sat there for several seconds, shaking our heads at each other. Eve picked Maria up, pulling her into a hug: "Hou jy jou groot?" ("Are you playing all grown-up?") she said affectionately to Maria, "Jy's nog 'n babatjie, jy" ("You're still a little baby, you"). (Observation 31, September 2005)

At the other side of the continuum was the act of giving too much space, to the point of danger (physical and emotional abandonment). Some of Eve's attitudes, born possibly out of irritation and frustration with Maria's wilfulness, and perhaps her own emotional struggles, resulted in different kinds of (brief) abandonment, whether in actuality or wished for:

Maria was wriggling. Eve said, "Jy wil onner oppie grond wees. Nou, sit daar!" ("You want to be down on the ground. So sit there then!") and sat Maria down on the ground in some way off from her feet. Maria looked down, her body going still. She hunched her shoulders up and her face melted into a cry. She let out several tight little sobs, until Eve picked her up again. Eve dusted her bottom off. It was the first time I had ever seen Maria on the floor. (Observation 31, September 2005)

"Kom! Kom na my toe! Kom! Kom!" ("Come! Come to me! Come! Come!") Eve says, patting the bed and opening her hands in a receiving gesture. Maria looks at her but only moves slightly, bending her right knee and pushing her bottom up into the air slightly. "Nou ja, kom dan nie" ("Well, then don't come") Eve says. (Observation 21, July 2005)

In the above example, it seems as if Eve experienced Maria's reluctance as a kind of abandonment herself. At times I experienced the theme of abandonment quite distressing to observe:

Soon, Maria starts crying. She squeezes her eyes shut and her mouth opens very wide. Her tongue forms an arc up against her top lip, vibrating slightly with every cry. In a mild tone, Eve says, "Mamma sal nou vat…nou…onbeskof! Jy's onbeskof!" ("Mommy will pick you up/take you now… now…rude! You're rude!") while she continues to pack the last of the clothes away. (Observation 11, April 2005)

Here, it was painful that Eve left the baby to cry while she sorted through a box of clothes and a pile of scrunchies (partly, I thought, to show me what she had). When Eve did eventually pick Maria up, there was also a degree of misattunement in that Eve tried to get her to dance when in fact she was at a point of distress where distraction would not work. In the next moment, however, Eve gave her the breast, which she sucked on vigorously, and spoke her name to Maria soothingly, in a rhythm.

Eve seemed to want to encourage a sense of self-sufficiency in her child. At times she took this to humorous extremes, almost seeming to want Maria to grow up too quickly:

"Help vir Mamma! Gaan jy vir Mamma help? Droog jy af, hies die vadoek!" ("Help Mommy! Are you going to help Mommy? You dry [the dishes], here's the dishcloth!") [Eve] said, giving Maria a dishcloth. Maria grabbed it and held it out in her hand, her arm straight. I thought that Eve was training Maria to be useful very early on. (Observation 35, November 2005)

Here Maria was 10 months old. On the one hand, her mother may have wanted to include her, or to amuse me with the interaction. At the same time I wondered whether this unconsciously accorded with an expectation in the household that children help with the chores from early on. I had noticed this in relation to Natasha:

"Ek gaan die skottelgoed was!" ("I'm going to wash the dishes!") Natasha announces to me energetically. I am thrilled that someone is talking to me. "Jy gaan die skottelgoed was?!" ("You're going to wash the dishes?!") I ask, copying her excitement. (Observation 18, June 2005)

Suddenly, Natasha appears in the doorway. "Hallo!" ("Hello!") I say, pleased to see her. She doesn't greet, but hops into the room over to her mother, handing her a small school bag. "Waar's jou hemp?" ("Where's your shirt?") Eve asks. Natasha is in her school clothes, but wearing a pinkish long-sleeved vest. "Da binne!" ("In there!") she says, pouting and pointing at her school bag, "Dis warm!" ("It's hot!") "Natasha, jy maak dat ek al agter jou aanwas…" ("Natasha, you make me wash after you all the way…") …Eve hands Natasha the shirt to fold away, and then an empty lunchbox to put on the kitchen dresser. There is nothing else in the bag. Natasha does everything as though this is routine, without argument. (Observation 19, June 2005)

Somewhere near the middle of the continuum Eve showed an attitude of fostering appropriate but early independence in Maria. There was a sense in which it was perhaps important for Eve both to present Maria as physically robust to me and to actually encourage her to be like this. This theme continuously came up across reports. For example, here Maria was only 10 weeks old:

She stands Maria on her tummy, holding her under the arms and leaning back so that she can look into her face. In a baby-voice she says, "Staan! Staan vir Mamma, staan…" ("Stand! Stand for Mommy, stand…") Maria's legs seem quite sturdy and the illusion is created that she is standing by herself. (Observation 10, March 2005)

When Maria could not stand on her own, Eve seemed to make excuses for her:

Eve then makes Maria stand next to her on the mattress, saying "Staan, staan…" ("Stand, stand…") Maria, still staring at me, plops down on her bottom. "Gaan sit sommer…" ("Just goes and sits…") Eve says. "Staan…" ("Stand..") and pulls Maria up again… Eve sits Maria down next to her on the mattress, saying "Bientjies raak lam, Mamma, bientjies lam…Sit…sit" ("[My] little legs get weak, Mommy, little legs get weak…Sit…sit") and she makes Maria sit on her own, with just a hand supporting her back. This is an amusing sight, with her body half scrunched-over. (Observation 14, May 2005)

Here Maria was only 4 months old. Infants only begin to pull themselves up to standing between 6 and 10 months and can only stand well alone by 9 to 16 months (Lovejoy & Estridge, 1987; Weiten, 2004). Eve would have known this from her experience with her first child. From very early on I saw Eve bounce Maria up and down, encouraging her to dance (9 weeks):

Eve says, "Dan, dan, dans…dans, Mamma" ("Dan, dan, dance…dance, Mommy") in a whisper. (Observation 9, March 2005)

Later I was amazed to see that the family had indeed taught her to dance by the age of 8 months:

Piet has her in a standing position on his lap and she suddenly moves her upper body backwards and forwards in a rapid dance-like rhythm, by bending and flexing her knees. I smile in delight and surprise, and Piet looks at me. "Ungh-ungh-ungh!" he says, making the rhythmic dance sound Eve always makes when she shows Maria how to dance. Maria sways in tune to it. "Dans! Dans vir Pappa! Dans!" ("Dance! Dance for Daddy! Dance!") Piet says softly, and she does it again. "Sê hungh-hungh, sê niee!" ("Say huh-uh, say nooo!") he says, and she shakes her head immediately. Piet gets her to do this again, looking at me with a smile to see my response. "Ek kan nie glo hoe baie sy verstaan nie!" ("I can't believe how much she understands!") I say, a bit awkwardly, with my voice coming out scratchy - but it is true - she is only 8 months old! I get the sense that Piet is demonstrating all Maria can do. (Observation 29, September 2005)

Eve may have been aware of my concern about a child growing up in circumstances like this. She may have been invested in showing me that her child was fine and a strong baby. The message was that, despite their poverty, they were doing a good job. On the other hand, it is possible that Eve was consciously or unconsciously "mothering for toughness" in the baby. We wondered in the seminars whether she was preparing her for the harsh environment she had been born into. But perhaps all mothers tend to do this in most environments. My sense of Maria as a fast developer is in line with a general observation in Moretown by the WMHRP, namely that babies in Moretown develop much faster physically than middle-class babies (Kruger, in press). From early on Maria seemed an assertive infant with a strong sense of survival:

[Eve] puts Maria back on the left breast, saying "Kom. Kom" ("Come! Come!") when Maria does not immediately take. Maria latches on and starts to pummel the breast with both hands, arms outstretched. Eve laughs, and says out the door to someone, "Lee, het jy al ooit gesien dat iemand so drink?" ("Lee, have you ever seen anyone drinking like this?") Eve watches for a

while, while Maria drinks greedily…Then she takes Maria off the breast and lifts her up to her face, kissing her. Maria's body falls across Eve's naked breast as she leans backwards, joyfully saying, "Djy's onbeskof! Djy baklei hier met die tete!" ("You're rude! You are fighting here with the boob!") (Observation 5, February 2005)

I noticed that Maria did not complain much when undressed:

Eve starts to change Maria's nappy but I can't see much. She pulls off the baby-grow and I am surprised at how quiet Maria is as it gets pulled over her head. Eve folds a clean cloth nappy on her lap, angling her body forwards so that I can see her lap. It is an interesting folding process which seems quite complex to me; I haven't seen it before. Then she puts the nappy on the bed next to Maria and gets up, coming over to the shelf next to me. I look past her at Maria, who is left lying in a pair of large, pink waterproof pants. She is lying very still. (Observation 5, February 2005)

Even when it was very cold and all her clothes had to come off for a bath, Maria showed very little obvious distress:

[Eve] undresses Maria. Maria lies looking up with slightly widened eyes, her arms held up off the bed. She is quiet, but constantly waves her arms slightly…Eve lifts a naked Maria up by her hands and turns her to face me in a standing position. She holds her there by her hands, looking down at her and then up at me. Maria's body has a sprung, rubbery quality to it. She looks me in the eyes with her mouth hanging open slightly, and an apprehensive air. I laugh, enjoying naked Maria, and Eve laughs too. Eve lays Maria down again, takes a facecloth off the line behind her, and dips it in the bucket. She soaps the cloth vigorously, and rubs it gently over Maria's face. Maria lies still, with her eyes slightly widened. As her mother moves down from her face, her arms wave a bit. Eve soaps Maria's chest, arms and legs with the facecloth, as well as her feet and genital region. "Lekker was, Mamma…lekker was…" ("A nice wash, Mommy…a nice wash…") she says in a low tone. "O, maar sy geniet so 'n bad!" ("Oh, but she enjoys such a bath!") I exclaim. (Observation 18, June 2005)

In both of the above extracts Maria seemed to be showing a degree of apprehension, even though the interaction seemed quite intimate and connected. In the first example Maria's response, perhaps to her increased vulnerability, was to become very still and to hold her body in tension. In the second her chief response was mobility. In neither instance did she seem to fall apart (with distressed crying, for example) and need her mother to help contain her in the experience. When Maria was placed in the bathwater, she again showed a rigid, held quality:

Eve throws the facecloth in the tub, and lifts Maria up and towards her by pulling firmly on her hands. She lifts Maria by her hands into the tub. Maria's mouth and eyes are held open, but she is silent. The water barely covers her legs. "Oe, lekker warm water, Mamma…" ("Ooh, nice warm water, Mommy…") Eve says, holding Maria with one hand and splashing water on her to rinse the soap off with the other. Eve holds Maria by the forearms and waves her from side to side through the water along the length of the tub. Maria is looking up at me with quite a frozen body posture, and I laugh, as it is comical. Eve laughs too. (Observation 18, June 2005)

It is possible to hypothesise about a kind of forbearance developing in Maria, in the face of the cold. When Eve dried Maria, Maria held on firmly to the towel with both fists, raising it up to her chin: we can speculate that in this way she helped herself to hold together in her naked state (Bick, 1968). It was noted in Chapter Five that Bick's (1968) paper is considered a useful tool for thinking about infants in vulnerable social contexts (S. Briggs, 2002). Only when her mother started to dress her did Maria begin to protest. It was as though she had finally had enough:

As the vest gets winched over her eyes, Maria starts to cry. Eve lays her back and pulls the sleeve-holes open wide, scrunching the sleeves up and pulling Maria's hand and arm through the holes. Maria continues to cry, but Eve says nothing. Eve picks up a legless summer baby-grow with short sleeves and proceeds to pull it over Maria's head as well. Maria keeps crying. "Ons moet eers aantrek…." ("We must first get dressed…") Eve says. She takes a large bottle of baby powder and pours some powder in gusts between the two vests. Maria stops crying momentarily, perhaps because of the smell, I wonder. Maria starts crying again and Eve closes the press-studs over the nappy. "Mari-A, MariA…" Natasha sings, hanging over the foot of the bed and looking at her. Eve rubs her hands over Maria's face, touching her crying mouth, and I think this might stop Maria from crying, but it doesn't. (Observation 18, June 2005)

Eventually Eve gave Maria the breast. It is interesting that Eve used a practical, goal-directed approach to the task of getting Maria ready, which may have been how she herself coped with the situation. She did not stop her actions to console the child, but stayed focused on what she was doing despite the distress. After a pause to pat her back, she returned Maria to the bed to have even more baby powder put on (which feels significant in light of the fact that I was watching - was Eve perfuming her baby for me?). In effect, Maria was left to manage her fragility as best she could, with the reward of soothing at the end. There was a sense in which Eve did not indulge her baby's distress, but minimised it by laughing and calling her rude. The result was not, however, an infant who struggled to self-regulate, but in fact a child who was mostly remarkably easy to console. One wonders about the link between her mother's no-nonsense attitude and Maria's characteristic way of managing herself. Eve did not rush to terminate distress through consolation. In a sense she was able to bear Maria's frustration for a while, which may, in turn, have taught Maria how to tolerate small moments where her needs were not met. This is one of the most prominent concepts in psychoanalytic developmental theory. In infant observation seminars the word "misattunement" is often used. Winnicott held that some "maternal failure" is essential:

> The good-enough mother, as I have stated, starts off with an almost complete adaptation to her infant's needs, and as time proceeds she adapts less and less completely, gradually, according to the infant's growing ability to deal with her failure. (Winnicott, 1971a, p. 10)

It is interesting, however, that Eve was working in this way with her child at the early age of 8 weeks (Observation 8). In order to explore, the child ironically needs to feel that the mother is sufficiently available. Exploration from a secure base occurs with intermittent reference to or checking with the mother (Ainsworth, 1969; Bowlby, 1969). Maria always seemed to like being held and would demand it when necessary. When her mother and the beloved breast were absent because Eve was at work, I thought I saw her negotiating this:

I am interested to see her tongue come out and explore the edge of the pushchair nearest her face. It moves in a rapid but snail-like way across the fabric, not in a lick but quickly touching and feeling it. I lean forward a bit to see this better. (Observation 29, September 2005)

I also heard reports that corroborated that it was hard to be away from the breast, but that she had become wily about still getting it as much as possible:

"Jy's moeg, jy!" ("You're tired, you!") Piet says, and then spontaneously tells me that Maria first woke up at 4.30 this morning, and then again at 5.30 when Eve got up. She could feel immediately when her mother left the bed. I nod slowly, while looking down at Maria, thinking that this is absolutely right. Piet looks at me and it feels we are sharing an understanding about Maria. Piet says that Eve comes home at about 7.30 in the evening. I exclaim that that is a very long day, and he says yes, it is a very long day. He says they finish at around 5 but the lift only goes at around 7, as "they tjaila (go home)" then (I presume he means the people with the cars). Feeling bad for Maria and trying to reassure myself, I ask what Maria does when Eve comes home. Yesterday she was sleeping, Piet says. Otherwise she just wants to go to her mother - "Reguit tiet toe," ("Straight to the boob,") Piet says, "Dan will sy net tiet toe" ("Then she just wants to go to the boob"). This makes perfect sense to me and explains what I have been seeing today. I nod, looking at Piet. (Observation 29, September 2005)

7.5.4.3 Holding and intrusiveness

There were many moments of mutuality between Eve and Maria, in which I sometimes shared:

Maria looked at [my] keys with rapt interest and then at my face. She sweetly looked up at her mother. Eve and I both laughed. You could see her thought process: I want to have those keys but probably may not…"Ooooo…" Eve said, indicating a sense of Maria's mischievousness, "Wat het jy gesien?" ("What have you seen?") Maria reached over for the keys and her body followed…Maria grasped the keys, looked down at them, and looked up at her mother. She grasped the heart locket in both hands, and then banged the whole bunch up and down. The metal heart banged against her shin and Eve said, "Tsss…eina! Eina!" ("Tsss…ouch! Ouch!") but Maria did not seem to feel anything. She rolled onto her stomach with the keys up at mouth level in front of her. Eve gently took the bunch away and placed it near me on the bed. I thanked her. (Observation 36, November 2005)

Eve was amply able to provide affection and soothing:

The nipple lies in her half-open mouth. Maria seems very sleepy: her eyes are half-closed and directed to the left, looking at close range at her mother's T-shirt just above the breast. Eve firmly pats the bottom of Maria's bare feet three times with the flat of her left hand, as though playing with Maria. Then she says, looking down at her, "Het jy nou klaar gedrink?" ("Have you finished drinking now?") Maria yawns and Eve puts her index finger and thumb on either side of Maria's mouth, squeezing gently inwards during the yawn, which continues. (Observation 5, February 2005)

In the observation above Eve provided connection and communication in verbal and tactile ways. In the following observation she was almost able to send Maria to sleep in a protracted process of holding and soothing her, while periodically checking her response:

After a while Eve lifts Maria up and some milk runs down Eve's breast. She re-adjusts her clothing while holding Maria up at her neck on the other side. Maria's bottom is sticking out over her mother's arm, and her knees are pulled up against Eve's body. Her head is turned into Eve's neck. Eve very firmly pats Maria's back, at the rate of one pat per second. Maria's head jolts slightly with each pat, but she seems to be falling asleep. Eve rocks her body backwards and forwards a few times in a jerky rhythm, while looking out of the door. Then she cranes her neck and peers over to see Maria's face. Maria's eyes are open and she looks back at Eve. Eve shifts Maria down to lie loosely in the crook of her right arm, on her lap. She rocks Maria twice by pulling her arm in closer to her body. Maria's body relaxes and I think how nice it would be to sleep there, alongside her mother's body. (Observation 7, February 2005)

In the above example it could be argued that Eve was particularly responsive to Maria's needs and able to adapt to her shifting states. In a previous observation Eve showed a similar ability to imaginatively put herself into the state that the baby was in and respond appropriately from there:

Suddenly Maria focuses on something just behind Eve: her eyes open more widely and the direction of her gaze moves forward. Eve looks back over her left shoulder, at the pink, patterned curtain that acts as a room-divider. I notice that it is slightly more drawn than previously, on both sides. Eve looks back down at Maria, and in a soft, affectionate and playful tone, says, "O, dis 'n mooi gordyn. Issa mooi gordyn" ("Oh, that's a pretty curtain. It's a pretty curtain"), with a slight smile and punctuating twice with an exaggerated chin movement down on the word "mooi" (pretty). (Observation 5, February 2005)

In the moments observed above Eve mirrored Maria's experience. On the one hand, there were many such examples of how Eve was able to "hold" Maria appropriately. Closer to the other side of the continuum, Eve's involvement with Maria sometimes took on an intrusive quality, such as when Maria was sleeping:

Without warning, Eve bends forward from her sitting position and quickly whips the lace off Maria, bunching it in her left hand. Maria seems very tiny, lying there in a white and pink baby-grow. Eve leans over her, saying gently and with a smile, "Huh? Ou maaitjie" ("Huh? Little pal"). Then she rubs the tiny soles of Maria's feet with her thumbs. I snort a slight, delighted laugh and then Eve does the same. Maria retracts her left foot and then pushes it out again. Eve pulls each foot down separately, talking in baby-speak: "Strraight, die bientjies moet straight" ("Strraight, the legs must be straight"). (Observation 4, February 2005)

[Maria's] hands go up to her cheek and chin. Her eyes half-close and I think for a moment that she will fall asleep at the breast. Eve has been looking down at Maria during the positioning and now suddenly worms her left index finger into Maria's baby-grow at nappy level, and sticks her finger into the nappy, pushing it down inbetween Maria's legs. A second later Eve says, "Is djy nat? Koekie nat" ("Are you wet? Fanny wet") (Eve uses another but similar word to "koekie" (fanny) - I do not know it and

already during the observation realise I can't remember it). Maria has let go of the nipple and her arms are held bent stiffly next to her body, with fists up near her face. (Observation 5, February 2005)

There may have been a number of reasons for Eve's inability to simply let Maria sleep in these early observations. One may have been that I was there to see the baby, and the other might have been the secondary gain that Eve got from having her (awake) baby watched. It may also have been that contact with the baby filled some need in Eve, about being wanted, and affirmed. It seemed that Eve chose often interaction with the baby, as though she was demonstrating "mothering" to me:

Eve feeds her again, on the same (left) breast. This time Maria's right hand is touching the breast, but still relaxed, with the fingers curled up. Eve examines Maria's left hand, uncurling the fingers and looking between them. I notice with concern that Maria's left hand and wrist are covered in eczema bumps. Eve picks at the fingers and looks between each of Maria's toes. Maria stops drinking after a while and the nipple slowly eases out of her mouth. She seems to be falling asleep. I feel very relaxed without being sleepy. Eve continues to groom Maria's left hand and Maria jerks it away slightly to the left. (Observation 6, February 2005)

Affection could become a kind of intrusion, crossing personal space boundaries. At times I felt alarmed by behaviour towards the baby which for me, but not necessarily for Eve, had sexual connotations:

Eve then turned Maria and took a serious look down the back of the shorts, seeing whether the nappy was wet. Then she lay Maria on her back, taking both feet in her hands. Maria's legs were straight up in the air. Eve bent down and energetically kissed Maria between her legs, shaking her head from side to side and pulling Maria's legs apart with a grip on her feet. She did this three times, lifting her head in between to say, "Stink toet! Issa stink toet!" ("Stinky fanny! It's a stinky fanny!") I felt very alarmed by this and wished she would not kiss Maria there. Maria giggled delightedly with an open mouth. I wondered whether this was giving Maria physical pleasure. (Observation 36, November 2005)

7.5.4.4 Play and aggression

Eve seemed eager to have me see her playing with her child:

Eve looks down: Maria has grabbed Eve's right index finger while drinking, and Eve now holds it up and swings the attached hand. She pulls Maria's left arm out and backwards twice. She says, "Strraight! Play 'n (a) game, strraight…", each time bending the arm back on the word "straight" I worry. Maria is falling asleep next to the breast. (Observation 5, February 2005)

As in the above example, such playful moments could quickly flip to become aggressive ones in which intrusiveness again occurred. I felt that there were many instances of sublimated aggression towards the baby, which were difficult for me to watch or even remember at times:

Eve moves Maria so that she stands facing her on her lap, and suddenly throws her up into the air, catching her under the arms again. "Innie dakkies! Innie dakkies ver-ver-gooi-e, Mamma!" ("In the roof! Thrown up, up into the roof, Mommy!") She repeats this several times, talking all the while. Maria's mouth goes wide open as she is thrown up. As she lands, Eve talks animatedly to her, face to face. Maria laughs. I remember that Eve has done this once before, but I think I forgot to write it up. Eve's hands squeeze Maria under her armpits and around her back. Maria lifts her shoulders as though ticklish. Eve exaggerates the motion of her fingers under Maria's arms, tickling her. (Observation 25, August 2005)

Eve took the key bunch up and rattled it above Maria's face. I felt alarmed and worried that Eve might drop the keys on Maria's face and checked her hold on the key (just index finger and thumb). Maria fluttered her eyelids vigorously and then put her hands up to her eyes, with the backs of them to her face. She covered her eyes. Eve stopped and Maria brought her hands down. Eve shook the keys again and Maria again fluttered her lids. Then she kept her eyes open, looking at the keys with a smile. Eve gave her the keys. (Observation 31, September 2005)

There are further examples of moments that I found uncomfortable and jarring in Observations 5 and 8. In the above key episode Eve initially frightened Maria and then pleased her by giving her what she wanted. A similar dynamic of frightening Maria and then giving her affection was to be seen in another moment in the same observation:

Eve looked at Maria and then blew into her face. Maria quickly fluttered her eyelids. She took the egg out of her mouth and shook her head from side to side. Eve laughed. "Sê ngh-ngh, ngh-ngh, Mamma, moenie so maak nie!" ("Say ngh-ngh, ngh-ngh, Mommy, don't do that!") Eve said, shaking her head vigorously. Maria copied this. Eve blew on her again and again Maria fluttered her lids, half-closing her eyes. (Observation 31, September 2005)

Here again we see the way in which playful teasing quickly became intrusion. At times the aggression took on the form of a withholding act:

Eve picks the doll up again and puts it near my leg. She lays Maria on her tummy, saying "Gaan haal jou poppie!" ("Go fetch your dolly!") Maria moves her head from side to side, bending her knees and shifting her feet. Her bottom moves up and down a bit. Eve pushes her from behind, on her calves. Maria's weight falls towards the edge of the bed and Eve steadies her. Maria's head is up, looking at the doll. Maria falls towards the edge of the bed a second time and Eve catches her again. She hasn't moved forward at all. Maria lets out a bleating sound. Eve picks her up and puts her on her lap, laying her down on her back. She brings the doll down to Maria's face, touching it to her nose before pulling it away again. She repeats this action several times. Maria's eyes flutter as the heart toy moves closer, and her eyebrows move up and down. As the doll is pulled away, she smiles briefly. (Observation 25, August 2005)

Eve seemed to be trying to frustrate Maria so that she could crawl. However, the teasing play felt quite cruel here because Maria was never satisfied: Eve tantalised Maria with the doll before putting it away, so that she did not have it at all. Frustration thus became a kind of cruelty. While there were certainly practical concerns related to poverty about preserving the doll, I felt that Eve was giving Maria an experience of wanting something and not being able to have it, which may have been her own experience of being deprived of many things, including perhaps my full attention as the observer. The result was a mixed message to the child. One interpretation could be that Eve experienced my silent presence, namely being there, yet seemingly unavailable for talking, as a double message, and a withholding act. There are numerous other examples that show that a similar dynamic, namely the double messaging of cruelty and care, often came into play between Maria and Eve (Observations 5, 9 and 13). Eve would kiss Maria and tell her she was "onbeskof" (rude) in the same moment, or laugh uproariously when Maria nearly fell off the bed. The idea was expressed in the seminar group that such negative labels were used lovingly to convey the opposite meaning. I remember my shock, however, when I first heard Eve call Maria, who was a month old, naughty for crying. My perception was that Maria was trying to communicate something with her cries (in the absence of language), but that Eve effectively silenced her:

Maria starts a semi-grizzle, wriggling her arms with her hands in fists and scrunching up her face. She makes a whining sound. Eve says, "Ungh-ungh, ungh-UNGH!" (no) and Maria is silent. Then Maria starts again, but this time the sound is articulated, almost like a word. She pulls her head to the side, away from her mother, as she utters it. Eve and I both laugh. I want to say, "Oh, she's talking to us!" but don't. Eve says, "Watse tipe huil is dit? Dis mos nie 'n ordentlike huil daai nie…" ("What kind of crying is that? That's not a proper cry that…") Maria half-cries in stops and starts a bit more. It is as if she can't decide whether to cry or not. Eve says, "Stoute kinders gewiesie, Mamma. Onbeskof! Sies!" ("[I've] been a naughty child, Mommy. Rude! Sis!") and then kisses Maria again. (Observation 9, March 2005)

7.5.4.5 Boundaries and punishment

Again on a continuum, we can consider the ways in which Eve set boundaries for Maria, and the capacity for this to become a situation where Maria was punished, even physically. Eve often raised her voice at Maria in a humorous way, and said "no" to her. From early on, I noticed the ways in which Maria responded to her mother's raised voice:

Suddenly Maria arches her back and frowns, opening her mouth and pulling her tongue up to her top lip in a sharp point. Before she can cry, Eve says, "Hey! Hey! Djy's onbeskof!" ("Hey! Hey! You're rude!") and lifts Maria up in front of her again, under her arms. Maria's body is less limp in this position this time, and she immediately seems to lock eyes with her mother. There is a tense, motionless pause as if Maria is listening and watching Eve. (Observation 5, February 2005)

Suddenly [Eve] frowns and shouts at something just outside the door: "Hey, wil djy nou loop! Loop!" ("Hey, will you get away! Get lost!") She half-stands, slapping her hand against her thigh, and then sits down again (she seems to have chased a dog away). Maria holds her body very still and tense, eyes locked on her mother. (Observation 5, February 2005)

I wonder how Maria is responding to her mother's shout, and quickly look over to her. She kicks her feet momentarily and then sleeps on. (Observation 6, February 2005)

In the above observation I seem to have been wondering whether Maria was shouted at more, or more harshly, when I was not present. In the following observations I saw Eve responding to being physically hurt by her baby:

Maria's arms are up at Eve's neck and suddenly Eve says, "Ssss…moenie krap nie!" ("Ssss…don't scratch!") and pulls Maria's left hand downwards. With Maria still held at the front of her body, Eve lays a clean nappy cloth (taken from the cupboard) out on the bed. She lays Maria face down on this, pulling her left hand away from her head, ostensibly so Maria doesn't scratch herself. Then she leaves the room again. Maria won't settle at all; she instantly starts moving her head from side to side and crying. (Observation 8, March 2005)

Eve talks above [Maria's] face, glancing constantly between the door and Maria as she speaks. She ducks her head for emphasis. Maria stares at her with wide eyes and an alert, interested expression. "Stoute kinders…het geknyp, toe't Mamma geslaan…ons slaan nie die kind nie, nee, ons praat net…" ("Bad children…pinched, then Mommy smacked…we don't hit the child, no, we just talk…") It is pleasant to watch this interchange and disturbing at the same time. (Observation 9, March 2005)

I felt that the contradictory words in the above example were possibly due to my presence: that Eve did in fact use more than just talking at times, but was uncomfortable disclosing this in my presence. This may have had to do, I could see retrospectively, with the consent form in which I declared my duty to report any form of child abuse. Eve's rough touch in the first example, "ostensibly" to protect Maria, may in fact have been an act of retribution for the scratching. There were indications that Eve and Piet also routinely used corporal punishment in a more formal way as a means of disciplining their children:

Natasha pushes the chair backwards and forwards, bumping it wildly into my foot once. I don't look down or acknowledge this. After a while, Eve scolds, "Natasha, los 'aai ding. Ek gaan vir Piet sê, laat hy jou kom slat!" ("Natasha, leave that thing. I'm going to tell Piet so that he can come and smack you!") (Observation 22, July 2005)

"Gaan speel!" ("Go play!") Eve scolded Natasha and the other child through the open door. Natasha snuck in and sat in the small space between the door and the TV cabinet, on the floor. Eve peered past the cabinet and said, "Sien hoe gaan ek nou slat as ek hier uitkom!" ("You just watch how I am going to smack [you] when I come out of here!") (Observation 31, September 2005)

I saw Eve hit her baby once during the observation process, when Maria was 8 months old. This happened while I was looking away. In an observation near the end of the process (Observation 31), Eve slapped her baby on the hand when she insisted on pulling at the edge of the new yellow plastic tablecloth that Eve had put over the

television unit. It seems significant that in this observation there were several descriptions of Eve's mood state, as well as several instances of aggression towards the baby. The two seemed connected. I noted that Eve had a "dazed frowning expression", that she was "in thought" and that she seemed unaware of my watching her.

As my eyes were on [Natasha], I heard a "piets" (short whipping) sound and quickly turned, realising Eve had hit Maria on the hand. "Lossie ding! Jy gaan hom AFTRRREK!" ("Leave the thing! You are going to PULL IT OFFFF!") Eve said, sounding annoyed in a dramatic, sulky tone. She flicked a dead match into the ashtray on the counter. I felt dismayed and wished that hadn't happened. I don't know how Maria reacted, but she did not cry. She seemed to keep moving. (Observation 31, September 2005)

What began as boundary-setting quickly became corporal punishment. Eve's irritation with the baby then culminated with Eve actually holding Maria upside down:

Maria continued to wriggle near the edge. "Jy gaan val!" ("You're going to fall!") Eve said, "Nou val dan! Val!" ("All right, fall then! Fall!") She held Maria upside down, with her head facing the floor, over the edge of the bed. She pulled her back and repeated the move. Maria looked at the carpet but did not make any noises. Her body was held quite still. Eve lay Maria on her lap and suddenly let her fall backwards again, by gripping her hands and letting her slide back off her lap slightly. She looked into her eyes with a smile as she did so. Maria smiled back but then her gaze wandered. "Soentjie! Hey! Kyk hierso!" ("A little kiss! Hey! Look here!") Eve said, and Maria looked at Eve again. "Soentjie! Gee soentjie!" ("Kissy! Give kissy!") Eve said, pulling Maria up to her mouth and pushing her lips forward while keeping her eyes on Maria's mouth. Maria did not respond and Eve kissed her on the mouth. (Observation 31, September 2005)

Eve deliberately put Maria in a dangerous position. She first inspired fear and then gave affection. This kind of double messaging could potentially be very confusing. Eve was simultaneously smiling at the child while committing a cruel, teasing act towards her. This can be interpreted in a number of ways. Perhaps Eve wished to cover her aggressive act to make it appear a game to me. In other words, she sublimated her aggression. Perhaps she unconsciously found a way to give expression to the feelings of ambivalence which, Winnicott (1947) argued, must exist in all mothering, but which she may have felt it was necessary to hide in front of me as an observer, revealing that my gaze was experienced as a judgemental one. It is possible that a sense of guilt (and again, my presence may have evoked this) can be seen in her insistent desire to be kissed (forgiven) by the baby afterwards. While it is acknowledged that such ambivalence is probably present in most mothering, the question is when it becomes pathological.

7.5.4.6 Attentiveness and disconnection

As previous examples have shown, Eve could often be seen to be very responsive, even minutely so, and even when the baby was feeding or sleeping and not overtly needing anything. For example, Eve would worm a finger into Maria's nappy to feel if she was dry or comment that she needed to cut Maria's nails (Observation 6). While Eve was often very responsive to her baby in my presence, there were, however, other instances where she seemed quite distracted or disconnected from her child. Whether these were residual signs of maternal depression is open to debate. I noticed, for example, that she would present an animated face to the baby, but that there was something frozen or held about it that I felt betrayed quite a different state of mind. For example, in the same Observation (6) I noted that Eve smiled "with her eyes only" when approaching a crying Maria. In another example, Eve tried to bath Maria on a cold day when the electricity may have been off all morning and the previous night:

She comes to fetch Maria and lays her on her back. Eve talks to her with wide eyes and a frozen smile, shaking her head from side to side: "Gaan nou eers lekker bad…ons gaan bad!" ("First going to take a nice bath now…we're going to bath!") (Observation 18, June 2005)

Eve seemed preoccupied with something that held her attention at times (noticeably, right across the observation year). There are many further examples of Eve's silent dazes, even when there was some activity going on, such as watching television (Observation 5) or playing with Maria:

Maria made an "unnn, unnn" sound while mouthing the key ring. I watched steadily with a slight smile, my chin propped in my hand. I finally looked at Eve to see what her response to all this was. Instead of watching Maria, she was gazing with glazed over eyes into the space between us, eyes downcast to the bed. She seemed deep in a daydream or just completely somewhere else. Her eyes bulged in two different directions. She did not move or change her gaze as I looked at her, and didn't even seem to see me. (Observation 31, September 2005)

Sometimes Eve and Maria could be seen sharing this state:

[Eve] stood at the open door holding Maria and looking out. They both stared out of the door, presumably watching some neighbours, with the same expression in their eyes and faces: a kind of empty, dazed, slack-jawed absorption. They seemed unaware of each other. (Observation 35, November 2005)

I called these moments "reverie" in an early observation, but in the seminars it was suggested that this was too present a concept, and that even less thought was happening at these times. In fact, it felt more like a dissociative state. Winnicott (1956) suggested that the capacity for primary maternal preoccupation is reduced where mothers are depressed. A fixed or unresponsive face interferes with the mother's mirroring of her child's emotional states (Winnicott, 1971b). One can speculate about what was going on for Eve in her absent states. It is interesting, for example, that the latter observation was made on a wet day after heavy rains had flooded the floor of the house, including the food cupboard, the previous night. On this day I came across Eve in her dressing gown, which had not happened since the first pre-birth visit almost a year ago. She was unpacking the cupboard to see what was wet, and moved the food to a different cupboard, which was slightly elevated by feet:

"Is jy nou kwaad?" ("Are you angry now?") she asked Maria. "Is sy kwaad?" ("Is she angry?") I asked, spinning to look at Maria, and Eve laughed. Maria watched her mother with baleful eyes. She held the strap of the safety belt in her hands and held it up occasionally, feeling it with her index finger and thumb but not looking at it. I sensed Eve looking at Maria and turned to see her smiling and dipping her chin at Maria. Her eyes were lit up and energetic, but her face had that kind of frozen mask-like feel I had seen before. (Observation 35, November 2005)

Here was an instance where, possibly because of the difficult circumstances, Eve was preoccupied and downcast. It certainly seemed like a moment of crisis. Again, the mother and child seemed to be sharing an emotional state. It is possible that Eve was attributing her own anger in this situation to the baby. Unusually, just as Eve was wearing her nightclothes, Maria was wearing a "slightly dirty baby-gro":

The feet and legs were particularly grimy. She must have been wearing a hat as I have no recollection of her hair. There were tears around her eyes. She stared at me with big round eyes and a sullen expression. I smiled at her but she seemed not to recognise me or be particularly interested in me, though she stared back. (Observation 35, November 2005)

While usually attentive, and taking care to dress the baby well, Eve may have become quite neglectful in her current state: not dressing either herself, or her baby, but instead focusing, in a miserable mood, on the wet food, and feeling the implications of this event for herself and her family. It is also possible that she normally took some

care to prepare Maria for my visit, but the crisis had circumvented this. I noted that I felt very preoccupied with Eve:

I wondered what was going on and asked Eve if she was okay (yes) and whether she had left her job. She said she had. I asked if it had not been good for her, and she said no, it wasn't. (I was remembering that she had hurt her shoulder at one point.) She mumbled that she had decided to stay at home and look after the child for now. (Observation 35, November 2005)

My interest in her may partly have been due to not seeing her in a long time at this point (she had been at work). My hypothesis is also, however, that this was a response to her emotional state. In other words, I attended to her because of the discernible dip in her affect: I unconsciously met her need to be attended to. It seemed that Eve had yet again had a difficult time at work. In an earlier interview Eve described the kind of apathy that sometimes resulted for her:

I: And the work..? What.. what.. what happened to your job? Did you work.. work before?
Eve: I did work before, yes (**I:** Yes..) but then that job was finished and after that I did not work again..
I: Okay.. for reasons related to the children or what were the reasons..?
Eve: Uh-uh, back then there wasn't that little one yet, it was only this one.
I: Okay... And.. uhm... what happened that you didn't go back to work?
Eve: I just felt I don't want to work anymore (**I:** Mmm..), that's all, then (**I:** Okay..) I just left everything. (**I:** Mmm..). Now I don't want to struggle with the work anymore. (Interview 1 with Eve, March 2005)

The foregoing extracts seem to show that Eve's mood, and by extension the state of her baby, was very much influenced by factors such as the weather, poor housing and inadequate employment. Her circumstances may in fact have depressed her. Another instance that lends credence to this idea was the observation in which the electricity was out following a storm the night before. I was not aware of this initially and noticed only the palpable mood in the room:

Eve is sitting on the single bed across from the open door, with Maria on her lap. She looks at my mittens as I come in. I ask, "Hoe gaan dit, Eve?" ("How are things, Eve?") (I worry briefly that I have got her name wrong – would she tell me?) She says, "Gaan nog orraait…" ("It's going okay still…") without making eye contact and barely moving her mouth. I say, "Nog orraait…?" ("Still okay…?") as I sit down on the chair, which is placed with its right side up against the single bed, at the foot…. I feel terrible, like I have infiltrated this house because of my needs, and that Eve is just bearing it. There is something particularly vacant about her eyes and face today…There is the sound of water dripping in a bucket behind me, and then a large splash of water hits the carpet next to my chair…There is a pink glass cup with some Pronutro-like porridge in it on the counter next to the TV. It has a teaspoon in it and is covered by a saucer. There is something unusually desolate going on here today. (Observation 18, June 2005)

Again, interference by the weather may have meant that Eve did not have the energy to tidy the house as usual for my visit. It seems that the mood in the room was influenced by the weather, the miserable housing conditions and inadequate electricity supply. Coming into this situation with my cosy mittens on, I may have been an object of envy. The environment could thus be seen to impact on how Eve felt and behaved; one could say that difficult circumstances can cause a sense of "depression" and contribute to fraught relationships.

In conclusion and overview, the infant observation process produced a very nuanced, multi-layered account of Eve's relationship with Maria. Because the reports describe the action moment-to-moment, in fine detail, it is possible to see the double-sided quality of their interaction, in which shifts occurred instantaneously. This, it has been argued, is the quality of all mothering, in which love and hate lie side by side (Winnicott, 1947). However, it

is also clear that the dyad's difficult physical circumstances played a role in negatively affecting the quality of the encounters between mother and child, and between mother, child and observer.

7.5.4.7 The effect of the observation on observable data

Reading these extracts a case can be made for "competent mothering" in the sense of the good-enough care that Winnicott (1971a) described. The parenting that Eve showed me as the observer was assured in many ways, and while its qualities moved along a continuum of different kinds of interaction, some more positive than others, there did not seem to be evidence of chronic misattunement or neglect. Yet I hope I have conveyed that there were times when I worried about the possibility of this. Perhaps my felt sense of Eve, which is very difficult to convey to a reader, provides the greatest credence for my worry. I am reminded of Keesing and Strathern's comment that "it seems increasingly likely that much of what the ethnographer learns never goes into the notebooks" (1998, p. 9). Perhaps there are things about Eve that a reader cannot know in the same way that an observer can.

From my observations one could argue that Eve was a very attuned mother. Throughout this discussion there have been many examples of her ability to be responsive, and the positive effect this seemed to have had on the developing child. The observation context, however, complicates matters. It is important to consider the impact of the observation on what was, or could be, seen. In my presence Eve was in fact mothering "in the public eye" and my being there may have demanded a degree of responsiveness. I had the impression that Eve cared what I thought about how she mothered. I could not discount the possibility that she may have been presenting a sanitised version of her relationship with her child to me, especially at the beginning:

Eve takes Maria's left hand in hers and starts rubbing its palm with her thumb. She seems to feel something there and rubs with more intention to get it off. Eve looks at her own fingers to see the substance she has removed from Maria's hand, then returns to look between the fingers. Then she grooms Maria's toes in a similar way, looking between each toe and rubbing her index finger there to clean it. Then she rubs the flat of her right hand over Maria's forehead and hair. Maria moves her head from side to side slightly, and Eve does it again, seemingly in the hope that Maria will wake up. She plays with a long lock of Maria's hair at the hairline, twisting it gently in her fingers and laying it out. Then she undoes a button on the baby-grow and slips her fingers in. She moves her fingers at the nappy-line, saying "Sit die vestie in…die vestie in…" ("Tuck the little vest in… the little vest in…") Maria flails her arms out in response, lifting her shoulders and moving her head rapidly from side to side. Eve says, "O, jy skrikkie. Mamma skrikkie" ("Oh, you got a fright. Mommy, a fright") and glances up at me briefly. (Observation 4, February 2005)

Here Eve groomed, cleaned and caressed her child. It is of course possible that she was always like this. But it seemed to me that even when the baby was sleep, Eve wanted to show me that she was caring for her. What is telling in the above extract is the glance at me, which I construed as being to check my response to the fact that an action of Eve's (tucking the vest in) had resulted in a startled response in the baby. I felt that she was checking to see whether I had judged her as "frightening the baby". A similar moment occurred much later in the observation period:

Eve let Maria sit on the bed and she fell over, bumping her head against the hardboard lining the back wall. "O!" ("Oh!") Eve said, smiling and then looking at me. I looked back at her with a slight smile. (Observation 36, November 2005)

It seemed that Eve wanted to present the opposite image of herself: as a very attentive mother who does not neglect her child, even though she is living in a sparse and dangerous environment. This is particularly poignant as it was

later revealed to me in the interviews that the parents had a sense that I was here to check up that they were not guilty of parental neglect. In a later observation I wondered whether Eve at times felt more relaxed and behaved more naturally around me:

After a while Maria started crying again. Eve came over and undid the straps and as she touched them, Maria stopped crying. "Het jy 'n kakkies?" ("Do you have a poopy/a little shit?") Eve asked, dipping her voice on the last word. She carried Maria into the other half of the room and I peered around the room-divider curtain with interest. Eve was looking at me with a smile and wide, almost excited eyes. She lay Maria on her back on the double bed and undid the press studs of the baby-gro. She undid the nappy and lifted Maria's legs up into the air by holding both feet with one hand. I had a good look at Maria and saw that the pale areas near her genitals had darkened and the skin was all the same even colour. "Sies!" ("Sis!") (Eve) said. I had had a bad cold so could not smell a thing. "Sies, Maria, jou kak stink!" ("Sis, Maria, your shit stinks!") Eve said. (Observation 35, November 2005)

It is possible that by November Eve felt comfortable enough to use the word "shit" around me (albeit in a demi-voice), and particularly when talking to her baby in my presence. Her vocal dip on the word still suggests that it slipped out and she may have initially regretted it. My strong sense that Eve was purposefully displaying "good mothering" during the observation made me wonder whether there was any difference in her behaviour when I was not around, although both parents said in interview that things would have been the same if I had not been there:

I: Do you think that, that there is anything different you see in yourself now or something you have changed or that, that you see something different in the baby because Jana is here, do you think you would have viewed yourself and the baby in the same way if Jana never came?
Piet: Oh, it would have been the same.
I: Is that so? Okay, so you don't feel she has changed how
Piet: No, she, she, she is just her, how can I say this, almost like her.. like, I now almost wanted to say, almost like a second mother to her, do you understand. (Interview 2 with Piet, June 2005)

And yet Piet's comment suggests that I had a reinforcing role. During the process I struggled to feel that Eve's mothering was always good enough, perhaps for a number of reasons. In part, I queried what I saw because I was aware of the complexity of our relationship. I may have been expecting poor mothering from a theoretical bias. More speculatively, I may have been responding unconsciously to Eve's conviction that I was there to judge her (and perhaps I was). Despite what has been suggested about infant observation as a non-judgmental tool (Maiello, 1998; S. Miller, 1997), it may not be easy to maintain a non-judgemental frame of mind where differences are marked and difficult events occur (Ellis, 1997; Piontelli, 1992). Alternatively, it is often mentioned in the observation literature that the observer's overly critical attitude towards the mother is a sign of identification with the baby's powerful primitive needs at this stage (Bick, 1964; Canham et al., 1997). My worry about Maria's vulnerability, discussed earlier, may lend some weight to this interpretation. In other words, I may have been critical of the mother because I was flooded with the baby's vulnerability, as a result of observing her so intently.

While the seminars could acknowledge the positive aspects of Eve's mothering, such as her responsiveness and the way she showed the baby off to me, it seemed they were more reluctant to engage with the more unsettling aspects. An example of this is the way in which Eve's calling Maria "rude" at a month old was first met with shock, but then quickly and genially interpreted as a way of expressing love by saying the opposite of what was actually meant. My sense was that possibly *both* love and hate were being conveyed simultaneously in this phrase. At the time of the following observation there was a great deal of discussion in the seminars about how well Eve was mothering under difficult conditions:

A well-known love song ("Say You, Say Me" by Lionel Ritchie) comes on the radio and Eve starts singing along, then catches herself and stops. After a while she joins in again, mostly mouthing the ends of lines self-consciously in a semi-voice. She doesn't always know the words. I catch lines like "Remember who you are, you are a shining star" and "Say it together, say it for always, naturally". Eve seems sad and in thought as she sings sotto voce. The song ends and another one comes on, about not knowing much but knowing how to love you. I find this quite touching, watching Eve rocking Maria to sleep, while patting her quite hard. I am not so sure she knows how to love Maria, but I want to believe she does. (Observation 8, March 2005)

My struggle is visible: I wanted to believe the seminar's version of events, but felt troubled by the complexity of the observation space. Only by May could I finally decide that Eve's care was genuine:

One of the small children has taken Maria in her arms and is holding her, facing outwards, by clasping her tightly under her armpits with her arms, her hands locked at Maria's chest. "Los my kind…" ("Leave my child alone…") Eve says, bending down to loosen the grip. In this moment I believe for the first time that Eve's infinite care of Maria (as discussed in the seminars) is actually real, and not just a show for me. (Observation 16, May 2005)

While Eve's ability to mother well was never in question for the seminar group, it did seem to me as though, especially initially, she censored her more ambivalent responses to the child. For example, the first time Eve, the baby and I were together I noticed:

After a while [Eve] lifts the lace off Maria and looks intently at her with her head tilted to one side, and the corners of her mouth curled in a slight, fixed smile. (Observation 3, January 2005)

How was I to interpret this tight smile? In the seminars this aspect was not discussed. Eve's fixed smile may have indicated her tension about being watched. But the fact that the smile felt "fixed" also suggests that she may have been wearing it in order to present a particular image of herself: "Mothers who look at their babies are filled with smiles and loving feelings". But it is possible that she did not genuinely feel like smiling at Maria then. Two months later I saw a less perfect version of Eve:

[Maria] starts crying again and Eve turns her over, going "WATissit! Watissit, watissit! Watissit…watissit…" ("What IS it! What-is-it, what-is-it! What-is-it…what-is-it…") Her initial tone is irritated, then she seems to catch herself and ask it inquiringly; eventually it becomes playful, with her leaning over to look into Maria's face. She seems to be putting her face there so that Maria can see it. Maria doesn't stop crying, so Eve leans in and kisses her cheek over and over again, holding the kisses in a long, sensuous way and murmuring, "Onbeskofte kinders gewiesie Mammie, onbeskofte kinders…" ("[We've] been rude children, Mommy, rude children…") (Observation 8, March 2005)

Here was a rare instance in which Eve did *not* seem to know why Maria was grizzling and allowed herself to show her exasperation at not being able to quieten her down. She stemmed her irritated outburst and instead turned it into its opposite, namely playfulness, and then affection. It seemed to me that she wanted to cover or disguise the moment I had witnessed. This episode is reminiscent of an earlier one cited, in which Eve held Maria upside down and then kissed her afterwards. Of course, many mothers may find themselves stemming their irritation at times, whether they are being observed or not. But I thought Eve was particularly vigilant about how she was seen. I will expand on this issue in the discussion that follows in **7.6**.

The more problematic aspects of Eve's mothering were not discussed at any length in the infant observation seminars. It felt to me that her possible depression (which I linked to her circumstances) and its impact on her child were not seen. This seems unusual, because maternal depression routinely comes up in the infant observation literature as something that is encountered. My hypothesis is that the extent of the deprivation that Eve was experiencing, together with our uncomfortable socio-political positioning towards each other, were too much for

the seminar group (and for me at times) and that we unconsciously conspired not to discuss these very painful facets in a process of defence. Secondly, the infant observation framework, with its emphasis on the internal world of the child, seemed at times to leave insufficient space and time to consider other broader issues. Technically, it also seemed as though the theory did not provide adequate means to think about the impact of the social.

7.5.5 The family and the community

In this section I will briefly consider the quality of the relationships between the Smit family and their immediate neighbours. The word community "conjures up, in most popular uses, a benign notion of unity between people living in proximity to one another" (K. Gibson, 2002a, p. 19). But in fact, the relationships I observed within the community of Moretown were very complex. On the one hand, I observed neighbours helping one another (lending things, including tools for fixing roofs, bicycle pumps, soap, buckets, and boiled water for coffee). On the other, when people had so little, it seemed hard to share. It seemed instead that there was a dominant culture of "each one to him or herself":

After a while [Eve] says she has just been sitting there thinking whom she can ask for money to buy gripe water with…She doesn't like to borrow from people around here, they are reluctant to lend you anything, they say you will not pay it back. (Observation 9, March 2005)

People seemd pitted against one another for scarce resources, creating a sense in which friends could quickly become potentially violent enemies:

Aunt Lil returns and smokes in the doorway. Another woman comes to tell her that she is not drinking her wine. The woman has a nervous expression on her face. I greet her and she nods, without smiling. She remains outside and keeps her eyes on Aunt Lil. She leaves. (Observation 10, March 2005)

Neighbours were most likely to gossip and privacy was not a given. On the contrary, there was evidence of intrusiveness:

Maria looks past me at something in the right neighbours' yard. She sweetly cranes her head to see around me. A woman in a large blue doek (headscarf) says something behind us. "Kry vir jou 'n bril!" ("Get yourself some glasses!") Piet calls, "Five inches…dan kan jy vêrder sien!" ("Five inches…then you can see further!") I suddenly realise what he is saying and laugh spontaneously, enjoying this acerbic retort to her nosiness. Piet looks at me with slit smiling eyes. "Of 'n verkyker…" ("Or a pair of binoculars...") he adds in a softer tone. (Observation 33, October 2005)

Piet: And here people are different (**I:** Mmm), you tell them something, then it almost seems they go and make a whole big story of it. (Interview 3 with Piet, January 2006)

There is a great deal of existent data about the prevalence of gossip in Moretown (Kruger, in press). The lack of trust this engendered in the Smit family may have contributed to their sense of alienation and isolated living. They expressed the way in which Eve in particular, at her husband's injunction, largely separated herself from the neighbours:

I: So they said nothing, never, said anything about.. Jana's visits to you?
Eve: They.. what-do-you-call-it.. they, we don't communicate a lot with the people around here.
I: Okay, okay.. okay… Is there a reason.. aren't you.. (There is music audible in the background. It sounds like rap/hip hop music).

Eve: Mmm-mm, there aren't any reasons. My husband just doesn't want me to go round to everyone's houses and so on.
I: Okay.. So you keep a bit.. you're by.. by yourself here?
Eve: I just sit here at home, keep myself busy.. (Interview 3 with Eve, January 2006)

Eve often washed clothing together with her back neighbour, Noelene, who lived in the same yard. My sense was, however, that this woman, like Lee, was accepted by Eve within the inner sanctum of the yard, where they all lived. Other neighbours, for example, were regarded quite differently, with a degree of derisiveness and suspicion:

There is a male voice outside and Eve frowns. "Wiessit?" ("Who is that?") she asks Natasha. Natasha skips to the doorway and back again. "Dis daai ander Oom…" ("It's that other Uncle…") Natasha says, looking at Maria. "Watse Oom?" ("What Uncle?") Eve asks with a frown, almost to herself. (Observation 22, July 2005)

Eve says, "Natasha…,jy't dan gister so lekker by Kalla en Lontie-hulle gespeel…net nie by daai lot nie, hulle baklei te baie" ("Natasha…you played so nicely at Kalla and Lontie's yesterday…just [don't go and play] with that lot, they fight too much") (I think she is talking about the neighbours' children). (Observation 20, June 2005)

There were indications that even with Noelene, who shared the back yard, there was at times some tension:

Eve comes around the corner and looks in briefly, staying in the yard. "En nou, as jy so sit?" ("And now, if you're sitting there like that?") she asks the back neighbour. There is no reply. Eve stands in the yard, looking out towards the right, shielding her eyes from the sun. (Observation 23, July 2005)

I wondered to what extent the lack of privacy that went hand in hand with living in crowded, makeshift homes exacerbated this need to put up psychological walls:

The house with the new wall is next to the black man whom [Alice] interviewed, and someone told [Alice] it is going up as the black man has funny wheelings and dealings and the neighbour wants to cut himself off from that. (Observation 32, September 2005)

In 2002, when I participated in the Depression Survey in Moretown, I wrote in my notes: "I wondered whether it was hard to be living among other people's children, who freely swarm into your house if you don't stop them." It seemed to me that the difficult living conditions thus affected the quality of the relationships between neighbours.

7.5.6 Conclusion

In the foregoing descriptions two themes are prominent, namely the ambivalence of the relationships, and the way in which the harsh physical surroundings may have played a part in determining the quality of these relationships. In interview I commented:

Jana:… And it's funny, because I, this is the first time I have actually articulated it (**Ms L:** Mmm), and I haven't really known what it is that's so exhausting (**Ms L:** Mmm). I've tried to say what's hard to.. observe poverty or see a baby without electricity (**Ms L:** Mmm), but it's not as intellectual as that.
Ms L: No, it's the relationships.
Jana: It's the relationships. (Interview with me, July 2005)

7.6 Discussion: The underside of experience

In this section I will consider what lay behind the prominent phenomenon of ambivalence in these observations on two levels. In this way I will try to consider the "forgotten" material that Freud taught us to think about: "Freud is

interested in the holes, the openings, the breaks, the breaches, the cracks, the spaces, the pauses, the silences, the interruptions and the lulls" (Kruger, 2006, p.13). I will again focus on my relationship with the mother. First of all, I will consider how the observations functioned as a therapeutic space (technically) for her. In other words, I will explain how the very nature of infant observation itself may have complicated our meeting. Secondly, at a broader but connected level, I will discuss the ways in which our different South African identities influenced our relating. In Chapter Eight I will consider the therapeutic outcomes of the infant observation process.

7.6.1 The observation as a therapeutic space

In Chapter One a therapy was defined as a treatment of sorts. In Chapter Two the analytic framework was described as lending containment to the therapy process. By extension, containment was then described as an important function both in psychodynamic community work and in infant observation (Chapters Three and Five).

7.6.1.1 A regular, reliable frame

The observation frame forms a very reliable, regular form of contact in which the observer ideally behaves fairly uniformly across observations. It appears that the parents in my observation experienced that they could always know what to expect, concerning my visits:

I: Okay... Is Jana any different.. since.. the start of the visits.. is she now different from before?
Eve: Mmm-mm, she's still the same.
I: Just the same..
Eve: Mmm.. (**I:** Okay..). She's the same every day. (Interview 3 with Eve, January 2006)

This contributed to their sense that in time I became a known entity to them (including the baby) and a part of their lives. Eve seemed to suggest that this happened quite quickly:

I: Okay.. okay.. So.. uhm.. because she was [here] for a year.. it is a long time to come here every week, so.. does it feel
Eve: We
I: Yes?
Eve: I quickly became used to her. (Interview 3 with Eve, January 2006)

Piet noted that it was the great length of time we spent together that had engendered this:

Piet: Geez man... All right, if I can put it this way.. the very first time, we didn't really know her yet.. (**I:** Mmm) do you understand (**I:** Mmm). But the first time and the very last time, [it]'s a big difference, do you understand (**I:** Mmm), *because why*, the last time, we already knew her well, do you understand (**I:** Yes), than when we [met] her the first time (**I:** Mmm), the first time we met her, do you understand (**I:** Yes, yes).. since that time we were (**I:** Mmm) together more (Interview 3 with Piet, January 2006)

Piet's comment recalls Ainslie and Brabeck's (2003) acknowledgement that, in ethnography and psychoanalysis, "meaningful engagements take time to develop" (p. 43). In reality the family did not know any more about me (factually) than when the process started. The kind of knowledge they were speaking about was a relational knowing about how I was most likely to be towards them. It also obliquely referred, I think, to the way in which we began to trust one another more. Because I was so predictable, I was eventually described in terms of a friend or companion, and a member of the family:

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I:…And how do you think you'll feel.. by the end of the year, and, when she finishes in January next year, how do you think you'll feel then?

Piet: That will now.. (He laughs a bit), can I tell you, it's going to seem a bit what-do-you-call-it, do you understand uh.. almost as if you're saying good bye to a person that you've (**I:** Yes, yes) worked with (**I:** Mmm) the whole year (**I:** Mmm). See perhaps you have, you have a friend, you've been working with him for all these years, now he's going to another.. (**I:** Yes) whatsisname (**I:** Mmm). You are going to miss him, *because why* the two of you did a lot.. (**I:** Mmm), most of the time, did things together or talked (**I:** Yes), you understand (**I:** Yes). You are going to miss him, *because why* uh uhm, the two of you were almost like brothers (**I:** Yes), towards each other (**I:** Yes), in the end, do you understand now (**I:** Mmm). We accepted [her] because why, because we had all the times when she would be coming over (**I:** Mmm), we know exactly what time she's going to finish (**I:** Mmm), we know exactly when (**I:** Mmm), do you understand?

I: Yes, so it is, it is, if I've heard you right, it is the same idea as, it feels as if she's becoming a part of your family (**Piet:** Yes), and when you think about, when you think that she needs to go again in six months, then you think it will be sad for you and (**Piet:** Yes) probably for your wife too.

Piet: *Because why* see, we've become used to her man, do you understand. (Interview 2 with Piet, June 2005)

In other words, the analytic elements of the space, namely regularity, reliability, and extended contact, quickly engendered a sense of safety and a degree of trust. The fact that I controlled my response to Piet's attack, for example, may have conveyed my focus on the family's needs as opposed to my own need for retaliation or gratification. It seems that in the latter instance containment occurred. In fact, at the time I commented:

The mood of Piet's conversation is charged and confrontational at first, but changes as I hold eye contact and try to listen and respond. It becomes much calmer, and almost intimate (therapeutic?). (Observation 6, February 2005)

It was suggested in Chapter Two that issues around basic trust and mistrust always arise in the early stages of any analytic encounter, or for that matter any relationship. In other words, Eve's own issues with trust, related to her childhood experiences, may have been activated. In addition, in real terms, as a white Afrikaner, I was not automatically a very trustworthy figure. It seems that I had to prove that I was trustworthy over a long period and through several tests and challenges. I will say more about this below.

7.6.1.2 The transference

It has been noted in the literature that, even though the observation is not a clinical setting, it is not immune to strong transference effects, like any relationship. It is possible that some of Eve's unmet self-object needs were activated by the presence of someone who essentially came to attend to her every week for an hour. Within this framework it seemed that a complex transference was enabled to develop between us involving the replaying of past hurts in the processes of idealising, mirroring and twinship (Kohut, 1971). In fact at times I compared the observation hour to difficult client sessions:

I feel like I have just done something big and taxing, like an exam or a difficult therapy session in which the client attacks me. (Observation 17, June 2005)

Ms L: Not sad about the fact that she can't say things to you.. that she can't express..

Jana: Uh.. Hurt, frustrated, I think that's what one (**Ms L:** Uh), that's what makes me want to stop it.

Ms L: Aha. Okay, so that's

Jana: *Ja*, it's like a therapy with no, with, with a connection that's continually, withdrawn or stopped, locked (**Ms L:** Mmm).. It's exhausting.. (Interview with me, July 2005)

In interview I listed the things that were hard about the observation experience and which by mid-year led me to feel it would be a relief to shorten the process. They included the way in which Eve was not able to acknowledge me:

Jana: …her not asking me whether I feel better after I've had bronchitis, when I phoned her and say I'm sick, I got her on the phone, I said I'm sick, I'm not coming, uh I'm ill in bed, she said: Yes, I understand, *ek verstaan*, sort of, I thought indicated to me, I'm not stupid, I hear what you're saying (**Ms L:** Mmm), don't patronise me (**Ms L:** Mmm). That's painful (**Ms L:** Mmm). (Interview with me, July 2005)

Here "understanding" was used not in the sense of sympathy, but as in, "I understand, I am not stupid". It is possible that I over-explained (out of guilt?) and she took my emphatic speech as another white person talking loudly at her as though she were deaf. Alternatively, it was just extremely hard to show me anything but defensiveness. Eve may have felt so vulnerable towards me to begin with that she was not willing to risk showing her attachment. It turned out that she did in fact worry how I felt:

Piet: No, it's.. it's actually still the same for (Eve) (**I:** Mmm). She, she .. there's many times when she's perhaps not here, do you understand (**I:** Mmm), if we're perhaps not going to be home (**I:** Mmm), then she'll always say man.. we must, phone, phone, phone her to tell her we actually won't be home that day (**I:** Yes), so that she actually, that she can actually know we're not here (**I:** Mmm, yes). We mustn't just go away from the house without telling her (**I:** Yes), then she comes here, and then she comes here for nothing, do you understand (**I:** Yes). Now that, that just shows you uh.. that she still feels the same about her do you understand (**I:** Yes), because if, if you didn't feel that way you'd, you'd just disappear every time (**I:** Leave yes) for the hell of it, do you understand.
I: Yes, yes, I understand. So.. is it, is it correct to say that there is sort of a, a friendship as well (**Piet:** Yes) between your wife and, and Jana, is that how she views it too?
Piet: Yes. (It is a definite yes.) (Interview 2 with Piet, June 2005)

The sense of surprise that characterised our meeting at the start of many of the early observations has made me wonder in retrospect whether Eve did not actually expect me to turn up every week, as religiously as I did:

Eve nods at me as though recognising me and suddenly remembering I was due to come today, but goes on wringing the washing out. (Observation 8, March 2005)

Here, again, it seemed like first contact all over again. It is possible that Eve did not want to show any eagerness to see me, but also that she perhaps did not even allow herself to hope for me initially. In other words, Eve may have expected disappointment, as though I would forget her or not care enough to keep coming, especially when the circumstances became charged and difficult. This may have been indicative of her organising principles. In the next chapter I will consider how thinking about my experience of loneliness in the observation process helped me to understand that Eve may have felt isolated, alone and unheard in general, and in particular in my presence, especially at the beginning: as a middle-class white observer, she may have felt that I could not possibly understand her experience of suffering. I had also indicated to Eve at the start, despite her obvious struggles, that I was not there for her, but for the baby. Thus my loneliness may have been part of a counter-transference feeling related to Eve's loneliness.

In retrospect, we can hypothesise that Eve had a great need for affirming connection. Burmeister-Nel et al. (2004) noted in the Mother-Infant Bonding Group they ran in Moretown that

> Many of the women reported what may be interpreted as lack of mirroring experiences and healthy attachments in their own childhoods. These appeared to be translated into adult needs for support, attention, care, empathy, understanding, and simply being heard. (p. 10)

Interestingly, such processes, they noticed, often involved the women's babies in some way, for example, gaining attention for the baby when the mother was actually in need of mirroring. It is significant and very interesting that my attention was, despite the fact that I fought it, predominantly on the mother right from the start of the infant observation process. There was a sense in which I was perhaps unconsciously compelled to give Eve something she needed, but which she could certainly not vocalise under these conditions. Instead, it seems to me in retrospect that she used her baby to express her own need to be seen and heard:

Eve looks at me and I smile at her, with a glance. I am feeling quite tense. She looks back at Maria and says, while holding her head down close to Maria so that Maria can see her: "Wie's dit? Wie's dit? Wie's die antie? Ek wil weet, maar Mamma wil nie vir my sê nie…julle wil nie vir my sê nie…ek wil gesels, maar julle wil nie vir my sê nie" ("Who's that? Who's that? Who's this aunty? I want to know, but Mommy won't tell me… you don't want to tell me… I want to talk/chat, but you don't want to tell me"). I half-hope Eve will give Maria to me to hold. (Observation 9, March 2005)

Eve seemed to construct the idea here that she and I shared a secret, or a special relationship, from which Maria was excluded and of which Maria was jealous. It is possible that Eve was unconsciously letting me know about her own need to "gesels" (talk), and her unhappiness at her awareness that I was not available for that, because I was there to observe the infant. In response, I perhaps wanted to "hold" her (emotionally), but again, did so in my thoughts about the baby. In the Mother-Infant Bonding Group, the facilitators experienced something similar:

> An example of this is when one of the women placed her infant on the floor in front of one of the facilitators, after the facilitator had given attention to another infant. Was this gesture a request for attention for the mother herself? - something she felt unable to request for herself, and so instead, did so by projecting this need onto her baby and allowing her baby to enact it. (Burmeister-Nel et al., 2004, p. 14)

The infant became, they noted, an extension of the self and needs were expressed through the infants themselves. Care for the infant seemed to symbolise a sense of pride in the self. These women related to the facilitators through their babies and in this way got the attention that they needed. In interview, Eve confirmed that I was only there for the child:

I: Okay… So.. what, what I hear is that she is here more for the sake of the child (**Eve:** Mmm..) than.. than for you.. okay..
Eve: It is only about the child.. (**I:** Okay..) (Interview 1 with Eve, March 2005)

I: Does it feel unclear to you..what exactly she's doing here...?
Eve: She just wants to see me because of the child. She won't do much.. much what-do-you-call-it (**I:** Mmm..) It's not really about the mother (**I:** Mmm..), it's about the child. (Interview 1 with Eve, March 2005)

It is revealing that Eve seemed to warm towards me slightly after the birth of her child:

Her tummy is still quite large. She smiles lazily (first time I have seen her smile?). Her face seems more relaxed generally. (Observation 3, January 2005)

The door, which had been "closed" and "ajar" in the first two (pre-birth) observations, was now "wide open". It was as though we now had a legitimate focus point and reason for meeting. In effect, Eve could now have what she needed, in a disguised, and therefore more comfortable way. The baby became a way for me to actually see Eve:

I can't see the baby anywhere! We stand facing each other and I ask some factual questions. She is quite slow answering: baby born 2 January, her name is Maria, but she has a second name (I inquire) - Milla, and she says the name proudly – Maria Milla Smit. When I ask, says they will call her Milla (then why introduce her to me as Maria?) I ask where she was born and she

misunderstands me, then says Hierso, with a head movement back and left, adding the hospital, and when my expression indicates that I want to know more, Stellenbosch Hospital. Eventually I ask whether the baby is here and she says yes, she is sleeping, standing back. (Observation 3, January 2005)

In the early observations, Eve seemed eager to have the baby awake:

Eve is clearly waiting for the baby to wake up, almost wishing it, and says, Die een gaan nie nou wakkerskrik nie (This one is not going to wake up now) (I nod). (Observation 3, January 2005)

Suddenly Maria lets out a brief, complaining cry and Eve and I both smile. Eve's eyes widen and she seems both amused and hopeful that Maria will wake. After a while she lifts the lace off Maria and looks intently at her with her head tilted to one side, and the corners of her mouth curled in a slight, fixed smile. She leaves the lace off and after a while she lets out an abrupt laugh, saying "Daar gaan die ogies nou oop" ("There the little eyes are opening now"). I can't see this as Maria has her face turned towards her mother. Maria sleeps again. (Observation 3, January 2005)

It seemed that the baby gave us a relationship within which to interact more legitimately with each other, particularly as I had suggested that Eve might like to get on with other things while I watched the child. Within this relationship, I could equally well see Eve, as she mothered Maria:

Eve: Sometimes we talk.. (**I:** Mmm..) and sometimes I sit, and then she just sits here and watches the child.. like this (**I:** Mmm..).. Then I'm maybe busy with the child... (Interview 1 with Eve, March 2005 2006)

Breastfeeding was an instance in which she, the child and the breast were all part of the holistic subject of interest:

Eve: She just sits, like Madam is sitting there now.. then the child maybe lies there or the child.. the child lies there.. (**I:** Yes..) Then she just sits, then she looks at the child how s.. how the child moves and those things (**I:** Yes..) and [what she] does.. then she might say I can carry on with my work or I can sit there.. there by the child (**I:** Okay..) and she watches how the child drinks at the breast, then she watches.. how the child breastfeeds and all those things (**I:** Okay..)... (Interview 1 with Eve, March 2005 2006)

By being busy with the child, Eve perhaps unconsciously ensured that she too would be watched. It is interesting that she remembers me as saying that she could either go on with her work or just sit with the child (which I did not). This seems to express her sense that she could be a part of being watched, or not, as she chose. In interview, it sounded as though having a baby was a kind of ticket to these visits for the mother. As discussed, I seemed to be something that this family had, and others not.

Ironically, the very fact that Eve was getting something good from the observations may have been the reason why she needed to make them difficult for me. In interview, my promoter and I wondered about why Eve continued to punish me:

Ms L: Because you've just earlier on said, you have a sense that she is feeling cared for (**Jana:** Mmm), but not being able to articulate it, so it is.. uhm, it's not that she's not getting it and therefore punishing you, she's actually getting it and therefore punishing you, so
Jana: Punishing me because she's getting it. (Her voice is thin and it is clear she is still upset).
Ms L: Ja, ja, ja (**Jana:** Ooh). And because she can't have more of it, or she can't have it forever or, or she simply doesn't know how to take something good, take on something good, because she's never had it (**Jana:** Mmm)… Ja, I.. I don't know where we are now on the schedule (They start laughing again). But I think this is very very important, really really important.
Jana: I'm just thinking about her singing along to a band today (**Ms L:** Mmm), some love song of, I know it, but I can't think of it (**Ms L:** Mmm), at the moment. (Interview with me, July 2005)

At this point Ms L actually knew how valuable Eve had found the observations (as she was privvy to the interview material and I was not yet). She helped me to theorise that Eve could not acknowledge what she was receiving partly because she had never had it. She may have been anxious about how long it would last and did not trust it. Kohut (1971) has written about the way in which having our previously neglected primary needs met can be an over-stimulating, frightening experience. So in part it is possible that the strain in our relationship may have been a clue about the effects of Eve's personal history of deprivation. In the co-transference (also created by what I brought from my own history), Eve was to me predominantly a withholding figure, whom I was not allowed to get angry with, someone who was connected and close to me in some way, but who was inconsistent about showing that. This interacted with my own organising principles on a very deep level. The strong sense of push/pull, of hiding and seeking, and of responsiveness and withholding that I experienced in relationship with Eve was reminiscent of the double-messaging quality I picked up in her mothering of Maria at times, which I have discussed. For example:

Eve brings up the issue of [my taking] photos of Natasha again: "Mevrou kan sê wanneer, hoe dit vir MEVROU pas, as Mevrou die dag tyd het - want sy kom half een uit die skool uit" ("Madam can say when, as it suits MADAM, when Madam has time - because school finishes at half past twelve"). I say we can look, maybe next week if the weather is fine – it's not essential, but the light is better then. "Is beter dan, ja" ("It's better then, yes") Eve says. Sometimes Eve has this exaggerated way of talking, as if she thinks I would like her to sound like this. But there is some irony in her eyes, like she is teasing me. (Observation 26, August 2005)

In the above example I felt what it was like to be connected with, but also to sense that behind it lay a disguised attack of sorts: even though Eve was talking to me in a respectful way, her eyes and tone suggested that she was in fact sending me up by putting on a mock-display of respect. The result was that in the moment I was portrayed, I felt, as a patronising figure. This double messaging was an unsettling experience and I wondered whether it mirrored some of what Maria felt when receiving similar (and different) double messages from Eve. If being withholding was a more general style of Eve's, one can speculate about the reasons for this propensity in her. In thinking about her personality, it is hard not to think of her in context: as someone dealing with very difficult circumstances, which certainly must have impacted on her mood and attitude. Unconsciously, she may partly have wanted to cause pain because she herself was in pain. I sometimes got the sense that there was something bothering her, and certainly there must have been many painful aspects of her daily life that I did not know about. I sometimes thought I saw signs that she had been distressed:

Then [Eve] absent-mindedly folds a nearby diaper cloth into shape on the bed to her right, placing it to one side afterwards. She stares towards the door with glazed eyes as Maria drinks, frowning occasionally when she hears someone speaking outside. I think her eyelids are slightly swollen. (Observation 8, March 2005)

[Eve] pulls Maria to her, kissing her cheek with a sucking raspberry sound. I say that Maria has grown a lot, but it feels a clumsy thing to say and I mumble it. Eve doesn't respond. She returns Maria to her facing-out position and we watch each other again, while Eve yawns and looks out of the door with a vacant stare. Her eyes seem slightly swollen. (Observation 13, April 2005)

In other words, it is possible Eve could not let me be comfortable because she herself was currently in pain. She could not talk about how she felt, but unconsciously she could convey an experience of her suffering by making me suffer. Within an object relations paradigm, as mentioned in Chapter Two, this defensive process has been called projective identification (Klein, 1946).

In summary, my assertion is that Eve was replaying other, past relationships in her way of relating to me. This had both a hopeful element of wishing that our relationship could meet previously unmet needs, as well as an element of replaying past relational failures. In Self Psychology terms, Kohut (1984) wrote both about the welcome "striving to complete the development of the self" and the "anxious clinging to the archaic self-object" that can be seen in the therapeutic space (p. 209). He held that this is a frequently encountered response when the patient meets a newly empathic milieu.

7.6.1.3 Abandonment by the observer

In the "make or break" period, as discussed, family members and neighbours seemed to test me unconsciously to see whether I would stay. Faced with several challenges, I noted:

I consider leaving. But I won't be chased away. (Observation 10, March 2005).

In the same observation Eve put her index finger into Maria's palm and Maria gripped it:

"Mamma sal nie weghardloop nie…sallie weghardloop vir die kind nie…" ("Mommy won't run away… won't run away from the child…") Eve says, waving Maria's arm up and down. (Observation 10, March 2005).

On one level this seemed an unconscious communication about being abandoned when in a very vulnerable state. Caplan (1998) commented that it is difficult when there is a communication in an observation from the mother in relating to the child: "Had this been a therapeutic relationship, I might have felt more able to try to take this up. As it was, we both had to rely on non-verbal and implicit ways of resolving this and other issues regarding our relationship" (p. 19). Eve may have been indirectly asking me to stay. I felt great responsibility towards the family but also, as mentioned, a real desire to be done with the observations:

Alice chats about her planned Gorilla Encounter in Africa. I wish I could go on something like that too, but I cannot be away from this study for so long. I have been trying to count how many observations I might still get in and it never feels enough (although the original count was to find out how many I still had to get through). (Observation 29, September 2005)

I wondered whether the family picked up on my desire to be away from them early on. For example, in Observation 6, during Piet's challenge of me, he said:

As ek sê u moet loop, dan moet dit so wees. As u besluit u gaan nou loop, dan kan ek nie smeek en soebat u moet bly nie, dan kan ek mos niks doen nie? (If I say you must leave, then it must be like that. If you decide you are leaving now, then I can't implore and beg you to stay, then I can't do anything?) (I nod, actually having had a fantasy of terminating the observation contract earlier when he spoke about skin colour). (Observation 6, February 2005)

In interview, Piet conveyed that it was a real possibility that I could simply stay away one day:

Piet: *Because why* uh uhm… there is something that she got uh.. got from it, as I can see it now (**I:** Yes), because if she didn't get anything out of it, she wouldn't come back. (Interview 2 with Piet, June 2005)

In the period when I observed while Eve was away at work, I thought I detected some anger in Eve towards me. After a good observation in which I felt relaxed observing the baby, I called Eve:

The next day, I call the cell-phone. Eve answers: "Hallow?" ("Hello?") she says. I say, "Hallo, Eve?" and there is a silence. "Dis Jana, Jana Lazarus." ("It's Jana, Jana Lazarus.") "Wiessit?" ("Who's that?") she says, after a pause. "Kan jy my hoor?" ("Can you hear me?") I ask. The phone goes dead. I call again immediately, but it is "subscriber unavailable". I feel unbelievably awful again. (Observation 24, August 2005)

Here Eve seemed to spoil the good experience I had had with Maria in her absence. She may have felt that the baby had me now and she had lost me, and this could have felt "unbelievably awful" to her. Eve said the following about my absences:

Eve: When she didn't come, then I always wondered if.. she's going to come.. or, or.. (**I:** Mmm..). Sometimes then.. when she came, she'd tell me why she wasn't here, then she told me she was a bit ill (**I:** Okay..), she didn't feel well, that's why she couldn't be here.
I: Okay, so there were times when she couldn't come
Eve: Then I understood her.
I: Okay. But before that.. did you feel a bit.. bad that she hadn't come or..
Eve: No, back then, we still had the *phone*, then she always called (**I:** Yes), because she had the number, then she always called to say that she can't make it (**I:** Yes). Then she would say she's not feeling well today, she can't be here (**I:** Okay). I understood that about her.
I: Yes… Were, were you perhaps a.. bit disappointed on that.. at those times, that she couldn't come…?
Eve: I didn't really feel disappointed, because.. because.... what-do-you-call-it.. because I now knew, she told me (**I:** Mmm). That's why.. I can't.. I don't have to.. I don't have to worry now whether she's going to come or that, because she already let me know she can't come. (Interview 3 with Eve, January 2006)

It seems that Eve did not want to name her disappointment about my absences in interview as resentment towards me. It is possible that she did not even feel that she had a right to be disappointed. It is interesting that Eve remembered my absences as something I came to explain, and ask forgiveness for (which is true): this suggests a shared sense that they were something precious, which were missed. She also described my staying away without warning. This, however, was not true - when their phone was not working, I asked research assistants to go to the house to get my message through. With this comment, Eve seemed to be expressing her sense of waiting for me, and perhaps wondering what it would be like if I did not arrive. Interestingly, I shared such concerns:

My car won't start and I feel an immediate sense of disappointment. I realise I really want to go to the observation. How awful for them too if I do not turn up and can't get a message through. Luckily I get it going and drive to Stellenbosch with great energy and a sense of happiness. (Observation 37, November 2005)

My sense of empathy here lay in stark contrast to an equally strong fear that I would never be able to escape this world:

Carol pulls in where I normally do, leaving the car running, and I joke that she shouldn't leave me here (to which there is an unexpected, ominous silence in the car), that she must promise to come back to fetch me in an hour! (finally, laughter). (Observation 18, June 2005)

Despite what Eve said, my experience was that my absences were indeed a source of some friction. Underneath her protective barrier, she may indeed have been anxious that I would stop coming. I have wondered whether her repeated expression of surprise at seeing me arrive at observations hinted at that. She was quite unsettled during an observation where I arrived later than the usual time, even though it had been with her consent and in order that I could take a photo of Natasha when she came out of school. Despite the fact that she had originally been pleased about our plan (an arrangement which put me out somewhat), she seemed angry. When I said that she had been worried I was not coming at all, Eve agreed:

As she does so, she says with a blank face that she wasn't sure if I was coming anymore, "Want kyk hoe laat is dit dan al," ("Because look how late it is already,") while glancing at the clock hanging near the medicine shelf. I am firstly moved and struck by what this means, and secondly mildly affronted. I hasten to explain, talking softly so as not to wake Maria: "Ek dog ons het gesê as dit mooiweer is kom ek bietjie later…" ("I thought we said that if the weather's nice I'll come a bit later…") but this is not addressing what she's saying (and I realise it doesn't matter), so I add: "Maar jy was bekommerd dat ek nie vandag gaan kom nie" ("But you were worried that I wouldn't come today"). Eve nods. (Observation 27, August 2005)

It seems then that the regularity, reliability and predictability of the infant observation framework were very important. As for therapeutic clients, any change in the "rules", though consciously positive, may have felt unconsciously threatening to Eve (Langs, 1982, cited in Colam, 1997). In response, I was moved to make a verbal interpretation by naming the feeling instead of arguing that she had known I was coming later, which seemed to ease things. This increased my awareness that we were somehow engaged in a therapeutic encounter of sorts. I wondered much later whether Eve had understood and hoped that I would come at the same time, but would then stay twice as long. It is possible that she very much wanted me to be there, but simply could not show me that. In fact she hid her need for me so well that in interview I was not initially able to guess whether, if given a choice, she would choose to stop the observations or not:

Ms L: …Do you think she would want you to continue, she would, what do you think she will decide if she had a choice?
Jana: Ooh, uh..
Ms L: I'm right off the schedule there. (They laugh together heartily.) I'm sorry!
Jana: It's fine! (She is still laughing.) Uhm… Do you know that only, I haven't thought about that at all, whether she would want to continue or not.. I do think however if asked that question, she might say one thing and think another.
Ms L: And, or, which way will it work?
Jana: I think, ooh, that's also a, I don't know. (Her tone of voice indicates that she really doesn't know, but would like to know.)
Ms L: What will she say to you..?
Jana: Nothing. (She gives a short laugh.)
Ms L: To you she will say nothing?
Jana: Oh, *ja*. I don't think she'll let me particularly know what her emotions are about this (**Ms L:** *Ja*), not in words.
Ms L: Mmm, then what will she..
Jana: I think she might tell an interviewer that it's, it will be fine, it will be okay to stop, in a fairly neutral way.
Ms L: Mmm.. And what will she be feeling?
Jana: I think that, she will miss me… (They both laugh softly.)
Ms L: Have you thought about that before?
Jana: Uhm.. No, I thought about the fact that I will miss her actually. (Interview with me, July 2005)

My prediction was accurate. Again, the pattern seems to be that I was made to feel things that were hard for Eve to feel. But in her last interview Eve was able to be more open about her longing not to miss observations. She spoke about the time when she was at work and I observed Maria with Piet:

Eve: Yes, then (**I:** Okay), at that time my husband was home.
I: Okay. And how did it feel to you?
Eve: I felt [*soe anners*] so different in a strange way, because I always saw, at that time we worked up here at the school (**I:** Yes) then I always saw how she came round there in her little car (**I:** Okay), then I stood by the fence, then I saw her little car turning in there (**I:** Okay). I felt [*soe anners*] so different in a strange way about not being able to be at home.
I: So you.. you missed it, you felt that you wanted to be there? Yes..yes.. And for how long (Eve interrupts the interviewer)
Eve: And when I got home then my husband tells me.. what she said.. then he tells me what they.. they spoke about.. and that which I [told you] just now about her.. [that] she feels [*soe anners*] so different in a strange way (**I:** Yes) that she has to leave now, and she's going to miss us.. (**I:** Uh..) and all those things. (Interview 3 with Eve, January 2006)

Here Eve seemed almost proudly to assert that I cared for them. Unusually, she interrupted the interviewer to do so. It seems that Eve was enabled to talk about her connection to me because I finally verbalised my connection with the family as I was preparing to terminate the observation. Again then, it was up to me to feel and express the

connection on her behalf. The fact that I cared (particularly about the mother) seems to be what made the difference - and perhaps that is why Piet and Eve were able to give me a felt sense of warmth and connection in the last observation:

I: And in the second last visit, the one before.. last week's visit, did you.. perhaps realise there's only one left, just one visit left, this is the second last visit that we will.. will have?
Eve: Yes, I knew.
I: And did it already feel different to you?
Eve: Mmm (**I:** Mmm?). Because, because, because.. my husband said that.. that.. when I still worked, then he said.. that she said she.. doesn't feel good now that she has to go away from us, because by now she's used to coming to the child every Wednesday.. (**I:** Okay). Because she has grown so used to us, and she'll miss us and everything. (Interview 3 with Eve, January 2006)

In the following extract from her last interview, Eve volunteered concrete things about how I looked (emotion) and what I did (showing care). Eve again seemed enlivened by the idea that I did actually care for them - she may have wondered, just as she had led me to wonder, whether we did really have a connection, or not:

I: Okay. And how did you feel when she said she's going to miss you.. and that..
Eve: So.. [*hartseer*] sad.. so (**I:** Yes). I have wondered, that is, she comes here to [see] the child (**I:** Yes). And then she chats with me.. and.. how she feels about us and.. (**I:** Yes, yes). It feels all right.
I: But it was a difficult.. day for you (**Eve:** Mmm..). Yes.. yes.
Eve: Because she still bought her a gift, because the second of January was her birthday (**I:** Okay). And so she bought her a .. a present (**I:** Okay..). And for my little girl (**I:** Natasha, yes). They both got something from her.
OV : Okay. And how did it feel.. that she gave you, the children something?
Eve: I feel all right about it.
I: Yes.. yes… Okay.. So… (The voices in the background have faded quite a bit and the atmosphere seems more peaceful).
Eve: She's almost like one who.. that last.. last week she felt, her face almost seemed as if, she wants to.. she wants to cry now or something (**I:** Is that so?), because she (**I:** Yes), she's going away from the child now (**I:** Yes).. The child still played and laughed with her. (Interview 3 with Eve, January 2006)

In the same pattern of relying on my feelings to express something of hers, she posited herself as the one comforting me for *my* loss - instead of talking about her own initially:

Eve: She actually didn't feel well, with the last.. It.. it was her last day (**I:** Yes). Then.. then she told me she.. feels so [*af*] down because she's going away.. That's now for the last.. (**I:** Yes..), and she'll miss us and all those things (**I:** Yes). And then I said to her.. Madam can still pop in inbetween when Madam has time.. gets a chance.. Madam can always pop in. And then she said she would just like to see how the child is progressing (**I:** Okay) inbetween those times when she comes around, how she's progressing (**I:** Okay), then I told her she.. there's no problem if she wants to pop in again (**I:** Okay). Then she still gave me the number, if we need her we can phone (**I:** Oh, okay, okay). So I feel quite okay about it. (The background voices are very loud at times and almost dominate). (Interview 3 with Eve, January 2006)

It seems significant that Eve credited herself with having come up with the idea that I should pop in occasionally, when in fact I brought it up. Here, once again, she seemed to be expressing, and even feeling her emotions, through witnessing my own:

Eve: She didn't speak that much to me, we just sat like this.. (**I:** Yes), sat and watched what the child was doing (**I:** Mmm) and then she looked so [*annerster*] different in her face.
I: Okay.. So you, you could see something was [*anders*] different? Yes.. yes.. Did you feel any different?
Eve: I also felt [*anners*] different because I saw she didn't know [what to do] now either (**I:** Yes..), she.. is now.. is.. she doesn't feel.. she's probably not actually, she was probably, she didn't really, she probably didn't feel like going away either because she'd (**I:** Yes..), she'd become used to the child (**I:** Yes..). (Interview 3 with Eve, January 2006)

The number that I gave her was in fact the number of the WMHRP, although they did have my personal numbers too. I specifically told her that it was the number of my promoter and that this was the contact person if they had difficulties in future. She remembered it, however, as my number, and in this way it might have functioned as a symbol of our continuing connection and contact. Termination was particularly painful time, as I was faced with the sense that I was abandoning a family who had so little to begin with:

I stood up and Eve turned, looking into the room. She looked surprised. I said that my time was up and thanked her. Noelene (the back neighbour) said something outside just as I asked her whether next Wednesday was okay, so she asked me, "Wat sê Mevrou?" ("What did Madam say?") and I repeated it. She said yes, coming into the room. I stood in front of them, saying goodbye to Maria with a wave. Maria and Eve just looked at me. Eve's expression was stricken and blank and cold and I felt hated, trying to say a nice sweet goodbye here. I turned around and left. (Observation 35, November 2005)

It is a windy, hot day with clouds over Table Mountain. I have been looking forward to this obs the way you look forward to the gallows. I think about calling Ms L for support. I have a panic: should I have brought a birthday gift today? I am planning to bring gifts for both children next week at the last obs. I have been on two weeks' holiday and feel very relaxed. I dress down, hoping in a way that I look like Eve. The gift would have bought my way back in. I have unusually bad period pain and diarrhoea. (Observation 42, January 2006)

There seemed to be something so unbearable in this for me that it could only be felt somatically. In their observations of premature babies Lazar et al. (1998) noted a similar mixture of feelings in the observer, namely of violent intrusion, guilt, excitement and terror, and yet great difficulty in leaving. We could hypothesise that, like me, Eve, had experienced some kind of abandonment in the past, which was reawakened by our connection and parting. However, it is also interesting to note that in Nhlapo's (1990) study two thirds of the mothers wanted to prolong contact when the observation course had ended. Like Adamao and Magagna (1998), I softened the impact of termination by visiting sporadically for another two years, especially around important events like Maria's birthday and the birth of her brother.

In conclusion, one of my findings was that just as in other contexts, infant observation can feel akin to a therapeutic space, in which strong attachments can form. Eve and I brought our own childhood histories to our meeting in the form of our internal worlds, as well as a particular socio-political positioning towards one other. In the above discussion it becomes clear that these two domains cannot easily be separated, if one considers that experiences under apartheid influenced our developing subjectivities. It was argued in Chapter Three that socio-political internal objects exist, which shape the transference (Long, 1999).

7.6.2 The impact of apartheid

Perhaps the most crucial but unaddressed factor in our relating was the looming spectre of apartheid. As K. Gibson and L. Swartz (2000) pointed out, community work entails entering a set of circumstances created by the policies of apartheid. This involves a legacy of pain and loss in parents that filters down to children, as well as poverty, a particular geographical positioning, and a lack of services associated with oppression and inequality (K. Gibson & L. Swartz, 2000). Therefore it is unsurprising that its influence was palpable in the present study.

Belle (1982) commented that sometimes a common factor in women's personal histories can contribute to the bond between researcher and participant by diminishing a sense of separateness from the women in the study. As much as I looked for sameness in a comparative process that was about connecting, there was continuous and painful

evidence of enormous difference between Eve and me. We lived worlds apart, literally in areas that had historically been polarised by poverty and deliberately segregated geographically. My awareness of this is present in the reports from the beginning, for example:

The TV is blaring, a soap - that crappy world I laugh at, it seems a glamorous escape to them, they wished they lived there…Look at my old white car, gleaming it looks beautiful, it will be a regular sight around here. (Observation 1, December 2004)

In my world my car was old and unfashionable, and I found soaps on television tedious and fake. In Moretown my car was a luxury (there were no other cars in the street that I could see) and it seemed to me that the glamorous world depicted in the television programme was something attractive to aspire to, if one compared it to the living conditions in Moretown. Throughout the observations there are endless examples of my noting the difference between us. Our differences were painful because they pointed to how much more I had materially and in terms of comfort, opportunity and education:

My film has been double-exposed, with the result that the pictures of the shacks are imposed over images of my house and garden, and me dressed up as Madonna at a karaoke party. (Observation 23, July 2005)

Cloudy day, I get dressed in casual shoes, thinking about mud. En route notice a wine farm and a restaurant I have been to, almost right outside Moretown, but never realised it. (Observation 3, January 2005)

This kind of extreme juxtaposition between wealth and poverty is a common sight in South Africa. While Belle (1982) speculated "that at some future time one of us might find herself rearing children in poverty", by virtue of my privilege at the expense of people like Eve, I would never end up living in a shantytown (p.17). Although the city of Cape Town (where I lived) was only 70 kilometres away, it seemed a different planet:

I was surprised and amused to see what at first looked like Christmas lights! Strung across the road at the little stall at the top of Maroela Street, was a wire construction with 2006 in the middle, and two bits of fir branches for decoration on either side. Now that I am writing, I think that this is the equivalent of the Adderley Street lights - and how Moretown is a world unto itself, so removed from Cape Town that they have to make their own lights. (Observation 43, January 2006)

From the huge disparities in our material wealth, I sensed envy towards me in the community and a wish to damage what I had:

Two days later, I notice smeary marks on my car doors, as well as a section of etched scratches, which may be pencil marks. (Observation 23, July 2005)

This led me to think about the way in which violent crime can come from a sense of having sustained damage oneself. Even when we seemed to be close, the status and material differences between us were painful:

A sense of contentment and being filled has come into me during this observation. At the same time I am absolutely torn. I am leading a "schizophrenic" life, heading off to lunch with my mother where we drink sparkling water and look at the lawns. I think how much Natasha and Maria would enjoy playing here. It is like paradise in comparison. (Observation 41, December 2005)

I thanked Piet, using his name. He looked up with mildly surprised eyes and said "Okei…" ("Okay") as though I was an old friend. The big dog lay there without moving. I was holding on to the metal heart that is my key chain and he glanced at it. Did he think it was money, I wondered? (Observation 40, December 2005)

From an intersubjective perspective our historical and current socio-political positioning can be seen to have governed our relationship. Our difficulties were partly about a reality-based fear: could one trust this unknown person of a different race, culture and socio-economic status, in the light of the history of apartheid? On a phantasy level othering processes had divided us and made us suspicious of one another (L. Swartz, 2002). In this sense I must have been a very complex figure for Eve, as she was for me. She wanted the visits, but despite the possibilities for connection they offered, to her I was also a person who might again use her, be intrusive in her life, have power over her, and shame or judge her. These are themes explicitly linked to her previous experience of white people like me. Similarly, my fear in Moretown was partly reality-based (as a previous victim of crime linked to the poverty created by apartheid), and partly the result of making the boundary between "us" and "them" more permeable by means of my study (L. Swartz, 2002, p. iv).

My fear was the result of complex factors. On the one hand, there was the reality of being faced with innuendoes and challenges in what felt like and was known to be a dangerous community. I was going into someone's home at regular periods for a full year: this was not a one-off interview, and my exposure was much greater. Secondly, the fear that I experienced could be linked to the fact that Moretown represented unpredictable surroundings for me, in which anything could happen. In other words, the unknown quality was frightening. This could be said to be fear created by segregation. Later I will explore how fear might have been part of a counter-transference response related to the parents and the community being afraid of me. Unhelpfully, I thought at the time, Mrs K linked my fear with the paranoid schizoid position[3] that the infant was in during the first 3 months.

The gaze I brought seemed to be experienced as an all-seeing one, like "Big Brother". This makes sense considering the tyrannical practices of apartheid. Therefore my sense of intrusiveness may have reflected Eve's vulnerability in being visited by a white person at such an intimate phase of her life. The door to the house was always open during the observations, but when I first arrived there, it was shut "in my face" once (in the first observation) and kept ajar another time (second observation). One interpretation of this could be that it was in response to the overwhelming power with which I arrived on the scene. The closed door served to protect Eve, at least momentarily, from me. Similarly, my fears about Maria's initial vulnerability made more sense when I learnt, from the interviews, that the mother saw me as a kind of "baby police" coming to check that she, the mother, would not harm the baby. My sense of being dangerous can more broadly be linked to the family's undercurrent of fear about me as a white person: perhaps I felt dangerous because this community experienced white people as untrustworthy. It is possible that at the start of the process Eve was in actual fact afraid of me, just as I was afraid, in a community that I in turn felt could be dangerous to me. In the first observation with the infant Eve's expression seemed to convey some of these feelings:

Occasionally I meet her eyes when she looks up and catches me watching her. I smile mildly. There is so much happening in that gaze (fear, tension, defiance, vulnerability) - she holds the look. (Observation 3, January 2005)

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[3] A Kleinian concept of mental life in which the focus of anxiety is on threats of annihilation and disintegration. In the depressive position, by contrast, anxiety is about the survival of the object upon whom one depends (Bateman & Holmes, 1995).

Eve did not, however, overtly show her fear, and nor did I. Instead, as I have already mentioned, she developed a bold stance towards me that in fact expressed the opposite. Instead of feeling intimidated, she made me feel intimidated. This could be interpreted as a defensive process beneath which she hid her vulnerability. The difficult emotions between us, including anger, suspicion and vigilance, were not in the open, just as feelings of love and connection were not overtly expressed. These underlying issues were very much there in my counter-transference, however, which was painful at times.

7.6.2.1 Using one another

A dynamic existed whereby the family and I were initially using one another for particular ends. This I felt was more prominent than in observations where the status of observer and participants is more equal. The family wanted help with material needs, and they looked to me to assist. On the one hand, they were imbuing me with a kind of "socio-political transference", by believing that I could and would behave like all white people before me. On the other, they wanted to use me in order to get something. Latterly I have considered that this replayed some of the events in our country, but in reverse. In other words, in a kind of racial projective identification, I was made to feel what it is like simply to be a commodity for personal gain. There were indicators from the first that the family hoped to get something back from me in a material sense, in terms of practical assistance:

After a while Eve sits up and takes a slim book of supermarket vouchers from the shelf, wiping its dust off on her tracksuit pants. She studies the booklet intently, reading the back cover first, and then paging to the front, counting exaggeratedly in a whisper and nodding. Then she puts the booklet on top of a shoe-box on the shelf. She glances at the clock again. She asks whether I will be coming every day. (Observation 3, January 2005)

After a while [Eve] says she has just been sitting there thinking whom she can ask for money to buy gripe water with… (I think that this is a comment to me). She picks the gripe water bottle up and studies its label, reading it (but her eyes don't move). I think that I will buy gripe water and send it along with Carol tomorrow as a surprise. Carol can say she heard Eve needs this. (Observation 9, March 2005)

Here Eve seemed to be showing me something about her need in an exaggerated "performance of poverty". Later she asked me directly for help. When I asked a question in order to "learn more about babies" as observers do, Eve used the opportunity to convey something else:

I ask what gripe water is for, and Eve says it is to calm stomach cramps and it also helps them sleep better. She says perhaps that is why Maria has not been sleeping today, because the gripe water is finished. (Observation 9, March 2005)

I felt in the above moment that Eve was not beyond using my concern for the infant to get something she needed. When I did not offer money, she eventually asked me for it as I stood up to leave. She also seemed aware of my need for observation and interview data, and her important role in my getting this:

Eve says that they need money for the children, and girls need so many things. I nod emphatically. She wanted to go and look for work, but this one (looking down at Maria on her lap) is still a bit too small. I sit there thinking about what will happen to my observation if Eve goes to work. I imagine observing while Maria is in the care of some other woman, and feel that I won't be safe without Eve to protect me here. (Observation 10, March 2005)

Eve: Mmm... I wanted to walk up to my mom's but my mom.. (**I:** Mmm.. today..?). Mmm.. but then I couldn't go up... (She sniffs). (Interview 1 with Eve, March 2005)

Here there was a sense of bartering: Eve was intimating that she could have missed this interview as she needed to go up to her mother's due to her financial situation. She had stayed, in order to do the project a favour, and so may have been hinting that she deserved something concrete in return.

As a researcher I had an agenda to study the family in order to gather data. In this way it can be said that I was also using them, and that we were in fact engaged in a mutual re-enactment of past race relations in our country. Maiello (1998) was equally aware of the implications of a white person asking a black person to correspond with a wish of hers in South Africa today. I did not present myself as a friend. I presented myself as a student with an interest in the family for work purposes, and reiterated this when Piet effectively tried to humanise our meeting by asking if they could visit me in return. I was aware throughout the project of being uncomfortable about objectifying the family as my "subject of study", and the dehumanising effects of "observing poverty" in this way. This jarred with the fact that I began to know, and care about, the family on a personal level:

I sit in the warm car, thawing and thinking that this does feel like a whole team of white people descending on the coloureds to study them. How can Eve not know that I am so much more than a "student of babies?" Surely I would have chosen an easy white baby to study in the suburbs rather than this then? She must know I am studying her, her poverty, and the whole community too. (Observation 18, June 2005)

I settled the issue of what I could provide materially in supervision and asked Carol to inform Eve that the university could only offer referrals and that they would be given supermarket vouchers at the end of the process, in thanks. At termination I gave each child a gift, and Eve got the vouchers some time later (which I had in fact bought personally and at my own cost, but sent through Carol as a gift from the WMHRP). Two months after the observations ended, Eve asked her husband to try to contact me so that I would come and visit again. Because I had never given them anything in a material sense, it seemed that they were asking the continuance of our connection around the figure of the baby. I did return, even though my data collection was complete, and continue to have contact with the family. Maria is now nearly three years old, and has a younger brother. In this can be seen some development from using one another to finding primary value in our relationship.

7.6.2.2 Racism and prejudice

S. Swartz (2006b) commented that, collectively, South Africans are preoccupied with race, and inevitably so. The racial differences between the Smit family and myself were obvious. In the light of apartheid history, however, they were a sore point. I was aware of my own issues with race:

Eve again plays with Maria's hair, stroking and feeling it, pulling the little curls out straight and letting them bounce back again. I say that Maria has lovely hair. Eve smiles mildly while looking down, and seems less pleased by the comment than I wanted her to be. (Observation 10, March 2005)

Afterwards I wondered whether a part of Eve's reluctance to accept this compliment from me was about the fact that in South Africa the quality of one's hair had in the past been linked to racial categorisation. At that time having "white" hair, that is, straight hair could mean avoiding a pass book and all the restrictions that went with being categorised as "non-white". There were numerous other examples of awareness of race in my thinking, in that of the participants, and in the research assistants. For example, in the reports I referred to a neighbour just as "nightie" (because she was wearing one) (Observation 1) and noticed "2 gangster-looking type men" and "a black man in a

smart red car" (Observation 10). I also wrote about the "local Cape Coloured songs with a strong dance rhythm" on the radio (Observation 12) and "a mottled, coloured albino" (Observation 18). In other words, I had the capacity to look at people in a faceless way and categorise them in both racialised and stereotypical terms. In another example, an argument can be made that my fear of Piet and other men in the community as sexual predators was partially linked to my own prejudice. Racial slurs came up occasionally:

[Alice] used the word "Bantoe" (Bantu) and I thought how I had not heard that word in a long time. (Observation 32, September 2005)

Natasha told me that sometimes she comes home and she asks, "Wie was hier…?" ("Who was here…?") which I took to be a comment about my visits. "Dan sê my ma…niemand nie…net 'n kaffervrou!" ("Then my mom says…no one…just a kaffir woman!") I looked at her in shock. "'n Lokasievrou - 'n swartvrou" ("A woman from the location – a black woman") Natasha clarified. She can't have been talking about me, I hoped. Natasha picked the bottle up, scolding Maria with "Dit maak nat!" ("It's making [things] wet!") and put it on the TV unit. (Observation 40, December 2005)

Aunt Lil seemed unable to believe that I could view Maria in a way that was not derogatory:

"Do you love her? Take your hand, make a fist…slaan haar (hit her)!" [Aunt Lil] says in a half-whisper. "Do it! Do it!" I am ignoring her. "Dis 'n klein kaffertjie!…Poes…Kak…" ("It's a little kaffir!...Cunt…Shit…"). She seems to be muttering this to get a rise out of me. I keep watching Maria (but see nothing). "Don't do it, don't do it!" she says to me. "Is she your child? Is she?" (referring to Maria). I say no, quietly. (Observation 10, March 2005)

The concept of blackness came up, not as a positive construct, but as something unfavourable. In an early observation in which I was inside with a sleeping Maria, and Eve and her back neighbour were in the backyard with the neighbour's toddler, I observed the following:

The baby crawls off a bit to the side. The mother walks past to the tub and says to the child, "Djy sit in die son en jy's dan klaar so swart!" ("You're sitting in the sun and you're already so black!") (Observation 7, February 2005)

I was in earshot and the comment might have been partly for my ears, in other words, reflecting on the way in which I might be seeing race and judging black as "bad". On the other hand, the comment betrays some ambivalence towards blackness in the speaker herself. S. Swartz (2006b) observed that "Parents with a history of racial trauma and with internalized racism, insist that their children disavow their cultural heritage and identify instead with the oppressive Other" (p. 11). I thought that I saw evidence of this in Observation 16:

Alice is standing, talking to the right neighbour Joan, and the interviewee (Ouma Lien). The two children play at their feet. Eve (carrying Maria) walks towards them as I head for the driver's side of the car, greeting the women. "Hoekom is jou baba dan so swart?" ("Why is your baby so black?") Joan asks the approaching Eve. "Swart gebore. Moet sy dan *wit* wees?" ("Born black. Must she be *white*?") Eve asks. "Ja" ("Yes"), Joan says. (Observation 16, May 2005)

I felt that at times crudeness was performed for me in a self-satirical way, in deliberate reference to the stereotype of poor coloured people:

Aunt Lil turns to me again energetically and tells me that she doesn't have a husband, she never wants to be married. She says, "Ek vat hom eerder en sit hom in die nat waslap!" ("I'd rather take him and put him inside the wet wash cloth!") She laughs uproariously, while slapping her pubic bone with her legs thrown wide open. She looks in my face to see my response. (Observation 10, March 2005)

As I got to know the family, the assumptions I (and the doctoral committee) had initially arrived with seemed both prejudicial and insulting. For example:

As I start to write this I think about how we were concerned a participant would drop out or disappear from the observation process and what a prejudice that actually is. (Observation 37, November 2005)

As early as my second observation, I became uncomfortable as we read the consent form (**Addendum C**):

[Eve] slowly turns the page after me. I cringe inwardly reading the stuff re me needing to report violence and sexual abuse, it sounds like an accusation, how rude to come in here and suggest someone may end up molesting their child and *I* would have to say something re it. I expect her to be angry. (Observation 2, December 2004)

The fact was that violence and sexual abuse were factors in this community, as in most communities, and I had to include those criteria. I would have had to include them if I were observing in a white, middle-class home for the purposes of research. However, doing so here, for me with my white guilt, seemed to communicate that I was better than the participants, in a kind of moral policing. Tellingly, Eve's response was not to show anger, but to worry that I would take her child away. But in small ways she and her neighbours never let me forget these initial intimations:

Eve leaves the room again, but Maria won't settle and suddenly lets out a very distressed, choking cry, while lifting her head up off the bed and going red in the face. Eve comes in and lifts Maria up to her face, saying, "Onbeskof! Onbeskof, Mammie! Djy huil soos iemand wat pak slae gekry het!" ("Rude! Rude, Mommy! You're crying like someone who got a hiding!") (Observation 7, February 2005)

Eve says teasingly, "Wat maak jy met die kind? Slaan jy die kind?" ("What are you doing to child? Are you hitting the child?") and I realise the neighbour's child is crying, but a bit of a distance off. I think that the insinuation is meant for me to hear: look, we beat our children. (Observation 11, April 2005)

I had essentially said that coloured people abuse their children. And yet the fact is that Maria probably did receive corporal punishment, as I have indicated. The father took issue with me about my intimations when he challenged me:

Maybe he is wrong, maybe he has read that form wrong. But there was all sorts of stuff there. This is correct, isn't it? Stuff about kindermolestering (child molestation). I say, I am here only to observe but if, say…(Pause as I search for an example that won't incriminate)…say I see the child being stabbed with a knife, then it would not be right just to watch and not say anything about it. He nods and says, That would not be right…So, u kom inspeksie doen (So you're coming to do an inspection) (I interrupt him: Nie inspeksie nie, ek kom watch (Not inspection, I'm coming to watch)). Nee, ek bedoel nie so nie, dis nou my manier van sê, ek bedoel u kom nou om te…om te kom kyk (No, I don't mean it like that, it's just my way of saying, I mean you come to… to come and see). (Observation 6, February 2005)

At one point, Eve and I indirectly challenged one another on the issue of race:

[Eve] points out several angel ornaments made of beads and safety pins, which I have already noticed and found beautiful. They are hanging from Piet's jewellery tree. She says that Piet made them yesterday. I say they are lovely – for Christmas (thinking that I would like one for my tree). She brings a box full of beads and safety pins and a wire-cutter over from the double bed to show me, holding it almost too close to me, under my chin. I say that is very clever (wondering if she wants me to buy one) and ask how long Piet has been making jewellery. She says he made these yesterday. I ask again whether he has made jewellery and these things for a long time, the other things I mean…and she says the school used to make them, and now he is making them. We are misunderstanding each other, and it is painful. She says he is going to sell them, the woman at the shop said he should bring them. "Die boere hou mos van sulke goed om op hulle krismisbome te sit, dis mos vir hulle mooi" ("The boers like this kind of thing to put on their Christmas trees don't they, to them it's pretty"), she says, looking at me. I feel like she has punched me in the stomach. "Wie's die vrou wat dit wil verkoop?" ("Who's the woman who wants to sell it?") I ask, deflecting. Eve says it is the woman at the store, they know her quite well, she is quite nice. I decide not to back down, and say, "Maak julle dan nie 'n krismisboom nie?" ("Don't you put up a Christmas tree then?") looking into her eyes. She pauses briefly and then says that they don't, but the church does – it is mainly for the children. Then she adds that she should

keep one or two angels out for herself. This last remark makes me relax, like something has passed. (Observation 26, August 2005)

This was an instance where I did not allow an attack on me, and it felt important. Altman (2000) has written about "a complicated level of enactment"[4] (p. 599) in interracial therapy work. In a comment which could equally be applied to my interaction above with Eve, he noted in an interracial encounter that "The unconscious communication was: 'I recognize the aggression in your racism, and I'm prepared to meet it with my own, and thus survive any attack you may have in store for me'" (2000, p. 600). He held that it is essential to detect how one's own racism works in tandem with the patient's negative self-image. He noted that "My racism was a piece of the unconscious interaction, perhaps most evident to the patient in the form of the defense against it" (2000, p. 601). While my observation space was not equal to a therapy space, it involved inter-racial interaction and all the complexity that implied.

Eve may have feared that I had a racial stereotype of her as stupid and untrustworthy. I felt that she was often at pains to show me that she was not stupid, in case I thought that. For example, when I briefed her about the infant observation process, her response was authoritative:

C [the research assistant] has told her everything, she knows. Assistant C said, Assistant C said. Mevrous (Madams) me once. Net om te kyk (Just to watch) (corrects my om te watch). Mevrou leer oor *babaitjies* so (Madam learns about babies this way). (Observation 1, December 2004)

Eve seemed invested in demonstrating her knowledge and intelligence to me. Beneath this may have been (as the "Mevrou" (Madam) suggests) a belief that I would doubt this about her. I was struck by the way in which people in my social circle would ask me, when I spoke about my plan to observe in a township, whether the mother "understood" what it was that I was doing. Later, colleagues wondered whether the participants would "understand" my dissertation if they were to read it. I felt that in both cases these comments were coming from a place of othering the participants. Eve unconsciously seemed to communicate to me that, like other white people, I probably didn't trust her:

[Eve] shows me a receipt for a pram they are buying via lay-by: R40 down on a R240 pram. "Ons moet dit eers afbetaal, dan kan ons dit gaan haal" ("We must first pay it off, then we can fetch it") she says. "Watse tipe lay-by is dit?" ("What type of lay-by is that?") I ask, feeling angry. "Ek wiete waste tipe lay-by dit is nie…" ("I dunno what type of lay-by that is…") she says, and explains that people don't trust you will come back to pay the rest of the money once you have the item. (Observation 19, June 2005)

I wondered how Eve felt about the fact that the University and I had money but would not help, even out of kindness. She may have thought that we did not lend her money because we feared she would not pay it back, and that we lied about what we could give because we did not trust her. This may have translated into the bartering aspect of the relationship.

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[4] In clinical terms, it is suggested that some crucial analytic understandings are possible only following actions that make transference/counter-transference dynamics available for reflection (Black, 2003).

7.6.2.3 Power differentials

It was suggested in Chapter Five that infant observation has neglected the issue of power. Power was a salient issue underlying the tensions in my relationship with the Smit family and their neighbours, as can be expected in a country where people have been oppressed. The infant observer is advised to come in with an attitude of humility and leave expert roles behind. However, because of our context, I had real power and was imbued with even more on a fantasy level. The fact that I was white immediately created an actual power differential: I did in fact have more education, money and a car. But we also made erroneous assumptions about each other, based on the history of our country, which exacerbated this. This can be seen as a kind of political transference. There were indications that the family was still treated in a way that made them feel powerless, such as when social services arrived to do a survey of which families in the area were getting grants. Unconsciously, and despite my intention to be respectful, I did in fact replay an oppressive scenario in my contact with the family. However, it took a while to see this. When social services came into the home without Piet's knowledge or permission, I was reminded of my own early behaviour:

Piet says, "En mag mens vra hoekom julle dan hier is?" ("And may one ask why you are here then?") to the man. "Ons kry net record van al die mense in die area wat toelaag kry," ("We're just getting a record of everyone in the area who is receiving a grant,") the man says directly, in a business-like way. His tone puts distance between himself and these people. He is coloured, but apart from them. I envy that his skin tone makes him acceptable here, and wonder if they send him out specifically. Yet I am shocked to realise he is as much an outsider as I am. "Mens mag mos vra, of hoe dan nie?" ("One may ask, not so?") Piet asks the man, while looking at me. I nod gravely, looking into Piet's eyes. I remember that he used this tone and phrase with me at the start of the observation process. (Observation 26, August 2005)

I also found myself enjoying the fact that someone else other than me was being powerful and intrusive, and being confronted. This is reminiscent of E. Gibson's (2002/3) account, in which she also wanted to be seen as allied with the black family she was observing, in the face of *other* people's racism. In reality, I had the power to come and go, and also to enter the Smits' home at will:

[Eve] doesn't want give me date when come again, I must say…Ek is mos hier, selle tyd is goed (I am here anyway, the same time is fine). (Observation 1, December 2004)

In interview Piet spoke about the child looking at my photos in future and asking questions about me. They would then like her to meet me, so that they could say that this was the woman who came to see her in the first year of her life:

Piet: But the big thing is this... it's like she now, like the child now, do you understand (**Interviewer:** Mmm), this is how I see it, as she grows up, gets her own mind, and we now show her those photos (**I:** Mmm), this is now, this is the woman who always comes to you (**I:** Mmm), but then she might perhaps not know, but where's this woman now, do you understand (**I:** Mmm).. where does she stay or (**I:** Yes), she's going to ask a bunch of questions and (**I:** Yes), do you understand.
I: Mmm, mmm. And what will you tell her then?
Piet: That is what I'm trying to say.. then we must be able to answer her, where and how (**I:** Mmm), and we will have to get hold of Jana (**I:** Yes) to tell her (**I:** Her), to, to tell her she must come pop in (**I:** Mmm, mmm), that she can now (**I:** Mmm) see here is the woman who (**I:** I see), do you understand. (Interview 3 with Piet, January 2006)

Telling in this is the fact that they knew so little about me; they did not have the power to "pop in" to see me, as I was coming to see them. They did not even know where I lived and did not have the means to get there if they wanted to. Their power over me was very limited by comparison. Perhaps in order to survive the invasiveness of

the infant observation procedure, it seems the parents repeatedly tried to equalise the situation. For example, I arrived ten minutes early for the first observation (which had been set up by the research assistant) to meet the mother. Our first interaction was stamped with a sense of my overwhelming power, about which I felt very uncomfortable because it was politically so incorrect:

Mevrou Smit? Is dit Mevrou Smit? (Mrs Smit? Is that Mrs Smit?) Scowling, and I see the bump, also under green nightie. I am using very polite language: Mevrou Smit, ek glo ons het 11 uur 'n afspraak (Mrs Smit, I believe we have an 11 o' clock appointment). Eve picking her nose, pouting says, maar dis dan nog nie 11 uur nie (but it isn't 11 o' clock yet) (I am 10 mins early). Seems displeased/reluctant. I say I am early, moet ek eers wag (must I first wait), she nods. I sit in the car… (Observation 1, December 2004)

Eve's response, however, was not "to take it lying down" (a revealing phrase in itself, considering my fear of being raped during the observation process). She effectively threw me out and kept me waiting when I returned to the house:

At 1 min past 11 go knock on door again, no answer, when knock again, Eve calls, Ek is net gou *bissig* (I am just quickly busy). (Jana:) Okay, is reg so (that's fine). Spraying of deodorant… I feel stupid standing here outside the back door with it closed… Eve comes out scowling and goes to throw naartjie (tangerine) skins on heap, saying Ek is nou klaar (I'm almost finished). Dressed, looks different. Checks me out in daylight as passes me. In again, out, moves the broom (God, is she going to sweep while I stand here), motions I can come in. (Observation 1, December 2004)

S. Briggs (1999) similarly noted that the white observer of a Nigerian family was kept waiting at the door and at times had to see her own way out. Maiello (1998), observing a Xhosa family, noted the mother's suspicion of her at the start. I was determined to keep up a stance of respectfulness, perhaps in defence against the glaring reality that this family was probably not used to white people showing them any respect at all:

She sits on bed. There is nowhere else to sit so I ask can I sit on bed too. First I shake her hand, like a limp fish. (Observation 1, December 2004)

Eve resisted my power in small but potent ways. By calling me "Mevrou" (Madam), she referred obliquely to the fact that my sort had historically not thought much of her sort. Her choice to call me "Mevrou" never wavered for a year, although in interview with Carol she referred to me by my first name. The use of "Mevrou" felt not at all like subservience or even respect, but simply a pointed reminder that I was a white interloper and could not ingratiate myself here easily with a handshake and a respectful attitude. It is also amusing to realise that I chose to refer to my seminar leader as "Mrs K". In other words, in relation to Mrs K I may sometimes have felt and behaved as Eve did towards me. In choosing her pseudonym, besides the link with "Mrs Klein" and "Mrs Bick" (as they were known in their time) I consciously made a link with Bion's (1967) concept of "minus K", with all its implications of the mind's inability to make links and to know, to utilise relationship in order to create meaning, and to tolerate the recognition of reality. My sarcasm perhaps reflects Eve's. By contrast, in calling my promoter "Ms L" I have conveyed my appreciation of a perspective that could think about rather than duplicate the "Madam and Eve" dynamic.

Eve continuously made me feel that the power was in fact hers. But this was, I believe, a reaction formation[5] to the opposite reality. She may have needed to seize power wherever she could in order to hold herself together in my presence. Not having the power was, I have more recently admitted to myself, also very uncomfortable and exhausting for me. Perhaps Eve was unconsciously communicating her experience as a coloured South African to me in this way. It would certainly have been easier for me to have a subservient participant! I mused about Piet's niece:

It feels as though Lee is younger than me and that I have some power. I know that Eve is a good ten years younger than me, yet I always feel junior to her - and as though she has all the power. (Observation 30, September 2005)

It is interesting that at the start I also very much wanted to rather have the 17-year-old mother (second on the list) as my participant:

Still wishing for the 17 year old rather, fantasies/hopes Eve will say no, where might the other house be, I could go straight there now, must be close (39 in same street). Seems deserted, I think no one will be here, knock on painted door…I fantasise about where the 17 year-old is, look around. Will start with is Eve still sure wants to do it? (Observation 1, December 2004)

Standing outside the Smits' door, I even wished that the neighbour, who had greeted me in a friendly way and was "relaxed, streetwise; doesn't seem bothered to see a white", might in fact be my subject. In short, anybody who was either overtly less powerful than I was (much younger), or was willing to play the game of not bringing up the fraught history between us. I had these wishes before meeting Eve; therefore I can conclude that I had a fear, in a general sense, of the potential tension of the situation and very much wanted to avoid it if possible. As fate would have it, the participant I received was not about to minimise any of this. But on another level it is possible that she was the only one powerful enough to agree to the observation. It may also have been so that by agreeing to have me observe, her own fear and awareness were increased, compared to that of her neighbours, who did not have to face the prospect of a white person actually coming into their home, and into the intimate relationship with their child. It may be that a participant with less courage and verve would simply have said no to the observation, as the first potential participant did. Kruger (2005a) noted that Foucault (1980) articulated something about the agency of the seemingly powerless when he said that "individuals are vehicles of power, rather than its points of application or its consenting target" (p. 15).

My response was to underplay my personal sense of agency, in some way trying to make myself small. At the end of the first observation I apologised for the way in which I had, essentially, walked in on the family in bed:

Jammer dat ek vroeër gesteur het, ek sal volgende keer op tyd wees (I apologise for disturbing you earlier, I will be on time next time), she nods. (Observation 1, December 2004)

I experienced what it was like to have to ingratiate yourself in order to be accepted by someone else. This again echoed the coloured experience in South Africa. Personally, it was a particularly painful experience for me it touched on my own issues of self-worth. But beyond this, the irrefutable fact of my greater power in this situation came through repeatedly:

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[5] A Freudian term denoting a defence mechanism in which an individual adopts a psychological attitude that is diametrically opposed to her conscious wish (Bateman & Holmes, 1995)

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"Dankie, Eve, ons sien mekaar dan weer volgende week" ("Thank you, Eve, then we'll see each other next week again"). She starts a bit, then says, "Mevrou het nie dalk 'n paar sente nie?" ("Madam doesn't perhaps have a few cents [for me]?") and I sit down again. I say, "Eve, ek gaan vir die universiteit vra of hulle nie dalk vir jou gripe water kan koop nie, dan stuur ek dit more saam met Carol" ("Eve, I'll ask the university if they can't perhaps buy you some gripe water, then I'll send it along with Carol tomorrow"). She pauses (did she really want money for something else?) and then nods, saying, "Goed…dankie Mevrou" ("Right…thank you Madam") in a half-voice. I say, "Jy kan my maar Jana noem…" ("You can call me Jana…") and she smiles, looking down, and nods. I say, "Tot siens, Eve. En tot siens, Maria" ("Good bye, Eve. And good bye, Maria"), while looking down at Maria. Eve looks down at her too and smiles. I leave feeling awkward. (Observation 9, March 2005)

In our second meeting I offered Eve the consent form but, somewhat patronisingly, read it out loud to her from my copy. In Ellis's (1997) observation of a West African baby in a low-income setting, it was similarly noted that power differentials impacted on consent to be observed. The same occurred in Maseko's (1998) observation of a Xhosa infant and in the cross-cultural observation of a Nigerian infant cited by S. Briggs (1999). My consent form was meant to ensure Eve's rights as a participant, and to offer her the freedom to terminate at any point. At the same time, it laid out my ethical responsibilities in terms of my duty to report:

She hesitates at end, about the signing, she's reluctant. Ek het mos gesê ek sal dit doen. Vir wat moet ek nou hier teken? (I said I would do it, didn't I. Why must I sign here now?) She's not angry or assertive, just quietly withholding. Explain again and ask what it is that she is fearing. Suddenly aware that this time I am a psychologist observing, and it feels different. She smiles and says, Dat julle my kind sal wegvat as ek hier teken (That you will take my child away from me if I sign here). I am blown over and go into empathic mode, then reassure. Real possibility that she will not sign and I see the observation falling apart. Go through the bit about social work again, subtly grab the pen - I feel I am press-ganging her on some level. Immense relief as she signs, offer her a copy of letter to talk through with husband. (Observation 2, December 2004)

Eve felt that I inherently had the power to take her child away (something I have never come across in the infant observation literature). At the same time, by not signing, she was standing up to me. Her words had a challenging ring to them. My response is telling: I was ashamed and amazed, but also ultimately forced her to sign. My power was incontestable and certainly useful to me. At the same time this was an act of trust on Eve's part. Much later in the observation process, I learnt that a social worker had indeed threatened to take Eve's eldest daughter away when she was drinking, making the threat I constituted so much more real.

While I wanted to shake off the burden of all this power invested in me, I also used it in order to get what I wanted in terms of research. The baby in a sense became Eve's greatest point of power. When Eve spoke of looking for work, it even crossed my mind that I could pay her to stay home so that my observation could continue! But in fact, Eve only went to work towards the end of the process, when I was much more settled in Moretown. She then left her baby, beautifully dressed, with others so that I could continue the observations. Being present or absent for an observation was undoubtedly a form of power, though; it made a statement:

She asks whether I will be coming every day. She addresses me as Mevrou (Madam). I say no, that it will be once a week. She asks will it be next Tuesday again and I ask whether Wednesday will suit her, at this time. She agrees to this. She volunteers that she is going to Paarl [a nearby town] tomorrow – om die baba se geboorte aan te gee (to register the baby's birth) (implying she would not have been here tomorrow). (Observation 3, January 2005)

At the start I was seen as someone who could assist in making welfare enquiries (both by the Smits and the neighbours on the left). I responded by making two separate enquiries for the Smits and passing some of this information on to the neighbours. I was somehow supposed to know about things. On the telephone even the local clinic invested me with power and knowledge, seemingly because of my race:

I say that I found out about the social worker…She asks whether I found out on Monday…I say, well, since I was here last…Woensdag-week (Wednesday week), she says. I am confused by this interchange (why does it matter when I found out?). I say that she needs to go to the "kindersorgkliniek" (childcare clinic) and she frowns. I try to explain where [the welfare worker] said she should go. She asks, "By die brandweer?" ("At the fire station?") and I say I don't know, it is near Stellenbosch, not here in Moretown (I also had quite a bit of trouble getting the welfare worker to actually name the place where the clinic is, as she seemed to be assuming I knew). (Observation 10, March 2005)

To Eve, I seemed to be both a critical figure but also a potential source of help. Her perception was that I was sent to check up on her by the clinic:

Eve: It's not really about the mother (**I:** Mmm..), it's actually just about the child. And they send the people.. (**I:** Mmm..) she told me.. they send them out to come and see what.. how the children progress (**I:** Mmm..) and so on.. how the children are treated and so on... (Interview 1 with Eve, March 2005)

Eve surmised that I sometimes went to the welfare after observations:

Eve: ...But then I explained to her about my children (**I:** Mmm..) and then she said she'll find out for me here, she is sometimes here in the room (**I:** Mmm..), then she's around here in the room and then she quickly goes to the *welfare* woman (**I:** Okay..) (An engine roars in the background, louder and louder, there are also some dogs barking. Eve is hardly audible above the noise.) whom she'll send to me so that I can apply for my children (**I:** Okay..) The man [my husband] gets money and I don't work at the moment (**I:** Okay..)... (The engine still roars) (Interview 1 with Eve, March 2005)

She even asked me whether I worked with "those people" who had tried to take her first child away when she was drinking. Yet she wanted me there. In retrospect, having listened to the interviews and analysed the reports, it seems the parents were convinced I was coming to see how they parented, which in a sense was true. I wondered whether it was an unexpected surprise and bonus to Eve that I then expressed an attachment to her, and to the family, over time.

It is interesting that Eve never asked anything of me in terms of advice about the baby. This is contrary to what is noted in the literature (and occurred for other members of my seminar group), where mothers will look up to the observer as the "child-care expert" (M.E. Rustin, 1989, p. 9). Yet other mothers will treat the observer as though she needed to be taught "the fundamentals of baby-care" (M.E. Rustin, 1989, p. 9). Eve did neither, and this seemed to be a place of power for her. Partly, this may have been because I stressed, also in my approach, that I was a student of sorts. On the other hand, I felt Eve's stance had something to do with pride, making a stand, and showing the white person "we may be poor, but we know what we're doing with our children". She may have been invested in showing me the opposite of the stereotype ("drunken layabout mothers") in order to show that she was good enough. There was also the fact that I had never had a child myself. Although Eve never asked about this, my attitude may have given this away. I think she assumed I was childless, because I posited myself as a student who came to learn about babies from life rather than books. She may also have guessed it based on some of my questions, which betrayed my ignorance about matters related to childcare. In this sense, I really was the student who came to gain "some practical experience of infants" (Bick, 1964, p. 558). Because I was a novice, my learning was genuine and her knowledge greater. The fact that I did not have children and Eve did seemed to give her some inherent power. It was also, quite frankly, an area in which I envied her. Perhaps she could feel this.

In the face of the power differential, Eve often was quite assertive in her way of speaking to me:

I say she needs to go there on a Wednesday; they start at 9 but she should be there at 11, otherwise there are too many people there. She smiles and nods, saying, "Dan wag ek te lank…" ("Then I will wait too long…") We talk about what she will need to take along to apply for a "toelaag" (grant) for the children. Eve starts listing which documents she thinks she will need, and is very accurate. It is as though she wants to say it before I do. (Observation 10, March 2005)

It seemed that Eve wanted me to help, but also resented the implications of my help. My help meant that she was not able to do things for herself, which may have been a shaming experience. At other times her silence was a form of power:

She has signed a different surname and it is the same one as the cellphone man's! I ask her about this, feeling like a dunce that I have been calling her by a married name that is not right! (Observation 2, December 2004)

It is clear that I was never an unobtrusive observer who sat in the corner while the family went about its business; I was in fact very noteworthy. Often, the house's only chair would be placed right up against the bed where the baby was sleeping, so that I could watch her. There was never a single instance where the baby left the room, whether carried or not, and I was required to follow. In Observation 20 I even indicated that the mother did not need to leave the front yard where the whole family was gathered and she was doing the washing, in order to bring the baby indoors for the observation. The result was that Eve simply sat with the baby on her lap in the full sun for an hour. When Maria became more mobile, the parents or sister would stop her from leaving the room so that I could watch her. In other words, the concept of me running after any of the Smits was never entertained; instead, the baby and in fact the family was at my beck and call.

Piet was the only one to actually use the word "apartheid" during the observation process. In the run-up to our conflict, there was a period in which my non-acknowledgement of him seemed to be an issue. In other words, I was demonstrating too much power and not enough regard for his rights. Shortly after I made the connection with the name he had written next to the telephone number and the name Eve had signed on the consent form, Piet himself appeared at the door, as if to insist on his presence in the proceedings. In retrospect, I realise I should have talked more to Piet about the observation process at this juncture and given him a chance to ask questions. I chose to greet him and leave him with the consent form, I think, because of my discomfort about his alcohol abuse and my desire to leave the house as soon as possible. In retrospect, I can see that Piet may have been giving me an opening to talk about the observation, by coming in at that point, thereby forcing a meeting. There were other clues in his behaviour that he wanted to be included more:

Father answered, baby was born 2 Jan while I was in London. I arrange with him as, unusually, he doesn't pass the phone straight on to Eve; I hear him asking her when would be a good time… (Observation 3, January 2005)

Early on Piet hobbles in (I had not noticed his bad limp before) and puts his mug in the shallow bucket on a small kitchen unit at the window. We make eye contact and I smile. He goes outside again immediately, and packs up his workbench. (Observation 3, January 2005)

The following observation occurred just before things came to a head between us:

As I emerge from the alleyway into the back yard, I see Piet sitting outside as usual on a low seat, but this time he is in the far corner of the small yard. I do not see what he is doing. He returns my greeting in an undertone, without a smile. (Observation 5, February 2005)

I had not followed the correct protocol and Piet's displeasure with me seems clear. On the other hand, one can interpret Piet's attitude in a gendered way: he was the man of the house, and I, a white woman, had entered it by consulting his wife. I also had a sense of being seen as a sex object by Piet, particularly at first and particularly when we were in the public eye. For example, in the following observation, the whole family was in the front yard, and in full view of the neighbours:

I watch Piet polishing the belts (not with colour, as I first thought, but with Dubbin) [a shoe wax or polish]. He glances at me and I smile. He holds the gaze without returning the smile. I pick up something sexually provocative and look away. (Observation 20, June 2005)

I wondered whether Piet's sexualisation of our relationship was a way to equalise the power imbalance between us. It is possible that Piet needed the "Dutch courage" of alcohol to finally force a discussion with me about what I was actually doing. At the time I felt threatened by the confrontation. In retrospect, I feel some regret for my lack of insight. In any infant observation it is always stressed that it is important to meet both parents. In this context it seems even more important, because the relationships are riddled with power dynamics. My response, to bring along people for safety, may have been yet another insult. It conveyed the message "you are dangerous" in answer to what had essentially been a communication to me about wanting respect. At the same time it was necessary for me to feel I could continue the observation. My behaviour towards Piet may unintentionally have been quite shaming. I continued to feel at times that I had the power to denigrate his status by my attitude:

Piet is half-lying in the group at the gate. He smilingly says, "Hallo, Jana, hoe gaan dit?" ("Hello, Jana, how are you?") and I say, "Môre Mnr Smit, goed dankie, self?" ("Morning Mr Smit, well thanks and you?") He says he is well and I say I left the information we discussed with Mrs Smit. As I walk to the car, I wonder whether I should have done this in front of other people. (Observation 10, March 2005)

It seems significant that Piet began to call me by my first name, but that I retained a more formal way of addressing him for a while longer. I let him be assertive but felt victorious because this approach won me what I wanted, namely access to the child. Ultimately I had the most power after all. This incontestable fact, despite his small victories during the process, lends a sad irony and hopelessness to our power struggle. In interview Piet stressed that he very much wanted to ask me what it was exactly that I had learnt about his child by watching her. He did eventually ask me this, but as he was not able to make clear to me the degree of detail he was after in the moment, I probably did not give him a satisfactory answer. When Eve seized power, my response was to try to bear the alienating effect of this on our relationship (again, letting her have the power). In the next chapter I will speculate about the effects of this experience on Eve, namely of being very assertive towards me as a white visitor, without retaliation.

7.6.2.4 Internalised oppression

A core feature of our relating was the issue of being evaluated and found wanting. In psychodynamic terms "good-enough" is a positive concept that suggests imperfection but an acceptable standard of mothering (Winnicott, 1971a). In the context of this observation the phrase can be used ironically, as negatively evaluative: meaning that one does not feel good enough, or worries that one will be found to be lacking.

I had the education afforded me by the apartheid system, yet I put myself forward as someone who was coming to observe in order to learn. I did, in fact, observe adequate mothering, under very difficult conditions. But there were many ways in which Eve may not have felt good enough in my presence. I have indicated that I did not always in fact trust that she was good enough for her baby. Apartheid gave a strong message of white superiority. I had a gaze that inferred inferiority, and intimated that I was watching critically. I was invested with the power to judge, to condemn, and even to remove the baby. Linked with this was the experience of loss that the family had suffered under apartheid. Eve may, in learning to be a woman within this particular society, have accepted and internalised a derogatory and constraining image of herself (M. Rosaldo & Lamphere, 1974).

There was some evidence that women in this community were still being patronised by white people. In one observation I found that Eve was not at home one day and Piet, who was drunk, encouraged me to go find her at one of the local churches. I ended up conducting my observation in the group welfare meeting she was attending. Mrs B, a white, middle-aged, Afrikaans social worker from Child Welfare, spoke at the meeting:

Mrs B says that first we will introduce ourselves and say a bit about our strengths, about what we are good at or enjoy doing - because if we can discover that, we can do something with it. Someone else in some other meeting enjoyed baking, and now she is selling biscuits from her home…Mrs B speaks as though she is one of us and knows these women intimately, but her voice also sounds like a preacher's and the combination is patronising. (Observation 37, November 2005)

Still dandling Maria between her legs, Eve says that she is Eve. She speaks as though trying hard to get her voice louder. Mrs B asks if she works and Eve says, "Ek *het* gewerk" ("I *did* work") in a slightly defensive tone. Mrs B asks how many children she has and Eve says two, one at school and this one, and that she is married. I look at her rings. I am aware of the painful monosyllabic quality of Eve's answers and want to help her, but don't… And what are Eve's strengths, what does she enjoy doing? Eve shakes her head and looks down with a smile. (Observation 37, November 2005)

While Eve spoke little to me generally, in the meeting she was more reserved and much more self-conscious than I had ever known her to be. This is reminiscent of E. Gibson's (2002/3) observation, in which the grandmother showed quite a different silent, compliant face to the visiting white health nurse. E. Gibson (2002/3) surmised that she had been given an insider view. In comparison with the other women in the group in this meeting, Eve seemed less at ease and less self-assured. Perhaps this patronising situation was very intimidating for her. In this painful exchange, in which it felt as though Eve were being put on the spot, she may have sought refuge in relating to the child on her lap. It is also interesting and ironic that my latterly joining the group seemed to have resulted in Eve "smiling more", which is something Mrs B commented on. My hypothesis is that having my attention on her and her child may have felt strengthening in this setting. Such patronising attitudes by a white woman may have been usual in Eve's world and undoubtedly impacted on her self-esteem. She may have been determined to have a different relationship with the white woman who was coming into her home to observe her.

It seemed pertinent that both the Smits and their neighbours presented for help to me as a white person. One can interpret that the community had ended up in a culture of dependence, by always being at the mercy of more powerful white people in society. In reading the observations, it is clear that there was a thread of shame running through many of Eve's actions, specifically shame in relation to me. It seemed that the oppression the family had historically experienced, as coloured people in apartheid South Africa, had come to live inside them in the form of low self-esteem. In a vast body of literature on the subject this has sometimes been referred to as internalised oppression (see, for example, Richards, Pillay, Mazodze & Govere, 2005). This could continue to keep them

powerless, because internally they felt as though they had no agency. S. Swartz (2006b) spoke of the way in which the internalisation of society's racism shapes a child's life, as inexorably as her gender.

There were indications of Eve's shame in areas related to her education. Here she filled in the form for Natasha's maintenance claim in front of me:

[Eve] sits upright, finished. I look at the page. Eve has written in large, round letters. "Ek het nou baie lelik geskryf," ("I wrote very ugly here now,") she says to me. "Dis fine," ("It's fine,") I say, smiling and shaking my head. "Hulle kan dit mos oorskryf op 'n skoon stuk papier," ("They can re-write it on a clean piece of paper,") she says, folding the page over and pursing her lips. (Observation 22, July 2005)

Eve conveyed a sense that she had somehow soiled the paper with her poor writing and that it needed to be "redone" by the white officials who would decide whether she got money or not. Eve and Piet seemed to care about how I as a white person saw them and their community:

I hear [Aunt Lil] talking next-door: Someone has been drinking her wine. I hear Piet saying that she is making "moles" (trouble) in his house; he doesn't come make trouble in her house. I hear him say laconically, "Ant' Lil steek ons in die skande…" ("Aunt Lil, you are embarrassing us…") (Observation 10, March 2005)

Eve also manifested a sense of inferiority about her home circumstances. This can be seen in the way the house was prepared for me from the first. It was noted that this was also the case in E.Gibson's (2002/3) observation of a low-income black family. In the first observation I found people lying in bed with the television on at eleven in the morning. Ten minutes later I returned to find the room empty, with the television off, the room-divider-curtain drawn, and only a single, made bed visible. Eve may have felt some shame about the fact that I had come across her and her extended family like this. At my first meeting with the baby there was a distinctly prepared feel to the proceedings. The father was outside, working hard at making jewellery, the baby was inside, bathed and sleeping, and a chair was placed near the bed, possibly for me. At their first meeting Eve apologised to Ms L for the way the roof was leaking, and it seemed the family cleaned up both the house and yard for me. For example, at one point the abandoned television that had been outside stood on a chair in the corner of the room. I never saw the house in the same dishevelled state as in that first meeting again:

I look around the room, noticing near me a table fashioned out of a large upside-down bucket with a melamine top balanced on it. It is shiny clean and covered in three doilies on which stand plastic sugar and coffee pots and Maria's bottle, with some milk in the lower third and its lid on. I wonder whether this display is for me. (Observation 7, February 2005)

The orange peels and wet toilet paper (previous observations) have mostly been cleaned away alongside the right of the back house. The garbage pile to the left of the back house is also almost flattened, and mostly ground now, with scattered bits of rubbish on it. There are a few shards of corrugated iron stuck into the ground to form a low wall-like structure in front of it. I wonder whether someone is starting to build a house there. (Observation 21, July 2005)

There was a constant process of home improvement on the go. The furniture and decorations, including the wall clock, moved around a great deal:

I notice that the doilies under the sugar and coffee pots have changed. Two rattles are suspended from a line of string above Maria's bed. I have seen them before, but not in this position? (Observation 8, March 2005)

I notice that the doilies on the table have changed again and that the plastic coffee tin on one of them is empty. (Observation 9, March 2005)

My visits may have been linked to the fact that the family acquired a new double bed, two dressers, the pushchair and a flowerbed during the observation period. As Maria began to crawl, they took increasing trouble to create a baby-safe space:

I immediately noticed that the whole floor had been pasted wall to wall with a plastic linoleum-type cover (but softer) in bright geometric patterns, making it look like a kitchen floor. It might have been plastic wallpaper or stickable table cover actually. (Observation 43, January 2006)

7.6.2.4.1 Shame related to the baby

My sense was that while Eve clearly enjoyed her baby, she feared that the baby would be found not quite good enough in my eyes. This centred on Maria's bodily functions, as though I, the refined white lady, might see her as a disgusting or off-putting creature. Eve was not genuinely ashamed of her baby, but I got the sense she was afraid I would find the baby unacceptable. This could be seen in the way that she said "sies" (yuck) to Maria a lot:

Eve yawns, looking off to the doorway. Maria yawns too, scrunching up her eyes and trembling a bit, while the "v" of her mouth elongates dramatically to fill what looks like half her face. Eve doesn't see the yawn. Maria drools and Eve says, "Sies! Sies, Maria, jy kwyl!" ("Sis! Sis, Maria, you're drooling!") and wipes her mouth with the bib. I am looking at Maria with my face involuntarily copying her expression and thinking it is okay to drool, when Eve suddenly glances at me. I keep my eyes on the baby. (Observation 14, May 2005)

Eve stands Maria up on the bed between us and I am surprised at how sturdy her legs seem. Eve says, "Dan, dan, dans…dans, Mamma" ("Dan, dan, dance…dance, Mommy") in a whisper. Maria farts long and loud and Eve says, "Sie-eeeeees! Sie-eeeeeees!" ("Siiiiiiiis! Siiiiiiiiiis!") and I snort a half-laugh. (Observation 9, March 2005)

Here I laughed because I explicitly wanted to demonstrate to Eve that a baby breaking wind was natural and all right with me and I was not disgusted. Eve seemed very sensitive about any possible criticism of Maria:

Maria's feet are covered in large, welt-like bumps with pink inner circles. They look terrible. I say, "Lyk my dis erger!" ("Looks like it's worse!") and Eve pauses for a moment before answering. In that second, I feel I have said something wrong. "Ungh-ungh…" (negative) she says softly, "Dis beter" ("It's better"). "O," ("Oh,") I say. "Ek het daai druppels opgesit, dis besig om gesond te word, dan lyk dit so…die rofies het afgekom" ("I put those drops on, it's busy healing, that's when it looks like that…the scabs came off") [Eve says]. (Observation 21, July 2005)

[Maria's] cap has shifted a bit and I notice that the hair behind Maria's ears is quite short. "Het sy 'n haarsnit gekry, Eve?" ("Did she get a haircut, Eve?") I ask spontaneously, feeling regret that I missed something. "Ungh-ungh, dissie kêp wat dit so platdruk (it's the cap that pushes it flat like that)," Eve says, immediately pulling the hat off. (Observation 19, June 2005)

Therafter Eve fetched a hairbrush and combed Maria's hair, saying "Ons maak eers jou hare bietjie mooi" ("Let's first make your hair a bit pretty"). It was as though the observer should see that her child was beautiful and good:

 "Hey!" [Noelene] says to Maria, "Is jy stout?" ("Are you naughty?") Maria is silent. [Noelene] makes whistling sounds to attract her attention. [Noelene] glances at me with smiling eyes. Eve says, "Ek was gister baie soet…" ("I was very good yesterday…") and [Noelene] leaves, casting a comment over her shoulder: "Jy lieg, jy was g'n soet gister nie." ("You're lying, you weren't good at all yesterday.") (Observation 9, March 2005)

"'Skofte kind…staan en raas hier…" ("Rude child…come and make a noise here…") [Eve said]. Maria looked at me with a still, watchful expression. "Wiesss…" ("Who'sss…") Eve said very softly, mimicking the look but watching Maria, "Die antie gaan sien watse 'skofte kind het ek…" ("The aunty will see what a rude child I have…") (Observation 35, November 2005)

"Hier kom die puisies weer uit…Die voete was erg lelik gewies, veral hier," ("Here the pimples are coming out again… The feet were really very ugly, especially here,") [Eve] says, showing me a spot under the foot where the skin is rough and the marks clustered together. The use of the word ugly to describe any part of Maria strikes me. (Observation 21, July 2005)

In restrospect I realise I might have been so shocked at the idea of an ugly baby in this moment because Eve had taken such trouble to present Maria as an object for approval. I wondered about the impact of racism and whether this was linked to an unconscious idea of a black baby as bad, ugly and inferior. Eve perhaps did not trust that I found the baby beautiful:

I say, "Sy't die mooiste glimlag!" ("She's got the most beautiful smile!") Eve hesitates for a second and then laughs briefly. (Observation 21, July 2005)

It was only towards the end of the observation period, when Eve went to work, that she was able to show me a less perfect version of Maria:

I noticed that Maria's toenails were quite ragged and long and that there was black dirt underneath them. Her baby-grow had little bits of fluff coming off it and was also quite dirty around the bottom. (Observation 40, December 2005)

7.6.2.4.2 Shame related to mothering

I have already discussed Eve's performance of good-enough mothering. In the seminars the way Eve showed her baby off to me was interpreted as a sign of pride. But under the gaze of a white observer, she may have felt some pressure. Her actual competence and assurance may not have felt enough when I was around. Any kind of judgement may have felt threatening; even a positive evaluation confirmed that there was indeed a process of evaluation going on. At one point I felt compelled to remark on her competence:

Eve peers at her, and then lays her down on her tummy on the bed between us. Laying back on an elbow on the bed, she bounces Maria up and down with the flat of her hand, and peers at something in her neck. I say, "Jy's baie goed met haar, Eve…" ("You're very good with her, Eve…") (saying something I thought about last time). Eve looks up at me with wide eyes and a veiled, suspicious expression. "Jy weet presies wat sy nodig het…" ("You know exactly what she needs…") I qualify. Eve nods once, looking down. I think I see a half-smile then. (Observation 19, June 2005)

This was sincerely meant and may have been triggered by her unconscious wish to be approved of. In the context, however, it may have been insulting. I thought I noticed a degree of tension brought about by the injunction to perform "good motherhood" for me:

Eve comes in, looking up just past the curtain at what I suddenly know is the clock. I think that she is waiting for me to go. She goes to Maria and pulls the pink quilt back a bit. She adjusts Maria's hand closest to her, presumably so that she doesn't scratch her face. I wonder whether this care is being demonstrated for my benefit. (Observation 11, April 2005)

Eve may have wished to be released from this tiring task of proving herself. The theme of shame had come up in a previous study in Moretown. In 2002, as part of the Depression Survey, I personally interviewed five participants, using the Beck Depression Inventory (BDI) and a background questionnaire. My process notes about the experience of interviewing Mrs S allude to similar feelings:

> I was shocked at the poverty of the house; the fact that all five family members sleep in the same room. I felt embarrassed to be asking her what she ate yesterday, as though I was judging that it wasn't good enough…At times she seemed a bit ashamed of her circumstances.

Talking to another participant, I noted the way in which a certain image was being presented to me, as if for my sake:

> Her husband sat slightly behind me, listening, nodding, and not saying anything. It was very peaceful in that house and I was loathe to leave. I felt like I was the Minister on a home visit and these people were showing me the gracious, grateful parts of themselves.

This image stood in contrast to a less controlled, more spontaneous way of being. In the same house:

> The children told me what their toy animals' names were. They caused irritation in the 72 year-old above, by wrapping on her window while we were talking in the living-room. She broke her sanctified demeanour with a sudden reprimand.

Similarly, it seemed that in Eve's house I was for the most part to see sanctified caretaking.

7.7 Conclusion

In summary, there were many aspects to this South African infant observation in a low-income community that were unique to its context. Firstly, the physical setting was attended to and described in some detail. At times this led to the infant seeming somewhat irrelevant. Secondly, the relationships with the parents, the neighbours and the wider community were prominent and formed a significant source of information. In particular, the relationship with the mother was central. These were complex relationships with the observer, filled with ambivalence. In some respects they mirrored the ambivalence between family and community members themselves. In this discussion I have considered the influence of a poverty environment on all these relationships as a whole. On a deeper level, I highlighted the way in which the phenomenon of apartheid continues to shape the participants' experience of themselves and the world.

CHAPTER EIGHT: Conclusion

8.1 Introduction

In the following chapter I will evaluate the infant observation project. In this process I will summarise my findings. The present study set out to provide a thick description of a single low-income mother-infant dyad to consider the potential contribution that such a description might make to a needs assessment process, and to explore the utility of infant observation as a tool for psychologists working in low-income communities in South Africa. In overview, my findings relate to two main areas, namely a) the nature and content of the resultant description, and b) the effect of the process. I was surprised to discover that, in this context, the main object of my focus and description was not the infant. Nor was the primary mode of knowledge transmission observation; it was in fact relationship. Another surprise finding was the way in which the observation functioned therapeutically on a number of levels. In a first section I will consider what worked (the observation as intervention) as well as evaluating its usefulness for research and training. After that I will consider the ways in which it did not work (my struggle with the Tavistock gold standard) and the inherent limitations of the present study. I will conclude by making recommendations for practice and research.

8.2 The observation as an intervention

Observation and intervention are somewhat polarised in the literature, although it is recognised that an observation can be an intervention of itself. More active forms of "observing" have been reviewed. S. Miller claimed that if (even classical) infant observations are done with care, "the family almost invariably finds it beneficial although there is no direct therapeutic aim" (1997, p. 166). Barnett (2006) commented that few people, including fathers, are as interested in "the day-to-day minutiae" as infant observers are (p. 188). I have already discussed the ways in which the observation functioned as a therapeutic space. While it was not planned as a form of action research, there is evidence that the family benefited from the observation in a number of different ways. Below I will consider what the specific therapeutic outcomes were for the family. Some of these benefits were not just therapeutic, but practical. My proposal held that, if research can be beneficial as it gathers data, so much the better. It is felt that research in the tradition of community psychology should be for mutual benefit (K. Gibson, 2002b). The present study showed that ethnography can indeed be "a form of therapeutic praxis" (Ainslie & Brabeck, 2003, p. 43)

8.2.1 A positive experience

It seemed that the observation time was a valuable space for the parents. They may have experienced the hour as a time of interacting with the child and with me, in which we often laughed about what Maria did, and enjoyed her. The observations may have felt like time out from the day, in that they may have had a very different quality in an existence geared to survival. Both Eve and Piet expressed in interview that the observation was an almost exclusively positive experience. Piet said that he would agree to the observation procedure again. Eve wanted to return to the observations as soon as possible after the December break. This was also at a time near termination:

I: Do you think it meant the same for your wife too, or for the little one?

Piet: Yes, it's really the same for her too, like, like she also sometimes speak with me about.. Jana and the child and that, she'd, when was it, it was earlier, we weren't here.. the, the week of New Year's, that Wednesday, first Wednesday of the New Year (**I:** Mmm), Jana was here, but we were still on holiday (**I:** Is that so?), still visiting at her sister's (**I:** Mmm), who we last saw two years ago (**I:** Mmm).. so we only came home last week (**I:** Mmm), last week Sunday.

I: Mmm.. And so, was it strange to your wife not to

Piet: No, we, we.. we knew about her coming, you see (**I:** Mmm), but then those people didn't want us to go home, we must now like (**I:** Still visit), still come home last week (**I:** Yes). We must still visit a bit because she also last saw her sister so long ago. (Interview 3 with Piet, January 2006)

The suggestion is that they were anxious about staying longer with their family because they had to get back for my final few observations. Did my visits feel as valuable as those with family? Either way, it seems it felt important for Eve to be present at them. Despite the fact of our fraught relationship, it seemed impossible to talk about what was hard about my visits:

I: And uhm, tell me, uhm do you think that.. do you think there's, do you think it will be, do you think it will be nice for you when she doesn't come to visit anymore, will it perhaps be a bit easier

Piet: If she doesn't do what?

I: If she doesn't come regularly each week, do you think there will be something good to it..? It sounds like a strange question now but

Piet: It does sound like a strange question, yes... (He laughs a bit. In the silence there are quite a few voices audible as well as rhythmic music.) (Interview 3 with Piet, January 2006)

It may have been difficult to speak about what was uncomfortable about the observation process, as it was hard to talk about any feelings at all. In reality it seemed that Piet remained suspicious for some time of what exactly it was that I was doing (was I doing what I declared myself to be doing?). His challenge to me in Observation 6 began with this intimation:

"Kan 'n mens nou iets vra - wat nou is die rede hoekom u nou elke week kom?…" ("Can one ask something - what now is the reason for you coming every week?...") (I explain). He is unclear why I am here every week and he wants to ask a question about it, is that all right? Has his wife asked any questions about it, does she understand it? (I say I think she understood it, I explained it carefully). So it is to learn about how the child grows and changes every time. (Observation 6, February 2005)

By June it seemed that he still wondered. The interviewer asked Eve whether she discussed the observations with her husband:

Eve: Not always (**I:** Mmm..). Sometimes then.. he asks me what does.. the woman come do here or something like that (**I:** Mmm..). Then he asks me does the woman just come sit here and the like.. then I tell him yes. She just comes and looks at what the child does. (Interview 2 with Eve, June 2005)

The above reflection was made 6 months into the process, indicating that, despite their positive comments in interview, it did perhaps take some time for Piet and Eve to become used to me. This recalls Maiello's comment that in the shack where she was observing she was a "totally unusual figure" (1998, p. 22). It was my sense that from July onwards I was much more settled into the observation process and our relationships stabilised. From September there were 8 observations in which Piet was present without Eve. In this time he was able to assess for himself what exactly I did. Just sitting there, watching the child, did seem to be an odd thing to be doing at first. In her observation Maiello (2001) noted what an unusual figure she cut in the Xhosa mother's daily life. Neither Piet nor Eve were able to express this directly in interview until the process was over however:

I: Yes.. Was there a time that you felt.. you don't like it, don't like it much?
Eve: The very first time.. it was quite long to me.. it went on so long for me (**I:** Yes..), because then.. she comes and then she sits now.. Sometimes then she sits. Then she sits here.. and then I keep myself busy and then.. if she then, then the child perhaps sleeps while she's here, and if the child.. when she goes the child is still sleeping, then.. she asks me if.. she can sit, then she asks me.. if she can sit, then I tell her she can sit, then I carry on with my work (**I:** Okay..). I ask her if.. I can finish my work, then she says I can finish my work, she'll sit. Then she watches the child.
I: So that very.. first one was difficult for you, it was..
Eve: The first time she was here yes.
I: Yes, felt a bit strange? Yes? Yes?
Eve: A different type of feeling. (Interview 3 with Eve, January 2006)

It is interesting that Eve credited herself with asking whether she could go on with her work when in fact I suggested this to her, in my own discomfort. It is possible that in this way her narrative to the interviewer disguised a painful aspect of the observation process, namely that I had more power. This first awkwardness was, however, the only negative she would discuss:

I: Mmm... Is he curious.. about what happened...? (**Eve:** Mmm..). How does he feel about it.. about the visits?
Eve: He feels all right..
I: Mmm.. Do you think it bothers him?
Eve: Uh-uh…
I: Does it ever bother you?
Eve: No... (She answers quickly. The baby is busy again in the background). (Interview 2 with Eve, June 2005)

Neither Piet nor Eve mentioned Piet's confrontation of me in interview. On the contrary, Eve presented it as an informative chat:

I: Okay... (There is a long silence, someone in the room shuffles around) Uhm.. What.. what does your husband think about it?
Eve: No, he said.. he's all right.. and I have already asked, and the woman who comes to me also asked him and so on (**I:** Mmm..), so he said it's all right.
I: And what.. what does he feel? How does he view it? How does he understand what happens?
Eve: I can't really tell Madam about it, how he understands what-do-you-call-it/things that happen.. but he did ask her.. what-do-you-call-it.. (**I:** Mmm..) about the child's things.. how it is and so on.. and then she explained [it] to him. The two of them can chat easily (**I:** Mmm..) and then he told [me] everything she said... (Interview 1 with Eve, March 2005)

We were constructed as getting on well. This may in part reflect the way in which the confrontation was contained and became a forum in which Piet could speak. But Eve's narrative about it also dove-tailed with my own on that day:

I say it was very interesting talking to him and he says, "Ek geniet u geselskap ook baie" ("I also enjoy your company a great deal"). (Observation 5, February 2005)

In other words, I had perhaps led the way in covering over the aggression and mistrust between us as soon as possible. In Eve's conversation with the interviewer, there is evidence of something that could not be put into words or said:

I: Mmm.. okay.. okay.. So if you.. if you.. uhm.. must see Jana again, what do you think.. is there something you'd like to tell her or.. Okay. Okay.. (It can be deduced that Eve shakes her head.) Okay Mrs Smit, thank you very much for your time. (Interview 3 with Eve, January 2006)

This reticence to talk is similar to what is heard in interviews in Moretown more generally (Kruger, in press; Kruger, 2003, 2005a; Kruger et al., 2005; Kruger & Van der Spuy, 2007). Eve may have been constrained by her

positioning in relation to the observer and the interviewer. This may have made it hard to discuss the observations in a relaxed way. But on the other hand, it may have also partly been a function of a community that did not speak very freely. In summary, the observation was portrayed as a positive experience, but it also seemed as though it was hard to talk about its more negative aspects. This is reminiscent of S. Briggs's (1999) discussion of an observation of a Nigerian family by a white observer, in which she wondered how free the mother might feel to make objections about the observation.

8.2.2 Being witnessed

A central outcome of the present study was realising the importance for the mother of being attended to. In several of Eve's comments in interview it is possible to detect what can be expressed as a need to be seen by someone else, or to have her life witnessed. For Eve this occurred within her relationship with me. In part, this was about my witnessing her struggle with her circumstances, sometimes in small ways, such as when I commented that the baby was keeping her busy (Observation 9). In part, it was about validating Eve as a person. For example, the photographs I took seemed to give her a pleasurable experience of being seen, and in this sense were a very decisive factor. It seemed that what was significant for Eve was that she too was being watched, while I watched the baby. In the first interview, she specifically linked her judgement of the observations as "something good" with the fact that I came to watch:

I: Okay.. okay.. And, and how do you feel about it.. that she.. that she came to you (**Eve:** No..) every week?
Eve: No, it's something quite good (**I:** Yes..). For me it's not what-do-you-call-it.. It's not hard for me that she has to come here.. here. It's something good.
I: What feels good to you?
Eve: That she just comes to see what.. how things.. how the child progresses and so on (**I:** Mmm..). She said she's coming to look... (Interview 1 with Eve, March 2005)

This surprised me, considering that my perception was that Eve found my gaze quite critical. Eve seemed to be indicating that the fact that I came to her in her home felt good and that in general it did not feel hard to be watched. It is possible that Eve did not have the power to say that it was not good. Coming to "look" was represented as an interest in the child's well being. Perhaps Eve felt, if one thinks about her comments related to her drinking, that on some level she needed an overseeing (white) eye to ensure that she would take care of the baby properly, despite her own struggles. I have previously hypothesised that my focus on the mother resulted from my unconsciously picking up her disavowed need to be seen in some way. This need seems corroborated by what Eve said in interview. When asked, she framed the visits as follows:

Eve: ..But he.. what-do-you-call-it that woman.. that.. what-do-you-call-it.. uhm uhm uhm.. that other woman.. that biggish one that works with her.. she has also been with that.. with that (**I:** Yes..), she came to look where I stay.. what the child does.. and those type of things..
I: Okay.. Okay... So what do you think about these people that come to visit you and...
Eve: I don't feel bad about it, I feel fine..
I: Mmm... Why do they think.. why do you think they want to come visit you...?
Eve: They want to.. they just feel.. probably... like visiting me and so on... (Baby noises are audible). (Interview 2 with Eve, June 2005)

It seemed that Ms L and I represented people who were genuinely interested in her, which was true, considering

that we were researchers. This may have been rare. Riessman (1993) noted that research interviewers can also bear witness. It may have been that our simply wanting to know about her and her child was affirming. The act of being there and attending felt important. Kohut (1971) commented on this when he wrote about the silent presence of the analyst that gives the patient a mirroring and twinship experience. Kohut's concept of mirroring is not, like Winnicott's, about responsive facial expressions reflecting emotion, but specifically about reflecting the child's grandiosity: the "'gleam in the mother's eye' reflects back the child's exhibitionistic display, confirms it, and provides the grounding for a secure sense of self-esteem" (Strozier, 2001, p. 211). I have commented on the way in which I felt Eve showed off her competence to me. Despite the potential for criticism I brought, I may in the end have mirrored her as a good mother. After the observation process, Eve articulated that what had been good about it was my interest in the baby (looking):

Eve: It was something good to me because she watched how [she] progressed, she came every time to see how the child progressed. (Interview 3 with Eve, January 2006)

Here she highlighted my sustained, ongoing interest in what the child was doing and whether she was all right. Implied in this is a kind of caring. This was also true of the WMHRP, where it was felt that less depression was seen than expected; mothers continually highlighted that the ongoing interviews were a positive experience, and one can speculate about their therapeutic effect (Kruger, in press; Storkey, 2006). In the Mother-Infant Bonding Group in the same community in 2003, it was felt that the group allowed mothers to see themselves through the eyes of other mothers and women (Burmeister-Nel et al., 2004). Being seen in this way, it is implied, can change one's perspective on oneself. In the Farmworkers' Project in 2001, a respondent commented:

> It almost seems no one is interested in you. Or no one cares about you…Then you think…"No, the Lord can rather just take my child and I away. Because no one worries about me, or cares about me in that way."

It seems that specifically, privileged attention is important. Tomlinson et al. (2003) commented that our research projects send powerful messages, for example in terms of prevailing gender politics. The infant observation project telegraphed that "women who have recently given birth are entitled to special attention" (Tomlinson et al., 2003, p. 208). These authors referred to the "social significance" of research as a "worthy by-product" (p. 210). In other words, the infant observation project was empowering for the mother and may have had an impact on society. Kruger (2005b) commented that

> in a still very modern world where control, autonomy, certainty and the unified subject are valued above everything else, the importance of simply attending to the moment of vulnerability cannot be stressed enough. This kind of attention seems to be unequivocally political. (p. 19)

8.2.3 Being heard

As described, there was very little talking during the observations. On the few occasions that Eve did speak to me at some length, it was about practical concerns, such as getting maintenance money for her eldest child. While Eve did not "talk about feelings" in a conventional sense, she did, however, share her problems with me in this way during the observation process. In retrospect, her approach for practical, material help became a way of talking

about what was causing her pain and preoccupying her. The act of reaching out to me to help her was a complex one, and she probably had mixed feelings about it. It did seem, however, that telling someone about what was troubling her might have benefited her.

I was surprised by the perception that both Piet and Eve had of me, expressed in interview, as someone who talked to them and someone whom they could talk to. From my perspective, we spoke very little. In fact, I felt that we could never really speak about what was hard for them, because they always said they were all right or fine when I asked. This was a common finding in the interviews conducted by the WMHRP in Moretown, the results of which are in the process of being collectively disseminated in a book on motherhood, poverty, race and culture (Kruger, in press). However, Eve, who herself struggled to speak at first in the interview process, commented that it felt to her that I (and the interviewer, and by inference also Ms L, who came to meet her), talked to her to find out how she was, which was not our express purpose at all:

I: Okay.. How does it feel to speak to me..?
Eve: It feels all right...
I: Okay... okay Eve... (There is the sound of someone paging through papers). Is there anything that is hard.. about the visits..?
Eve: No..
I: Anything that is nice..?
Eve: Anything that's nice for me.. the people.. speak to me (**I:** Mmm..), how am I.. how is the child (**I:** Mmm..). I feel fine about it. (Interview 2 with Eve, June 2005)

Here Eve was expressing that she enjoyed our asking after both her and her baby and that this meant something to her. What was nice was that people talked to her at all: Eve's expectations were perhaps not high. While I was frustrated with not being given full and open answers to the "How are you?" question, it seems that Eve experienced my enquiry, and the very fact that I was talking to her at all, as positive:

I: What changed for you.. since Jana started visiting..? Do you think things changed for you..?
Eve: Yes.
I: Yes. What do you think has changed..?
Eve: When she always speaks to me and so on (**I:** Yes..), asking me how I'm doing and.. asking me how my husband's doing. Then I say no it's still going fine (**I:** Mmm..). She speaks to us when she comes here..
I: Mmm.. And how does that feel to you?
Eve: Then I feel all right.. because she talks to a person..
I: Mmm.. It feels good to you?
Eve: Mmm...
I: She's someone you can talk to?
Eve: Mmm..mm... (There is a long silence, the baby starts making noises again). (Interview 2 with Eve, June 2005)

Here Eve seemed to be saying that I began talking more to her as the observation progressed. This may have been because I was being encouraged by Mrs K to do so. Yet Eve said I didn't ask many questions:

Eve: She just watches.. how the child progresses and (**I:** Mmm..) she says the child is big and (**I:** Mmm..) and what-do-you-call-it.. She doesn't ask so much.. so much… (The baby becomes restless again). (Interview 2 with Eve, June 2005)

The fact that my mostly silent presence had the impact of making the parents feel heard may suggest how seldom they experienced emotional responsiveness to distress. The observations took on the role of being a time for a kind of talking. In an amusing and revealing parapraxis (Freudian slip), Carol (also a clinical psychologist) referred to the observations as "interviews" on two separate occasions (Interviews 2 and 3 with Eve). The observations seemed

to have been experienced as a time specifically and predictably set aside for attentive interaction, rather like a therapy space. In the middle of the year Piet expressed the idea in interview that I was someone who could be trusted and spoken to confidentially when one had a problem, rather like a therapist:

Piet: … she has also actually now, how can I say, for us uhm.. brought us closer to her do you understand (**I:** Mmm). Because, because.. there is someone you can speak to (**I:** Mmm), if, if.. if perhaps you have a problem (**I:** Mmm), you can contact her to say see, I feel I want to speak to you (**I:** Mmm), or I can phone you and tell you see, I have a problem or I want to, just speak to you about something or I want to (**I:** Mmm), perhaps I feel today uh, how can I say it (**I:** Mmm), feel depressed/downcast (**I:** Yes), do you understand (**I:** Yes), I just feel like speaking today (**I:** Yes..), then you have someone that you know, look here I can trust you because (**I:** Mmm), that which I tell you, is just for you (**I:** Mmm) and that which you tell me, is just for me (**I:** Mmm), do you understand? (Interview 2 with Piet, June 2005)

It is very interesting that Piet specifically talked about reaching out in order to talk about feeling depressed. The speaking and relating seemed to represent an important form of contact for him, in the context of experiencing distress. There was a distinctly therapeutic quality about this:

Piet: No, nothing has changed (**I:** It sounds as if you) For me it is, it's a joy to, to (**I:** Mmm) meet someone else (**I:** Mmm..). My.. I, am actually a, a, a how can I say, person who uh, loves other people or (**I:** Mmm) to speak to other people (**I:** Mmm, [a] people's person), yes. (Interview 2 with Piet, June 2005)

Here, Piet spoke about pleasure in reaching out. This should be seen against the background of the information that the family, following Piet's wishes, tended to isolate themselves quite deliberately. Talking about the child had the effect of making Eve feel good:

I: So there's something he still.. wants to ask Jana (**Eve:** Aah).. about Maria. Yes.. And what about you, anything you still want to (**Eve:** Uh-uh, I have nothing) want to say to her or
Eve: Nothing. I have nothing to say to her.
I: Okay, okay.
Eve: I feel fine.
I: Okay, yes.. And
Eve: She always talks to me when she sits here with me, then we chat (**I:** Yes..). She talks with me.
I: And what were the type of things that you ta.. talked about?
Eve: We speak about the child (**I:** Yes), and how the child is progressing (**I:** Yes) and all those things (**I:** Okay…). And I feel all right about her… It's actually something good to me. (Interview 3 with Eve, January 2006)

It is interesting that Eve gave the agency (the act of talking) to me. Here she seemed to be saying that she did not have anything more to ask me (unlike Piet), because we had spoken a lot during the observations already. When I got the chance, I reflected feeling during the observations. Here Eve was describing her difficulties with Natasha's father's family:

Sy [Eve] het mos gedrink (She [Eve] used to drink) (gesturing a chugging motion with her hand and looking in my eyes with chin ducked, checking to see if I remember?) - the klong's (young guy's) family reported her, social work was here and wanted to take Natasha (hulle wou haar van my afvat) (they wanted to take her away from me). I say sjoe (wow/gosh) a few times, and suck my breath in. I say she must have been angry. She says she was angry. She told them she only drinks on weekends, in die week is ek rustig (in the week I am quiet/peaceful). Her mother called social work and said it wasn't so - there are many other people around, taking care of the child. She gave up drinking. I say it must have been hard to give up. She says it was. (Observation 21, July 2005)

I believed Eve when she said that she had stopped drinking, but I wondered in post-observation visits whether she had started again. My therapeutic instinct was to attend to Eve's feelings and open them up more. This may have

been an unusual kind of space for the family. Besides the fact that therapy in this low-income community did not exist, there was evidence that people may not have spoken much to each other either. Therefore, while the interviews in the area provided an opportunity to talk, there might have been no expectation to be invited to do so, least of all by a white visitor. It struck me that in a low-income community, where everybody is struggling with the daily effects of poverty, this struggle perhaps becomes something that people do not commiserate about. When your struggle is a known fact, and is the same struggle as everyone else's around you, you may in fact end up talking less about how things are going - because it is the same daily. Talking about it becomes like talking about breathing. The theme of feelings being heard also came up in the Depression Survey in Moretown in 2002. For example, as an interviewer, I noticed about an elderly participant that

> at first she was suspicious of me, but when she heard I wanted to hear about her feelings, she laughed shyly in a pleased way. This was often a response when people heard about the content of the survey.

This seems to lend some support for the idea that people did not enquire about feelings in this community; that such talk is a luxury under these circumstances, and is in fact a rather odd idea. Talking about feelings when there are more pressing concerns may also seem irrelevant. It is, however, a pleasing invitation, partly perhaps because it is so rare. I wondered in retrospect whether my declared intention as an observer not to talk much (and certainly not about poverty) may have felt particularly cruel: I was just here to watch the baby, in order to learn about babies. Unlike the interviewers I, who could see the family's suffering very starkly in an ongoing way, may have seemed to be ignoring it. It is interesting that Piet spoke to both me and to the interviewer at some length about his battle with haemophilia. There was some evidence in interview of how hard it was to talk about the experience of pervasive poverty:

I: Is it hard for you.. to speak to other people...?
Eve: How does Madam mean? What other people?
I: Well.. if.. if things are difficult for you.. is it hard to share those feelings..?
Eve: I don't always share it.. it's only sometimes...
I: Mmm... What do you think.. makes it hard to share it with me...? You can be honest.. I won't get angry or.. hard.. my feelings won't be hurt... (There is a very long silence. The baby is restless and Eve speaks softly to her, but she says nothing to the interviewer). Last time we spoke a bit about things that are hard for you... (**I:** Mmm..). Is it.. uhm... the same things that are hard for you [now]? (**I:** Mmm?). Is it the same.. that is hard for you.. or is there something else.. that bothers you...?
Eve: It's just.. what-do-you-call-it.. It's still the same... (Interview 2 with Eve, June 2005)

Eve made the point here that the same things that were troubling her several months ago in the first interview were still present now. Eve said here that she did not often (or always) share her concerns. It is interesting that when she struggled to talk about her difficulties to the interviewer, she suddenly communicated with the baby - perhaps a bit unnecessarily, telling her to sit still. I wondered whether this was another example of how the baby could become a conduit of sorts and a figure of hope in a difficult or painful situation.

While the first hour felt long, once Eve knew what to expect, it seemed that the hour often felt too short. This may have been one reason why Eve often looked surprised when I said that it was time for me to go:

I: We just sat here (**I:** Mmm..), then she laughed with the child and chatted.. But she's still all right.. otherwise (**I:** Mmm..). I can't complain about her being here.

I: Okay.. How does it feel to you.. in that hour?

Eve: It's.. it doesn't feel so.. what-do-you-call-it hard. It's just (**I:** Mmm..), that hour isn't so long, it goes by quickly.

I: Is that so? (**Eve:** Mmm..). So it feels as if.. it goes quickly? (**Eve:** Mmm..). Do you enjoy it that.. that..

Eve: Yes.. (There are thumping sounds in the nearby background and a baby sound). We also speak sometimes and so on (**I:** Mmm..), then we speak to each other in here.

I: And what do you speak about?

Eve: We just speak.. then she just sometimes asks.. how is the child and.. and how it is going with us here in the house and then I tell her it's going fine. (The thumping sounds continue. The baby seems to be restless). (Interview 2 with Eve, June 2005)

Again, it seems here that my interest in the family was enjoyable, and as though I was perceived as enjoying the child. It seems significant that when asked what was good about the observation, Eve said it was a time in which we could sit together and talk to one another in her home. Both Piet and Eve therefore commented that the "talking" was important. It is interesting that Eve remembers me as being very interactive (or more interactive than I was), and that what she mentioned in describing "what we did" (as the interview asked) was not primarily my sitting in a corner without saying much, but the more active aspects of my visits. Her refrain, of just sitting, just talking and just laughing conveys a sense of simple time spent with each other without any expressed task. The only task was watching. Eve seemed to look forward to this, and even cleared her other tasks out of the way to enjoy this "open" space in which just to be together:

I: Yes…? Okay… Uhm… Okay, so how do things feel different now that she's not coming anymore?

Eve: It feels different, yes.

I: Yes? And how does it feel different? What is different?

Eve: It's a.. it's a.. It makes a difference (**I:** Yes..). Every... every Wednesday she used to come then… I clean early.. and then when she comes it's done. If she then comes.. then she just sits and speaks to the child (**I:** Mmm) and she plays with the child and so on (**I:** Yes..). Then she says the child's progressing.. and the child's getting big (**I:** Yes) and I look after the child well and all those things.

I: Okay.. okay.. And when she.. said that type of thing to you, how did it make you feel? When she said *that* to you?

Eve: I feel fine about it. (Interview 3 with Eve, January 2006)

I wondered how much time Eve actually had where she was not performing tasks, but could just play with the child for an hour. I was surprised to hear her say in interview that it felt good to hear me commend her mothering, because my experience was, as described earlier, that she made me feel bad for having said that. It seems that she felt I mirrored her in a positive way after all. In an earlier interview she described me as coming to be with her in this time:

I: And how does it feel to you that she comes and sits here and looks and...

Eve: I don't feel bad about it or anything (**I:** Mmm..)... For me it is just something good.. Because she told me before.. when I still.. when I still was pregnant.. then she said.. that she'll come and be with me… she'll just come and see how I am... (**I:** Mmm..) how the child's progressing and so on... (Interview 1 with Eve, March 2005)

Here Eve seemed to portray me as someone who would come and support her after the birth. It sounded as though Eve experienced me as coming to see how she was; in other words, as someone who offered care, solidarity and a sense of being accompanied at a difficult time. It is possible that this may have led to her feeling less alone in her task of mothering under difficult conditions. This was, however, not something she could ever verbally acknowledge to me or even allow me to feel by her actions and attitude towards me, for the reasons discussed. But my sense, even before the observation period was over, was that it was indeed very important to have me there. In the last observation, in which I felt freer to respond more spontaneously to what I was observing and experiencing,

I wrote about "what really matters":

I hoped Maria would sleep the whole observation; this felt manageable. I would write about all her little detailed movements and the infant observers of the world would be happy. I can instead write a whole paragraph about what the radio was saying, and the interaction between the radio, Eve, and me. It was a station I had never heard of, a chat show with a religious bent, aimed at housewives, but also at poorer communities (the word "gemeenskap" was used) (community). The woman told you to take the phone off the hook and turn the pot off on the stove and put your feet in lukewarm water (the way some listeners told her they did). She seemed to know where they lived and how. She said if you didn't have a couch, like her, you should put your agterwêreld (backside) on one chair and your voetjies (feet) on another and relax in this way. Because this was the hour in which we focus on what really matters, on what's really going on. How true, I thought - maybe my visit is like that for Eve; it is for me. (Observation 43, January 2006)

In infant observation the infant matters, but what really seemed to matter here was giving Eve some time. Eve and I were not able to talk about "what really matters" in her life, but my mere presence there seemed to be fulfilling a function related to seeing her, or witnessing her life, and this felt to me to be an unspoken acknowledgement of the important things. My presence in effect said that the baby mattered and, by extension, that the mother of the baby mattered. This seems to be the most important outcome of the process. Similarly, in the Mother-Infant Bonding Group in the same community in 2003 sharing feelings was felt to be an important need. One of the goals was fostering support among the mothers through the voicing of experience in a group. It was felt that talking and being heard in this way strengthened these women (Burmeister-Nel et al., 2004). In the Farmworkers' Project in the area in 2001 a participant commented:

When you first came I thought you should tell Madiba (Nelson Mandela) everything I say. So that he knows how difficult things are. So that he can do something. But now after I have talked I think it's good you listen to all the people. Just listening is good.

Bick (1964) noted that mothers often welcome the observer specifically as someone to talk to regarding their baby's development and their feelings about it. It was found in the present observation that talking about the baby and about feelings in general was very restricted. Despite this, both parents experienced me as someone they could speak to about their feelings more generally, including depression, and related to their wider difficulties.

8.2.4 Shoring up the self

8.2.4.1 Emotional support

The process of being witnessed and heard may have resulted in an airing of existent distress and increased emotional well-being. Theoretically an attending presence can provide emotional support, which enables the receiver to be more herself. Already in the first interview Eve expressed the idea that in three months the observation had changed her personally in a positive way:

I: ... Okay.. so things have.. in a way.. changed for you. Maybe you could tell me.. did it become a bit worse.. or a bit better.. or a bit of both?
Eve: Better yes...
I: Do you think.. her visits have.. uhm.. in some way or another.. changed.. your relationship with.. Maria.. has changed it..?
Eve: Yes Madam... (A male voice and a small child are audible in the background).
I: Can you maybe tell me how.. how it has changed...?
Eve: Now that I.. have her now, hey.. (**I:** Mmm..) what-do-you-call-it.. now I'm not like I used to be..

I: How were you before?

Eve: I was.. what-do-you-call-it.. I always used to d... My child was already five years old... then we.. when we.. when we sat and drank here and so on.. then it's not.. then.. then.. then perhaps it's not for me.. what-do-you-call-it.. (**I:** Mmm..) like it always used to be.. it's not the same anymore and so on.. and now.. I stopped those things.. since I have had her it is.. I am normal like I should be...

I: So it feels.. like it helped you to make changes to your life?

Eve: Yes, I think so yes... (Interview 1 with Eve, March 2005)

Eve spoke with some hesitation about her past drinking behaviour. She seemed to be indicating that she drank after the birth of her first child, but that somehow having the second, in conjunction with the visits from the observer, had helped her not to drink after Maria's birth. Perhaps the period following the birth of a child was a particularly vulnerable time for a woman in Eve's position, when things felt particularly demanding and resources were insufficient. Her experience was that she was more able to be herself through this period. My hypothesis is that the observations enabled this, because they regularly provided interest in how she and the baby were doing and this was experienced as emotional support. Later in the infant observation year Eve went in search of work again. I wondered whether my being with her in small ways had strengthened her or alleviated some of her distress to a degree. Both parents in fact stopped drinking. After the observation period a friend of Piet's (who was himself inebriated at the time) complained to me that Piet, his drinking buddy, had recently given up drinking. Piet also reported that he had had a "nervous breakdown" in this time. It is possible that being attended to set in process a motion of attending to what was present in himself. Perhaps he hoped that telling me this would bring a return of my weekly visits, out of concern.

8.2.4.2 An increase in self-confidence

It was the transcriber's impression that Eve spoke louder and was more confident in her second interview. In the last interview Eve was also described as being "more confident" and speaking less hesitantly:

From the start there is quite a bit of noise in the background, especially voices speaking. Both the interviewer and Eve are speaking notably faster than the previous times, and Eve with more self-confidence. It's only towards the end that she keeps quiet for a long time when she's asked a question. (Interview 3 with Eve, January 2006)

In interview 3 Eve actually interrupted the interviewer to say something that felt important to her (something she was emotionally invested in). The third interview was also twice as long as the second. We can hypothesise that Eve was becoming more comfortable with the interviewer, but also that her sense of agency and power in this situation may have increased. It is possible that the observation process and the related interviews, both of which symbolically constituted empowering relationships with a past oppressor, may have counteracted some of the internalised oppression discussed. This may have come about because Eve actively took and wielded the power for a year, and I did not retaliate. These are speculations, but Eve's attitude right at the start of the first interview lends some credence to the idea that she was acting assertively towards us by this stage:

I: Okay, so this is our first interview. This is.. it's Carol and Eve. I don't know whether you'd like to choose a pseudonym for the tapes.. if you're concerned that other people will hear it. I will promise you that no one is going to hear it. Just me and.. at a later stage Jana.. but..

Eve: Yes, she said that Madam will (**I:** Mmm..) at a later.. (**I:** Mmm..) at a later.. at a later stage Madam will want to tell her everything.

I: Yes, but not now.

Eve: Yes, not now.

I: It's very important to me that you know that everything you say is confidential, so..
Eve: She told me that again yesterday..
I: Okay… So and only when she is done with the visits to you (**Eve:** Mmm..) will I.. (**Eve:** Give) give her the stuff. Okay..
Eve: She told me yes.
I: Okay…
Eve: That is, how I feel about her..
I: Yes..
Eve: And all those things she told me yesterday.. (Interview 1 with Eve, March 2005)

Here Eve said five times that she had been told before what Carol was telling her at the time. Therefore the issue of power between them was very prominent, with Eve battling a perception (internal and possibly real) that she was being patronised. But by the last interview, Eve took her power and spoke over the interviewer when she wanted to.

8.2.5 National healing

The implications of this kind of interracial contact for South Africa are pertinent, in the sense that the personal is political. Eve expressed her awareness that being in the township with her family was a new experience for me and something that had to I get used to. Here she spoke about me and the termination:

Eve: She'd become used to having to be here (**I:** Mmm). She's only been around Stellenbosch (**I:** Yes). She's not been around to many other places
I: Yes.. Okay. So it felt like it was special to her to be here? Yes.. (Interview 3 with Eve, January 2006)

It is interesting that Eve represented me as getting used to the child, specifically. The child was the reason for our meeting, the reason for my visits to the township and the reason I would miss the visits. It seemed, as I noted in the previous chapter, that the baby was the repository for all that was positive about my contact with this family. Like Eve, I was also aware that our contact represented something unusual:

And I have realised today that I am probably the only white person Eve has ever known. (Observation 37, November 2005)

By this I meant that I was the only white person to establish a relationship with her in her home. In retrospect it seemed that the child was invested with the possibility of creating a new kind of meeting across old racial divides. In other words, she symbolically became a figure of hope, not only in relation to me, but for a better future for the family on all levels. In this there was the seed of something healing. Because the family related to me as a person, and I to them, it could be said that in time a kind of rapprochement was reached. Piet seemed to highlight this in interview:

I: If you, if you think back about the visits, what will you remember most about the visits and about Jana..?
Piet: Her friendly, friendliness (**I:** Mmm) and polite[ness], and her patience and (**I:** Mmm).. Because they say if you don't have patience or aren't polite, then you'll never (Piet starts mumbling towards the end of the sentence and it is not clear what he is saying.)
I: So she was an easy person to
Piet: She was an easy person to get along with, because if she were a difficult person then I wouldn't have got along with her (**I:** Mmm), because I would have told her *hey* (The interviewer starts laughing heartily), to *here* and no further (**I:** Yes), do you understand (**I:** Yes). Because in all honesty, I'm going to be honest with a person, I'll tell him, that which I don't want to (**I:** Mmm) feel
I: Mmm, okay.. But it was, it was generally speaking easy.
Piet: It was a pleasure for me man. (Interview 3 with Piet, January 2006)

In the long run I wondered whether there would be implications of this experience, in which I as a white person, who stood symbolically for degradation and conflict, was experienced as developing genuine feelings of warmth not only towards the baby, but the whole family. Piet seemed to touch on this aspect:

I: Okay, *cool...* Uhm, I think we've answered this already, but perhaps I'll just ask you again, if, you can tell me if you feel you've already answered this, but what did the visits mean to you personally?
Piet: It meant a lot to me and taught me a lot (**I:** Mmm), and uhm.. a lot about human relationship, do you understand (**I:** Mmm). A person, every person has their own feelings and you, and each person has his own, uh uhm.. his own will, do you understand (**I:** Mmm), if I don't want to speak to you, you can't force me (**I:** Mmm), do you understand (**I:** Mmm), or if you don't want to speak to me..
I: Mmm.. then you can't force me..
Piet: Do you understand? (**I:** Mmm). But the big thing is we, we as people, it doesn't matter who you are, your attitude must, uhm.. we mustn't live like a cat and a dog or, do you understand (The interviewer laughs softly.) *Because why* life wants to be lived, but it also depends on how you want to live it, do you understand..
I: Mmm.. So some of those things you leant from, from the visits by, by Jana.
Piet: Yes.. (Interview 3 with Piet, January 2006)

However, the family could not quite trust that my care was real until I expressed it at the last observation by saying that I would miss them. They seemed to reach out in response. I was moved by Eve's empathy with my plight. It seemed a very generous attitude to grace me with, considering what had historically been done to this family by the apartheid regime. S. Swartz (2006a) noted that where there has been a history of oppression and the abuse of power, such "unique moments of meeting are not only possible, but essential to change" (p. 434). It seems that this constitutes the real first contact in my study.

8.2.6 Impact on the baby

8.2.6.1 A guardian figure for the child

Although I was once called a "guest" by a neighbour (Observation 21), Piet predominantly seemed to have the need to make me family. He described me as a grandmother (Observation 6), a second mother and a godmother to Maria:

I: Mmm. So that, that, half tells me that, she started meaning something to you.
Piet: Yes, she [meant] a lot, actually to me she was, she actually became like a second mother to the child, do you understand (**I:** Mmm), almost like a godmother to the child (**I:** Mmm, mmm).. (Interview 3 with Piet, January 2006)

Similarly, it was noted in Chapter Five that Maiello (1998) was referred to as the baby's grandmother in her observation of a Xhosa family and that she was given the baby to hold. It is possible that one by-product of the observations was that the parents in effect created a better environment for the baby on multiple levels, in order to impress me. I wondered to what degree my being there, focusing on the baby as important and interesting, conscientised them about parenting. Again, in the light of our power imbalance, it seemed hard to talk about this and easier to talk about me as an observer:

I: Do you think, do you think that, do you think she has an influence on, on Maria and how Maria develops…?
Piet: From my side I would say yes (**I:** You think so). Is, is, is.. if it depends on me [to say].
I: I know it's difficult [to say], because you're not always here with them but
Piet: *Because why* uh uhm… there's something she gets uh.. gets out, the way I see it now (**I:** Yes), because if she didn't get something from it she wouldn't come back.

I: She wouldn't come.
Piet: Do you understand?
I: Yes, that's Jana now? (Interview 2 with Piet, June 2005)

I also wondered to what extent the observation process, in which Maria was watched and interacted with very intensely for an hour every week in the first year of her life, could have shaped her emotional responsiveness. Unlike S. Briggs (1997b), I did not actually take on the role of an auxiliary parent during observations and yet I was regarded as a guardian figure of sorts.

8.2.6.2 The parents' ability to observe the infant

It was shown in the previous chapter that the parents discussed the observations among themselves, talking about what the baby did, with one parent describing the observation events when the other had been absent. They also discussed their feelings with each other about termination. It seemed that through the observation process their ability to wonder about what was going on for the baby was enhanced. I thought that this might be related to my constant attitude of watching Maria and wondering about her, without asking or deciding prematurely what it was she was experiencing:

Eve says, "Sy't nog niks geslaap vanoggend nie. Sy slaap en dan is sy elke keer weer wakker" ("She hasn't slept at all this morning. She sleeps and then she wakes up again every time"). I say I wonder why this is and Eve smiles, looking down at Maria as though enjoying her. (Observation 9, March 2005)

The idea of the baby as having a mind seemed to develop. Both parents seemed to speculate about what Maria might be thinking when they spoke about her response to the observations ending:

Piet: I think the little one will perhaps miss her, do you understand (**I:** Mmm). I know she will still.. she still tiny but we don't know what's in her thoughts (**I:** Yes), is in her little mind (**I:** Mmm, mmm), do you understand.. *Because why* she knows, she's already got to know her (**I:** Mmm), do you understand and become used to her (**I:** Mmm). (Interview 3 with Piet, January 2006)

Eve: I wouldn't know how [Maria] feels about it (She speaks with a smile in her voice.) (Interview 3 with Eve, January 2006)

Both parents spent a great deal of time watching the child with me. Towards the end the father seemed to be as absorbed in observing Maria as I was:

Piet watches me much less in this observation. He seems to watch Maria a lot with me. At the end we both spend many long minutes with our attention on her in silence, a memory that I now treasure. (Observation 38, November 2005)

Piet would watch Maria and make comments about her to me, also looking to see what my responses were to what she was doing. At times he would attempt to elicit specific responses from her and then look at me to see what my response was to what she had done. In interview he expressed that just watching Maria had taught him something about babies:

I: Mmm.. Oh, that's very cute.. Yes, you don't always think that, that children this small could (**Piet:** Yes, they) get this attached to you.
Piet: Yes, if you look closely, I have now, and it's things that also.. teach you hey.. You, you think maybe this little child, he's small, he doesn't really understand what's what (**I:** Yes), but if you really (**I:** Yes), as, as I have seen, she hasn't yet.. spoken a

lot to the child, she sat and just watched the child.. (**I:** Just watched), his reaction (**I:** Mmm), do you understand.

I: Mmm.. Yes.. which actually just make it more amazing.

Piet: ... I, I have thought to myself.. but why.. does she just watch the child (**I:** Mmm).. but understood later on

I: Why, why doesn't she speak to him?

Piet: Yes. Later I underst-, perhaps the child is awake later you see, but she sits and just looks at him, at her like this (**I:** Yes). But I thought to myself... I just thought.. she's probably looking at the child's reaction (**I:** Yes), or something like it.

I: Did you ever ask her?

Piet: No, I didn't ask her then (**I:** You have). But later I started seeing for myself why she's watching (**I:** Mmm), do you understand (**I:** Mmm). Then I would see no she's watching the child's reaction, do you understand (**I:** Mmm).. And sometimes when the child is sleeping perhaps, when she gets here then she's perhaps sleeping (**I:** Mmm), then.. she lies awake, when she perhaps wake up.. She has a different reaction when she starts awake, do you understand (**I:** Mmm).. she's not.. (**I:** Mmm) she wasn't uh awake when she [Jana] got here, do you understand (**I:** Mmm). And now that she's awake, now she sees here, here's someone who's sitting watching her. (The interviewer and Piet both give a short laugh.) Then she maybe starts laughing or, (**I:** Is that so?) or she's angry or, not angry, you know how (**I:** Yes, yes), a baby child, he doesn't just doesn't *smile* (**I:** Yes, yes), or... (Interview 3 with Piet, January 2006)

My sense of surprise at the many things Maria could do and be aware of at an early age may have had to do with my lack of experience with infants. Equally, I was impressed by the way in which Eve could interpret and meet Maria's needs. In retrospect, it seemed as though my personal sense of amazement and wonder at Maria may have given both parents, and Eve in particular, new eyes with which to look at their baby, and perhaps themselves. In other words, the power of the gaze is that it can help to cultivate more appropriate, and even less cruel, parenting. If Eve could internalise my beneficent but slightly protective gaze, she could become less cruel to the baby when I was not there. M.J. Rustin (1989) seemed to comment on exactly this kind of process when she said:

> Mothers sometimes seem to gain from identification with an observer's sympathetic interest, being helped to find emotional equilibrium between being engulfed by a baby's insistent feelings and needs, and defensively banishing these to a safe distance, sometimes to the baby's cost. The presence of sympathetic adults who support the mother's devotion to the baby, but who are themselves less overwhelmed by its impact, is often extremely important in the care of infants. (p. 62)

8.2.6.3 Increased pride in the child

It seemed that the parents' joy and pride in their child was possibly enhanced by the infant observation process and could be articulated. It was interesting to see how the parents interacted with the interviewers in relation to the baby, who was often present during interviews:

(A baby starts crying and there are footsteps walking away and then coming back. Piet comes to sit with the interviewer again, with the baby. A long time passes where it is quiet and Piet just talks to the baby in baby language and the interviewer laughs softly every now and again.) (Interview 3 with Piet, January 2006)

I: Yes, I see. Okay. How do you think it was for the baby, what do you think it has meant to her..?

Piet: It meant a lot to her, when she saw Jana, and she already exactly knew her, her car as well (**I:** Is that so?). When she saw, when she was sitting in the front there, and she saw her, and that car comes in, then she was already laughing (**I:** Is that so?), then he would stand straight up in the *pram*, then he's already looking.. (Piet speaks with a smile in his voice and the interviewer has a good laugh.)

I: Uh, that's very cute. So you think it has, it obviously meant something to the little one..

Piet: Mmm... When was it, I'd say, yesterday yes, yesterday I told her, here comes Jana, I go out, [she] goes peeping there with (Piet and the interviewer start laughing). I told my wife look there, she already knows what we're saying.

I: Geez, oh, so you just said it and then

Piet: Yes, and then she went out and peeped around the corner.

I: So it seems like there's quite a bond developing between the two of them.

Piet: No, she's quite clever, she's clever (**I:** Mmm).. You wouldn't think, she's that clever but you could tell her something, then she does it.

I: Mmm.. still so small, wow.. (The interviewer speaks very softly and actually more to himself.) (Interview 3 with Piet, January 2006)

It seemed that Piet wanted to share his pleasure in Maria with his interviewer. He portrayed her as very bright and understanding a lot for such a little child. In the interviews generally there was a great deal of laughing together about the baby and enjoyment of her:

I: Mmm.. Okay.. (The baby is very excited again, the interviewer chuckles). To the baby: You're laughing hey.. hey.. (The baby starts laughing again and the interviewer and Eve laugh along heartily). Are you laughing at me..? Are you laughing at me..? (The interviewer and Eve laugh again. The baby eventually calms down and the interviewer starts talking to Eve again)... Okay.. (Interview 2 with Eve, June 2005)

It seemed almost as though the parents tried to get the interviewers to observe and appreciate their baby in the same way I had. For example, both parents and the sister had often shown me how Maria could dance. In interview Piet especially seemed to want to impress the interviewer with her abilities in the same way:

Piet: Dance, dance, dance, He doesn't want to dance, he's still half asleep
I: A little asleep still.
Piet: He doesn't want to dance, quickly dance for the man, dance.. He doesn't want to dance, he's still asleep.
I: A little asleepies yes.. It's a very pretty baby... (Interview 3 with Piet, January 2006)

It was as though the parents continued to observe the baby and find her interesting even when I was not present. I noted that the father talked a lot more about the baby and less about himself by his third interview. Therefore we might conclude that a process of containment of the adults' feelings had occurred, which allowed all of us to see and think about the baby more over time. I have indicated that I struggled to watch the baby, because there was a strong emotional pull particularly from the mother. Eventually, when I gave in to witnessing the whole family in context and admitting all the intersubjective tensions between us, it seemed we were all enabled to observe the baby.

8.2.6.4 Facilitating mother-infant bonding

I have indicated that Eve may have been depressed as a result of the difficult circumstances related to living in poverty. I need to stress that there were times when I felt worried about Maria when I watched her family's interaction with her, in particular responses by Eve and Natasha. I have highlighted the intrusiveness, aggression, punishment and disconnection that I witnessed, alongside the attuned mothering, and which the seminar group did not seem comfortable thinking about. I wondered about how my presence in the face of Eve's possible depression facilitated her connection with her child. It seemed to me that my being there sometimes served to "warm her up" out of an unavailable state which may have been about depression, and which I linked with the difficulties of her situation:

Eve glanced at me, smiling. I smiled and laughed, nodding in recognition, but looking at Maria. It seemed to me at this point that Eve had warmed up a great deal since the start of the hour. Maria said "ungh" while facing me and Eve said, "ungh!" as though agreeing with her. Eve laughed in a genuine, spontaneous way. "Ungh!" Eve said again. (Observation 31, September 2005)

In the following extract, I found the family without electricity as a result of a storm the previous night:

"Het dit baie gereën hier by julle?" ("Did it rain a lot here by you?") I ask, wincing inwardly as I say it (Hier by julle - daar by

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ons (Here by you - there by us)). "Ungh," Eve says. She is wearing a thin purple long-sleeved vest over another top, dark purple cords, two-tone shoes, and a multi-coloured, striped woolly hat with a long point. She looks cold to me, with her shoulders slightly hunched-up and her body held. I nearly ask her, "Kry jy nie koud nie?!" ("Aren't you cold?!"), but don't. There is a pink glass cup with some Pronutro-like porridge in it on the counter next to the television. It has a teaspoon in it and is covered by a saucer. There is something unusually desolate going on here today. Maria is staring at me and now smiles again. This time, Eve smiles slightly too, looking down at her, and then out at me. Maria smiles again and then ducks her head back to her mother's neck. She repeats this motion a few times, each time looking at me and then turning away again with a smile, hiding. I have not seen this before and want to ask, "Is jy skaam?" ("Are you shy?") Maria is sitting back in the crook of her mother's right arm, in her lap, and looks up at her mother in a long glance. She looks back out at me and then glances up again at her mother's face, holding the look. I have never seen this before. Eve looks down at her and smiles. (Observation 18, June 2005)

It seemed here that the connection facilitated by my entrance, namely of people noticing one another and looking at each other (seeing), may have counteracted the painful physical and emotional state of being cold. I also noticed that the way in which Eve fed her baby changed over time. Initially she would hold Maria very loosely across her thighs while she breastfed, and gaze out of the door "with glazed eyes" (Observations 7 and 8). Later on, I noticed increasing eye contact from Eve (gazing) during the feeds and facial responsiveness towards Maria:

Maria drinks, with her left, visible arm stretched alongside her body in a straight but relaxed fashion. Eve looks down at her, without making any eye contact with me. She gently strokes Maria's hair as she drinks, playing with the texture between her thumb and forefinger. I think how soft the hair looks and want to say something to this effect, but don't. (Observation 10, March 2005)

On the one hand, this may have been in response to Maria's development: she became more interactive and therefore Eve did. On the other, my attention on the mother may also have enabled her in turn to become more preoccupied with the baby (to be in a state of reverie), which may have facilitated her bonding with Maria. In the Mother-Infant Bonding Group in the same community in 2003 the goals included observing interactions between mother and infant, and developing the mothers' awareness of the interactions as important. Ultimately, the idea was to encourage interactions and maternal responsiveness (Burmeister-Nel et al., 2004). I felt that my presence as an observer might have had a similar outcome.

8.2.7 Practical help

Eve indicated in interview that she had known other people who had been interviewed and had received supermarket vouchers in payment. Carol explained that apart from appropriate referral, this was all we could offer in material terms:

Eve: It's just for the child really... That.. that what-do-you-call-it.. that they get (**I:** Mmm..) I now remember about the girl that stays here (**I:** Mmm..) she also got something like that.. It was after a long time (**I:** Mmm..). She also got it and then she bought it for her child..
I: So, that's what she got from the people who came to talk to her.. It's the same type of thing.. But it is long, it's a year..
Eve: It's long yes...
I: Yes, and I think the best thing in the meantime is.. that we try.. uhm.. to help you get hold of a social worker.. so that you can get the money from the welfare.. you can get it... (There is a long silence, voices are still audible in the background as well as bird sounds). But it still feels hard for you...
Eve: Mmm... (Interview 1 with Eve, March 2005)

Therefore it is possible that at least part of Eve's motivation in agreeing to the observation might have been to gain practical, financial help for her child. She and the interviewer seem to agree that her commitment was longer than

just a few interviews; therefore her hope might have been that her gift might be more, which in the end it indeed was. In the long term my observation did in fact result in greater financial wellbeing for the family. Eve indicated that she would like a social work referral when it was offered. My enquiries resulted in information about how to apply for a disability grant for both Maria and Natasha, by virtue of their relation to Piet. A monthly grant was then given to Maria only. I further assisted Eve to gain information about making a maintenance claim from Natasha's father. Social work services indicated, through my inquiries, that Eve could claim from a fund while waiting for him to respond. Eve applied and this money was then paid out monthly for Natasha in the interim.

8.2.8 Conclusion

In conclusion, the observation had multiple therapeutic outcomes and in this sense can be considered a successful intervention in itself. The observation was experienced as a positive event in which the parents' lives could be witnessed and their troubles heard. The mother's sense of self may have been strengthened by the emotional support she received. This accords with S. Briggs's finding that the containing function of the observer becomes of paramount importance in situations where parents are taxed by their environment and may not always be available, emotionally or physically, for their infants (1997a). The baby seemed to benefit from my presence as a kind of guardian in the first year of her life: the parents may have attended more to her, which enhanced their pride in and bond with her. In practical terms, the family benefited from the grants that my referrals enabled. On a broader, and perhaps somewhat presumptuous level, I claim (tentatively) that our contact made a small contribution to national healing in South Africa in the wake of apartheid. My observation shows that, even in a very different context, infant observation can be beneficial - perhaps even more so, and in a broader sense, than in other contexts. I conclude that infant observation offers one way to conduct community research that is simultaneously therapeutic. In this sense it is, as I noted earlier, an example of ethnography as therapeutic praxis (Ainslie & Brabeck, 2003).

It should be noted that, like other psychodynamic work, these outcomes were (inadvertently) achieved via relationship (cf. Bardyshevsky, 1998). Therefore I am concluding that it is important to examine the nature and quality of this relationship in all infant observation more extensively, both in terms of the immediate emotional impact and the long-term impact, or usefulness, of the experience. This involves thinking about how the observer uses the experience as well as, and in comparison to, the way in which the family and individual members of the family make use of the experience. There has not been much attention paid to this in the literature in any setting.

8.3 The observation as research

At proposal stage it was initially envisaged that I would use the material gleaned from the observation to design an intervention in the same community. However, in the proposal process it was decided that it was important to take a slow look at needs first. The goal that was set was to consider in depth what kind of knowledge such an observation might bring theoretically and then to test that in practice. This was felt to be an opportunity to develop a thick description, but of what was not foreclosed at the outset (see Chapter Six). I discovered that infant observation in a community setting in fact involves seeing the things that press themselves on you, wanting to be seen, and which you did not necessarily expect. Below I will summarise the findings of the research process around

needs. Firstly, I will look at the nature of the knowledge I gained, and secondly, at the content of that knowledge.

8.3.1 The kind of learning

It was described in Chapter Five that infant observation offers experiential learning. The kind of knowledge I took away about needs was characterised by detail, depth, specificity and emotion. I began to understand the participants' needs from their own perspective by forming a relationship with them and then thinking about the dynamics of this, often difficult, relationship.

8.3.1.1 Detailed thick descriptive texts

The infant observation literature and my previous experience of observing demonstrated the importance of watching closely (seeing) and recording in great detail. The memories I have of the observations in Moretown remain extremely clear, even years later, and are almost photographic in quality. The observations produced extremely detailed records that could stand alone as a rich document about the participants' lives, without further analysis. The 43 observation records form a very compelling account that of itself has some of the texture of thick description. For example, in describing the characters, their circumstances, the setting and the drama that then unfolded between us from these records, it became clear to me how much detailed, interior information the observation process had made available to me. I hope this comes through in my description in this chapter and the previous one. I doubt whether I would have been able to describe the people and their environment in quite this way after a needs assessment process consisting only of interviews and questionnaires.

I have found that I could not make claims about character without talking about relationship, and I could not describe relationship without considering where we all came from and how that affected the dynamics between us. Certain themes repeatedly emerged from the coding procedure. It was, however, extremely difficult to separate them, because I found them to be interlinked. "Apartheid", for example, was implicitly represented in all of the themes relating to context and was present in the second major theme, namely the relationships I observed and experienced during the process. I have concluded that "context is all" in that it is a thread which runs through everything. It cannot be separated out as a distinct factor and put aside in an infant observation process of this nature. A representation of discrete themes would have given an artificial impression of how these aspects manifested. Rather, it is hoped that my discussion of the material has revealed how tightly interwoven they in fact are. Infant observation accounts are, like other written material about real people, "texts about lives that could be interpreted to reveal intersections of the social, cultural, personal and political" (Riessman, 1993, p. vi). The present analysis has, not out of design but of necessity, made such issues and their intersection visible.

8.3.1.2 Depth knowledge about the unspeakable

In the described observation contact our economic, cultural, racial and political differences became central, whereas these aspects could be left out in other work documented in the literature. Through the interpretation of the unconscious, psychodynamic practice here gathered unspoken, unspeakable and unknown information about all the

participants in the observation project. This provided a very deep kind of knowledge. For example, I had access to unspoken shame and rage related to the legacy of apartheid. This came to me through the transference effects that spoke of the mother's internal world. Therefore one could say that what was added to the needs assessment project here was a very difficult, unconscious and emotional dimension, which might have been hard to access otherwise. Race and difference *were* the issues and they came out in the relating, rather than in the observation of the baby. I learned about what Maria was born into in terms of her political ghosts and social realities. This was an anxiety-provoking process, because it involved my own personhood. Interpretation in supervision is meant to contain the significant anxiety of cross-cultural work in low-income communities. It is my contention that it can only do so if it is prepared to work with dimensions like race, poverty, politics and power.

8.3.1.3 Visceral learning through relationship

All knowledge of other people comes through our subjective experience of them. First contact has the potential to give rise to "new ways of seeing" (K. Gibson, 2002b, p. 83) or more stereotyped views. Infant observation offered a kind of learning about the family under study that put me in touch with their lives and environment in a very vivid, empathic way.

The goal of the present research project was to see whether infant observation could add depth to a needs assessment. One result was that it gave me a deeper understanding of the community by means of the political and emotional dynamics with me as the observer. In Chapter Seven I was able to describe the community of Moretown in three sections (**7.3.5**; **7.5.3**; **7.5.5**). This is quite surprising, considering that I was there to observe a single infant. To recap, I learnt that it was a forgotten, patriarchal community that was particularly dangerous for women and children. Domestic violence and sexual and alcohol abuse seemed rife. There was ongoing competition for scarce resources, and a lack of privacy. Families sometimes isolated themselves and there was very little communication about feelings generally. Apartheid has resulted in a view of white people as both beneficent and oppressive. I felt that the community did not trust me, but also looked up to me as an authority. I found that my personal, long-term involvement in the present project helped me to break down any image I might have had of Moretown as an idealised community.

My focus on the relationship between me as the observer and everyone else in the setting unsettled the more traditional infant observers in my seminar group and it was resisted. But in retrospect it is not at all surprising. The complexity in the meeting space between us was an indicator of the ills the community were wrestling with on a daily basis. My experience of this in relationship gave me a textured and emotive understanding. These constituted new insights, which were the direct result of experiencing the effects of oppression and poverty through relationship. The complexity of the meeting space between observer and observed in a community setting was highlighted in the present research. Contrary to suggestions that infant observation might be a way to observe difference without fear or opprobrium in South Africa (Maiello, 1998), the opposite in fact turned out to be true. Fear and opprobrium are almost guaranteed at this stage in our history. One of my major findings was that relationship will be much more important in this context. But I have also argued that relationship is always important in infant observation, across all settings, and needs to be considered more systematically in the model.

On the upside, infant observation offers a rare form of cross-cultural relationship in township settings, which is what psychotherapy in these areas could offer, were services currently more broadly available.

It is acknowledged in the literature, and I have felt it, that experiencing the force of primitive anxieties gives practitioners a valuable training exercise in bearing or "staying with" clients' emotional states. In this case I needed to be able to hold the impact of poverty on the participants' emotional life. I expected at the outset to see a great deal about life in poverty. The standout outcome of the present study was, however, that I experienced something of the family's situation through their relating to me. What I saw was also important, but could presumably also be described in interview. The felt experience I had could only, I believe, be obtained through the discipline and structure of the observation process, which forced me to go back every week and attend, which I did for 43 hours. As in therapy, it is the attending, including emotional attunement or a position of empathy, that gives one the experience of having been with someone. In this case I felt that I had been with them under difficult external circumstances.

I conclude that infant observation offers a very deep, profound kind of experiential learning about lives in poverty. The results can perhaps be generalised in a limited way, but are the product of a kind of emotional research into experience. A felt sense of poverty resulted. Both seeing and experiencing were important in this process and they overlap, but experiencing seemed the most important. This was a function of the repeated, long-term exposure to the family's lives that observation offered: it is a kind of participant observation, as has been described. Much more participation occurred here than it would have in interviews alone. There was a sense in which I could see and feel things that would not necessarily be talked about in an interview. The results of the present study are the product of both seeing and feeling. I conclude with Piet's concise comments about visceral learning through relationship in the observation process:

Piet: If, if I [take] it from me, like I say now, if I take it from me now, it is something good as well (**I:** Mmm). It's, it's something good. Because, because in this way you learn more things, that you perhaps didn't know (**I:** Yes), or.. I perhaps know more about you later than.. (**I:** Mmm) that I didn't know before (**I:** Yes). Or that I, or I, I get to know you better (**I:** Yes), do you understand (**I:** Mmm). And you get to know me better. (Interview 2 with Piet, March 2005)

8.3.1.4 Knowledge that conscientises

As a psychologist, a researcher and a person, I feel that I was changed by the observation year. In other words, the experience affected me on a profound level too. Like other observers in cross-cultural settings (King, 2002), I found I was conscientised by the contact, and increasingly reflected on racism and oppression:

> I also began to understand some of the ways black families successfully strengthen their children to cope with often hostile experiences in society through, for example, pride in their own cultural origins or by promotion of the importance that education can bring. (King, 2002, p. 216)

Like Piontelli (1992), I felt that the observation process challenged my stereotypes about the participants. I constantly examined my values and beliefs regarding difference (Tanner, 1999). I would go as far as to say that all observations in such a setting, involving long-term cross-cultural contact, will undoubtedly conscientise and politicise the South African observer, and enable her to begin engaging with complex issues such as power

differentials. An important part of this process was the self-reflection that was instituted along the way, and the focus on feelings.

8.3.1.5 Particularised versus generalisable knowledge

The infant observation reports represent only one unit of information. However, the reports, the interviews and the present dissertation represent approximately 600 pages of data about a single child living in poverty.

In overview, it is clear that relationship and subjectivity came to the fore more in the observation process than in other processes in other contexts documented in the literature. Perhaps in social constructionist and intersubjective terms they are always important, but have been underplayed. My findings accord with S. Briggs's suggestion that in observations across socio-economic and cultural divides, the subjectivity of the observer may become more important (2002). However, I wish to go further than this and to argue that the issue of intersecting subjectivities is always important in every context. Perhaps we can go as far as saying that all infant observation is ultimately able to record is an infant observer observing. My critique of infant observation is that it has not recognised this. Secondly, the present project supports M.J. Rustin's (1997) assertion that, where there is risk of any kind to the infant, the family's relationship with the observer may become a significant element that needs considering in its own right.

8.3.2 The content of the new knowledge

In this section I will summarise the information I gathered that can be contributed to the needs assessment process in Moretown. Where relevant, I will contrast my findings with some of my initial expectations at proposal level.

8.3.2.1 The impact of physical and emotional deprivation

In Chapter Seven I described in detail the way in which the deprivation of the physical environment impacted on the microcosm of relating. This included the mother-infant relationship, but extended to all the relationships I observed and was a part of. I was able to sense the emotional deprivation that resulted from physical impoverishment. In a concluding comment, I would like to return to my concern, at proposal stage, that the time commitment of weekly visits for a year might feel too much for the participants. At the end of the present study I realised that the observation period had in fact felt too short for the family. At the beginning Eve repeatedly asked me if I would be coming every day. In the interviews she seemed unconsciously to allude to the same desire, even a year later:

Eve: And from then on she came every week.. she came every week.. But she only comes Wednesdays, she comes to me. (Interview 1 with Eve, March 2005)

I: Which one was the most enjoyable, the visiting day that was the best for you?
Eve: She only came Wednesdays. (Interview 3 with Eve, January 2006)

Despite the sense that I was the "baby police" and in some way synonymous with child protection services, Eve seemed to want me to be with her. A year, she seemed to be saying, was actually not enough for what she needed:

Eve: That she told me.. she only comes.. until the child.. is a year old (**I:** Mmm..), then.. then she's finished.. Madam sees, then she doesn't come anymore.
I: A year is a fairly long time hey?
Eve: Yes, she told me that when the child is a year old.. then she is finished.. then she won't be able to come again. (Interview 1 with Eve, March 2005)

I: How do you think you would feel when it's over.. when the visits are over..?
Eve: I will feel all right.. because this is just for a certain time now.. (**I:** Mmm..) until the child reaches that age then she won't be coming anymore.. (Interview 1 with Eve, March 2005)

In both these extracts Eve seemed to be expressing regret that my time was limited. Contrary to an expected sense of relief, she seemed to be sad that I would not able to come any more because of the nature of the study. This indicates how rich and valuable the experience of infant observation can feel for people living in conditions of poverty. It also indicates the extent of the mother's emotional need in the present study.

8.3.2.2 The need for therapy

Similarly, I was surprised that Eve did not withdraw from the study, as this had been a consideration at proposal stage. It seems the observations brought something that she needed, but which could not be easily acknowledged. The study's main finding was the parents' (particularly the mother's) need to have their lives witnessed by means of an attentive, empathic gaze. The fact that, through the observation process, this was forthcoming from someone who was historically a member of the enemy camp may have contributed to the difficulty in admitting the need and the connection. At the same time, it would seem at the end that this very struggle was also a site for healing in the lives of both the practitioner and the participants. The injunction in infant observation to focus on the baby was found to create a rather unnatural pull in another direction at times.

I have described the way in which my presence had therapeutic outcomes. It is possible that my gaze had a broadly preventative function related to pathology in this family. This lends credence to the power of attentiveness and suggests that it may have been underestimated in community work to date. The need to be witnessed speaks of a desire to be worthy of being seen, in other words, to feel valuable in the eyes of another. This may be one of the first wounds one experiences when living in an abandoned community. Ultimately, my tie with this family was the sense of validation that the parents took away from the project. Therefore I will recommend that any intervention that is based on my findings needs to focus on affirming parents who have been marginalised by the apartheid system.

8.3.2.3 Resilience

My initial expectation was that, in terms of mothering, I would possibly witness a situation of inadequacy and suffering in the present study, which could be quite painful to watch. To some extent this was true at times. At the outset I could not really imagine that there would be significant strengths and resilience coming to light. Accounts

that focus on resilience (a theoretical concept for me) sometimes seemed to do so in defence against suffering. I have indicated that, to an extent, I felt the seminar process was guilty of such a bias. As described, Maria seemed to be developing as a robust, securely attached child. We can hypothesise that at least one reason for this was the way in which she was mothered within the environment: it seemed that she was not overtly sequestered, although she was adequately protected, especially when she was younger. I have commented on the difference between observing when Eve was present and when the children were alone in my company. My sense was that Eve's maternal presence functioned as an important buffer in a very harsh environment. In other words, while Eve herself suffered and even transmitted the effects of poverty, she also mitigated its impact on her children.

8.3.2.4 A nuanced mother-infant relationship

In setting out to find out about mothering under conditions of poverty, I had the expectation that, as a review of the literature suggested, mothering would be negatively affected (J. Lazarus, 2003): that is, that aspects of living in poverty would be deleterious when it came to the mother's ability to be available to her child. This failure in early relationship has been amply demonstrated in the literature as having long-term effects on the development of the individual. I expected the depressed, preoccupied mother of the literature to come to the fore in the present study. At times Eve did seem to be that; her ability to engage in primary maternal occupation varied (as did mine). One can speculate about the "ghosts in her nursery" (Fraiberg, 1989). One spectre was nearly losing her first child through alcohol abuse.

However, the reports produced a much more nuanced picture of the relationship between Eve and Maria. In retrospect, it seems that the quality of "micro-observation" was very important. The intricacies of mothering in a poverty context were illustrated. The observation helped me to see that "mothering" and "mothering well" are not black and white concepts. Within a poverty context, mothering is in fact an extremely complex construct. There is a careful balancing act needed when depicting mothering in a low-income community. I felt that the seminars attempted to construct it as an act of heroism (good mothering in the face of adversity). This seemed to gloss over the considerable and often subtle impact of the greater environment, via the mother, on the baby. I became more conscious of the ways in which we try to interpret the difficult things away and how motherhood in an impoverished community can easily be either demonised or idealised.

Like S. Briggs (1998), I was struck by the way in which the parents in the present study had to, perhaps unconsciously, foster resilience in their child in the face of hardship. At times this could be interpreted as cruelty. A question that arose is whether the definition of what is appropriate mothering in this context is different. This is tricky territory, because it can minimise what are abusive or neglectful practices. Tomlinson et al. (2003) held that we need to ask provocative questions about difference, rather than appropriating diversity into a powerful and familiar genre. In terms of the present study, this has meant interrogating my own notions of motherhood instead of relying on definitions offered by an imported tradition of infant observation.

Winnicott (1960) argued that the mother and her infant are indivisible at first:

> The infant and the maternal care together form a unit…"There is no such thing as an infant", meaning, of course, that whenever one finds an infant one finds maternal care, and without maternal care there would be no infant. (p. 39)

The present research project has highlighted the practical, physical, social and ideological realms that held Eve as a mother and which therefore shaped the kind of mothering that "constituted" her infant in a Winnicottian sense. I found that maternal and other environments, and personal and national history, are as indivisible as a mother and her infant are. I discovered that to try to observe an infant without simultaneously being interested in every aspect of her environment, by which I mean more than the mother, namely all that surrounds and has shaped her, is to try to simulate a kind of blindness. Perhaps we could say then, following Winnicott, that there is no such thing as a mother.

8.3.2.5 Culture

A consideration of culture from a postmodern ethnographic perspective has made me wary of making absolutist statements about culture in the present study. At most, I can reflect on a few isolated things that the mother did in relation to her baby, which seemed to have some wider frame of reference. These would include Eve's way of squeezing her baby's mouth shut when she yawned, and dressing her in multiple layers of clothing, even when it was warm. Oddly enough, Maria often wore some of her T-shirts inside out. It also seemed that music, dancing and singing were important both in the family and among the neighbours. The idea that any of these phenomena can be attributed to some form of wider "culture" is pure speculation. It is interesting, however, that the mouth-squeezing came up in an observation by another observer in one of the initial seminar groups I visited. The race and culture of the observed family were undeclared. The observer, who was coloured, however, commented that she had seen this action often within her own cultural milieu, but that she did not know what it meant. Similarly, when I later asked Eve why she did this, she smiled and said she did not know. It is possible that there was originally a specific logic in this action (for example, if she yawns too widely, bad spirits will come in), which was lost over time, while the action itself was passed on generationally. Geertz (1973) has shown that it is important to understand the meanings of events as they are salient to those involved in them. I have insufficient evidence to explicitly attribute either this action or Maria's way of being dressed to a wider group or community style of mothering, about which there is some shared understanding. A thick description of cultural aspects would need much more verification from the participants (in order to access their own meanings). The restricted conversation in the infant observation module makes it less than ideal for gathering specific cultural meanings. Beyond this, however, it has been noted that the South African "underside of experience", namely our history of racial and cultural conflict, dominated the observation experience. Therefore, while I am hesitant to itemise the participants' "cultural ways", the observation did highlight all our differences, whether we categorise them as cultural, racial, political, economic or social.

8.3.3 Conclusion

In summary, as a research endeavour the infant observation process yielded thick description about unspoken, unspeakable and often unconscious information about the client group: namely the pervasive impact of poverty and apartheid on the clients' lives. This information was gathered through experiential learning in relationship; in other

words, it was coloured by emotion. The effect was that it was conscientising for me as the observer and will possibly be for those who read about my research. Very specific knowledge was produced about the impact of deprivation on one family and their need for therapeutic intervention. I was able to see the way in which the current and historical, internalised environments impacted on the mother, which in turn influenced her way of relating to her child. This information, as well as my emergent focus on the mother as someone who had been forgotten and whose experiences had been marginalised, feels important from a feminist perspective. I realised that my very choice to observe an "othered" subject was politically significant and that it went some way to combating the discriminatory, exclusionary and sexist effect of the resolve in infant observation to observe a "normal" family. At the same time, the way in which deprivation permeated all relating in the wider community was noted. Resilience was also observed. A very nuanced description of one mother-infant relationship resulted, as did some observations about the family's "culture". It seems in overview that the kind of knowledge gained was as important as the information itself. In practice, the observation module did indeed offer a very respectful way to engage with a family in order to learn about them, as was hoped (Maiello, 1998; Nsamenang, 1992; Orford, 1992). It was, however, taxing at times for me as an observer to bear the tensions of the situation.

8.4 The observation as training

Infant observation was traditionally a training method, but the present study attempted to use it for needs assessment purposes. As a by-product, however, it is worth thinking about how my experience of observing in a low-income community could be used for training purposes. It is my contention that such an experience can help the community practitioner to acquire more of a visceral, insider's view. This could be one way to conscientise clinical students or existent practitioners who are "out of touch" with the actual experience of living in poverty. I believe that observations in community settings by clinical students will have the effect of producing more community psychology practitioners. The proviso is, however, that they must be adequately supervised. With sufficient support, they may develop a sense that the difficulties of community work can be mastered and are, in fact, very interesting to work with. This has been my experience, even following a very difficult observation process, as a result of sound supervisory support from my promoter. However, the fact that infant observation is such a time-intensive procedure is problematic, both in terms of needs assessment and training. I will address these concerns below.

In the following section I will consider what needs to change about infant observation. My comments are based on the impossibility of applying the Bick "gold standard" in the present study, by which I mean our co-construction of infant observation from the Tavistock in its most pure and original form. After reviewing my struggle in the present study, I will consider the limitations of the study itself and then conclude with recommendations.

8.5 My struggle with the Tavistock gold standard

There were unusual problems thrown up by this particular setting, which I will review below. I was able in many ways to adhere to the frame, but some aspects of the Tavistock tradition seemed difficult and inappropriate under these circumstances. I have discussed my struggle during actual observations in the previous chapter. Below I will

focus on further aspects of the process.

8.5.1 The reports

Like E. Gibson's (2002/3) reports, mine recorded accent in the dialogue and described events from much earlier on than in intracultural observations. In fact, as indicated, I often started describing an observation at the point where I stood in front of my cupboard in the morning, wondering what to wear. It was extremely hard to write the reports and I began commenting on this from early on. In the following extract it became painful to write as I recalled reading the consent form out loud to the mother:

I read it aloud to [Eve], slowly. She nods after first paragraph. Natasha listening as if to a story, standing at Eve's side, frowning. Halfway through I think I should have stopped after every paragraph, to ask if there are questions. Also have assumed she can read? Some of these words sound so big and complex. (Am rushing to write up this obs, get it over with). (Observation 2, December 2004)

In other words, what was painful here was my awareness of the disparity between us. In the long run perhaps even more painful than observing was the injunction to write some kind of report about what I saw, specifically, an "infant observation" report with certain rules:

There was an upturned crate placed opposite the pram. It seemed there for me and I sat on it without asking. Although there was a lot of movement and people around, I kept my focus on Maria (the baby). I knew that if I looked up I would see so much that I would then want to record. The reports have become so long that it is painful. (Observation 32, October 2005)

I used titles for the reports from the beginning. This was accepted in the seminars but not discussed. I had done the same at the Tavistock, although it is not usual practice. Headings are, however, used in infant observation essays discussing themes across observations. In retrospect, the use of titles in this particular observation process became consciously subversive as it deviated from the infant observation discourse of "just describing". The content of the title was often a comment on process between the family and me as observer. For example, I entitled Observation 23 "Mother/infant observation" (**Addendum F**), indicating that at last (midway, in July) I felt I had finally done some of that! Yet the punctuation here (a slash, rather than a hyphen) continues to suggest an either/or dichotomy. Thus my titles also commented on the injunctions of infant observation (the framework), instead of just staying with the details of what I saw. In another example, I remember taking great delight in presenting an observation entitled "My promoter" (Observation 13) to the seminar group, in which I discussed Ms L's coming along to meet Eve. Mrs K commented wryly that that was certainly unusual in infant observation. In a sense then I was, initially unconsciously and later consciously, using the tools of the observation discourse to dismantle it. Within a feminist deconstructionist paradigm, this kind of (more conscious) subversive move has been described as "retaining the term to circulate and break with the signs that code it" (Lather, 1993, quoted in Olesen, 2005, p. 252). I noticed that generally it was very hard "just to observe" versus interpreting, and I made comments about this in Observation 29:

I notice that it is becoming increasingly difficult not to record interpretations of what I see here. I justify writing them up as for the most part they are actually happening to me in the moment, during the observation, and not after it. (Observation 29, September 2005)

My observation reports were short and tentative at the outset (Observation 1), and, as mentioned, one of them is

unfinished (Observation 4). It is interesting that part of what I failed to describe in detail in Observation 4 was the humanising moment when Eve showed me the baby's photo album. Initially I used a telegraphed, shorthand style, which is very unusual at the Tavistock. This suggests that I possibly had some resistance to really "being there", that is, experiencing and meeting what the setting offered. I may unconsciously have had a sense at the start of the litany of difficulties that lay ahead of me and wished for the experience to somehow pass over me without my feeling it.

My writing-style changed during the process, which is revealing. In time a lot more of "me" came into the reports, and I freed myself to a degree from the "observation voice" in my head, so that they became less like traditional infant observation reports. For example, it is unusual to have quite so much reflection on the observer's personal emotional reactions in an observation report (M.E. Rustin, 1989) (see also **Addendum B**). The format of the reports became more standardised. I began observing the observation; that is, quite self-consciously observing myself in the situation, along with everyone else. Retrospectively, I notice that I began to use lots of parentheses, perhaps indicating that there were things I wanted to say but which did not seem to fit in. For a while (around Observations 31 and 32) it seemed I was "writing for two", namely for the seminars and also for supervision, where I felt freer. I was indeed writing for two different audiences, especially as I knew in advance when I would be called on to present in the seminar. In retrospect, these audiences can be roughly defined as the modernist Tavistock gold standard (embodied by Mrs K) and a postmodern South African community psychology (embodied by Ms L). My use of meta-commentary and irony grew. I seemed to develop my own distinctive voice. The result was the "thick description" of the last phase. Something that characterised this phase was a giving-over to letting things develop, instead of trying to force them into a frame:

I wrote most of this report up in one sitting and it was gargantuan. The latter part was particularly heavy to get through. Also I notice that I am able to admit to uncertainty about what I remember - instead of forcing it all to make sense in the most accurate pattern possible. (Observation 30, September 2005)

This may have been partly about admitting to not knowing about the community I was observing in. The reports increasingly became very long and took many hours to write, often over several days. I repeatedly commented on this, with some exasperation, for example in Observations 16, 17, 18, 23, 25, 27, 31, 36, and 41. Piontelli (1992) noted that "infant observation is enormously time-consuming, particularly if note-taking is accurately performed after each observation" (p. 17). Piontelli's reports were, in keeping with Bick's dictum to produce "details" and "sequences", also long (five to six pages typed and single-spaced) (A. Briggs & Piontelli, 2006, p. 203).

There are many references to my agony related to the writing process in my reports in the present study. From my own research it seems unusual to have so much commentary about the experience of writing itself in an observation report. While I also used to write long reports during my observations of a young child at the Tavistock in 2001, I did not experience doing so as painful and certainly did not comment on it in the reports. In the present study the reasons for the growing length of my reports were complex. My experience of suffering in the writing perhaps mirrored the suffering I was witnessing. Initially I felt anxious about "getting it out before I forget" (Observation 13). It bothered me when I did forgot details and I would start a new observation with added memories that had come to me about the previous one (for example, Observation 20, 22 and 24). It is possible that I wanted to do

justice to the family in my descriptions of them and therefore became over-inclusive. Kruger, Van Mens-Verhulst, Campbell and De Villiers (1999) commented about Ruth Behar's (1995) ethnographic study of a Mexican woman called Esperanza that: "[Behar] wished for her wickedness to be taken away by her research, but no one could respond in the way that she hoped for. She expected writing to be liberating, instead it was painful…If we want to do writing that won't hurt, we will never write" (p. 3). The reports also seemed to get longer as I allowed the relationship with the mother to take centre stage. At the same time, trying to record all the minute details of the baby's physical movements (M.E. Rustin, 1989) made the reports even more extensive. Essentially, I was trying to record so many kinds of different things that it was hard to encapsulate it all in the more standard two to three pages. My longest observation record was the last one, at 15 pages.

I commented in Observation 23 that I tended to take breaks before describing the baby, suggesting that I was avoiding doing so, or that it did not interest me as much as everything else around the figure of the baby, which was very absorbing. It felt more manageable to write up in stages, over several days. I repeatedly wished not to have to write reports (Observations 23 and 33). Eventually I did not write up one of the observations (Observation 34). This recalls the difficulty Lazar et al. (1998) had with writing notes from memory when observing premature infants. In my case however, this might have been both a defensive process and an attempt at liberating myself from the observation "rules". I experimented with writing in the past tense (Observation 31 and 43) and tried to make the reports shorter, perhaps in a bid to try to see less, to make my observations more like the standard, and certainly to try and get through them in an easier and less painful way. I deliberately tried to make Observation 14 shorter, knowing I was due to present it. It seemed particularly hard to write when I was writing about stepping out of the prescribed observer role:

The next day I call Diakonale Dienste ("Deaconal Services") and get the information for Eve. I call, but the phone is "subscriber unavailable" - I send the info with James. It almost kills me to write this observation up. (Observation 21, July 2005)

The greatest relief at the end of the observation process was not to be liberated from the family (in fact, I continue to visit them regularly), but to be liberated from the reports. In a letter to my supervisor about the first post-observation visit, I wrote:

…I have been so reluctant to write anything down about it. Even driving in I felt how different it was not to go in with this injunction to attend, remember, and record. I suddenly felt how liberated I was from the strangling infant observation framework. That it was meant to be a vehicle for uncovering something but in fact it paralysed me in so many ways… (April 2006)

In other words, for me writing began to represent a way in which to govern what I could and should be observing along certain rules. More recently, I have begun to think that the material would be better served by an ethnographic novel about our first contact, possibly entitled *Looking for Eve*. On the other hand, I have argued that aspects of the observation frame itself contained and sustained this difficult meeting, and made it possible in the first place.

8.5.2 The seminars

I was in two parallel ongoing supervisory processes simultaneously: with my thesis promoter (Ms L) and my infant observation seminar leader (Mrs K). Below I will briefly discuss my experience of the seminars and then contrast it with my thesis supervision.

8.5.2.1 Being different

My core experience in the infant observation seminars with Mrs K was of being "the odd one out", of doing something different, disturbing and difficult to digest. This in time led to a chronic feeling of being silenced, ignored, excluded and misunderstood. Just as the material in the observations intersected with my own personal issues in profound ways, so it was very hard for me to be the "black sheep" (an interesting phrase here) in the seminars. There were three kinds of real difference about me in the group. Firstly, I was observing in an "unusual" setting compared to others in the group. Secondly, I had a research agenda. Thirdly, I sometimes behaved differently in the observations and in the seminars on both counts.

I had chosen comparatively "difficult subjects", perhaps best to be avoided. During the seminars other observers vetoed particular families that they felt were potentially too difficult for them to tolerate personally - for example, a Rasta family where the parents used marijuana. I was observing in a poor setting rather than a middle-class one. I was fortunate in that I could speak Afrikaans and in this sense shared at least some cultural overlap. I had perhaps avoided communities that would bring home the difficulties associated with language in a country with 11 official languages (L. Swartz, 1998). It felt as though that which was uniquely South African about my observation and my research agenda could not be acknowledged and adequately worked with. There was one other student who was observing in a black township, but she was German and in a different seminar group. Eventually, having procrastinated regarding her offer to meet, I made several appointments with her to discuss our experiences after my infant observation process, which she repeatedly cancelled.

There was some discomfort about my role as researcher. Mrs K explicitly pointed out in the seminars that I was not doing what the other infant observers in the group were. This divide represented a conundrum: I was trying to do observation, and think about or question it at the same time. Mrs K expressed the idea to the group that I was in fact not doing a "real" or "normal" observation, because of having a consent form and a research agenda, and later, being accompanied to observations. In retrospect, it is strange to think that infant observation, even for training purposes, does not in fact use a consent form. Subsequently I felt that I was not a good enough observer and that my observation was being discounted. This was exacerbated by the fact that I continued to do things outside of the frame in response to its specific challenges: for example, making a welfare referral and taking photographs. This was perceived as stepping out of role. There was also criticism of the steps I took related to making the environment safer. The impression created was that one should endure feelings of fear and get on with the observation without assistance from others. I wanted mine to be a "regular" observation, in the sense of being like others I had conducted and read about, but I began to realise that it could not be, because of the context and also because my inquiry was about the method itself. In time I also came to question the whole notion of a regular

observation. Ultimately I felt that, like S. Briggs (1997b), a rigidly non-interventionist strategy in which referrals were not made and photographs not taken was impossible in this context. However, unlike S. Briggs (1997b), I never needed to intervene to ensure the physical safety of the child during observations.

There was discussion about how the seminars were meant to feed clinical work, linked with infant observations' original task, which is to train clinicians. For the first 6 months of the observation process I did not see clients. If I was not using the observations and seminars for this purpose, Mrs K asked, what was I doing with them? I responded by taking on clinical work even though I had planned a break from it following a punishing community service[1] year. Especially when presenting observations in the seminars, I can notice in retrospect that I was very keen to show that what I was doing was indeed observing and that I was an able therapist. For example, I entitled the summary preceding Observation 25, "Jana Lazarus: Observing Maria (7 months)" and used the language I had heard infant observers the world over use: "Mother demonstrates what M can do…"

I began to observe the dynamics of the observation seminars, about which I increasingly began to take notes. This added to my sense of having a different agenda. Latterly, in conjunction with my journal notes made after each seminar, I began to see that my feeling of being marginalised and not good enough, and then proving myself by taking employment, may have mirrored the experience Eve had in being observed by me. In other words, it became clear to me that my experience in the seminars may in part have been a counter-transference experience. I wondered whether Eve felt, like me, not a "real" person (or in my case, a real observer). Was this a "real" baby, then? Was Eve trying to show me that Maria was just as real and good as a white baby? It struck me that this kind of obliteration of the self was historically what Eve experienced as a product of apartheid. In retrospect it seemed logical and inevitable that this dynamic would come into play in relating to me, a white observer.

Even knowing this, and partially voicing it to Mrs K, did not resolve the difficult impasse in the seminars, however. It seems the observation year was characterised by a strong transference that pervasively affected the relationships between Mrs K, Ms L and me. Despite the fact that we were all trained in psychodynamic thinking, the pull towards enactment at times held sway. Even in my thesis supervision, which I experienced as supportive of the emotional and practical difficulties of observing in this particular South African context, a process of enactment occurred by which I separated myself from my supervisor so that I was, effectively, isolated with my difficulties. I stopped scheduling individual supervision sessions with Ms L after my interview in July 2005, so that we had no individual meetings in the second half of the observation process (although the research group continued to meet, and Ms L and I had telephonic and e-mail contact). I presented Observation 31 to the research group in this period (September) and Ms L continued to talk to me about the content of the observations I sent her. My withdrawal coincided with the middle of the second last phase (called "Love" in the previous chapter), from Observation 25 (October). I would even have gone to the last observation without Ms L's input had she not taken the initiative to call me to discuss it. I remember feeling that in the interview and the research group presentation (both of which spanned several hours) my work (and I) received a great deal of focus, attention and support, on emotional as well as intellectual levels. I felt almost guilty about taking so much. Two years later I am for the first time making the

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[1] Since 2001 all clinical psychologists who graduate in South Africa must do a compulsory community service year in an under-serviced area before they can register for independent practice.

link that I might have withdrawn because I finally got what I wanted - much, as I have argued, as Eve punished me because she felt cared for. I also remember feeling slighted, earlier on, when Ms L did not always have time to read my observations, at which point I stopped sending them until she prompted me to do so again. This was not something I discussed with Ms L at the time, because I felt rather ashamed of it. Perhaps it represents the child parts of both Eve and me. We may both have lacked a particular self-object experience developmentally, and continued to look for it in others. Eve looked to me and I looked to Ms L.

It is my belief that this experience of suffering alone (but yearning not to), while it intersects with my own organisation of experience, also led to a central finding: it gave me insight into Eve's experience of suffering alone, as touched on in the previous chapter. Just as I felt that my project was a poor fit in the world of infant observation, so Eve may initially have felt, in relation to me, that she was "not a real person" because of my declared focus on the infant. Secondly, and more broadly, her experience of oppression, at the hands of white Afrikaners like me, may have had this effect. Thus we both felt as if we did not fit (she, into my white world and perceptions), and we both felt ashamed by aspects of our context (I, about my research context). On the positive side, this led to profound empathic contact. When not worked through in the observation seminars, however, these emotions left me in an exhausted state. Urwin held that factors such as interracial tension must form part of the infant observation framework, because any undigested material could result in projection by the observer onto the mother as a cruel figure (C. Urwin, personal communication, January 30, 2007). It was only when I found a space (in thesis supervision) where it was possible willingly to think about what my feelings meant that some relief was found in a process of containment. McFadyen (1991) wrote of a similar experience in which she felt distressed by the sense that she was abandoning the mother in her study, just as the mother felt she was abandoning her baby: "The opportunity to share and discuss the meaning of these feelings in the group helps me to continue to behave appropriately in my role as observer" (p. 13). Perhaps it was possible for Eve and me to connect more explicitly in the last observation because Ms L had insisted on re-connecting with me just before it. In the interim it seems that the disavowed anger that Eve and I carried towards each other, about who we were and the difficulties of our relating, was only able to come out towards other people, including Mrs K:

Aunt Lil grabs my arm again, wedging it under her armpit. I wriggle away, openly sighing in exasperation, and look over at the end of the other bed. I am thinking of getting up and going to sit there, but wonder what the consequences will be. Lil asks me, "Is jy kwaad? Is jy?" ("Are you angry? Are you?") I shake my head, thinking, "No I am not angry, I am just ignoring you". (Observation 10, March 2005)

In a sense, I eventually began to ignore Mrs K. It was very difficult to be angry with any of the participants, because of my position of comparative wealth and power. It felt irrational and impossible to be angry at Ms L, who gave me so much, and so I censored those feelings. After trying to adapt and say and do the right things regarding Mrs K, I allowed myself to separate from the observation seminars in an emotional sense. Having said that, I did find several members of the seminar group supportive of me. My inability to meet Mrs K (and vice versa) remained particularly painful to me, related to my own organisation of experience. In summary, I suspect that we were acting out rather than thinking, and that we both felt the bi-directional strain of this situation. My decision not to talk to Ms L about my hurt feelings was, I think, part of my transference to her as well as part of Eve's transference to me. The fact that I can now write about it feels hopeful though; in contrast, I have not had contact with Mrs K again.

8.5.2.2 Resistance and defence

It comes through in my description of the present project that it was very trying at times. It was hard to bear what was going on in the observations, but even harder to attend seminars that did not help me to digest this difficulty, but instead left me feeling at fault for "not coping". I have already touched on my defensive processes during the observations, which were also visible in the reports. My resistance was born from the contact itself and was not present beforehand, when I was waiting to find a participant. I was in fact very eager at that time. Therefore I argue that it emerged in response to the difficulty of what I witnessed and experienced as early as the first observation. In the second report I noted my procrastination and even referred to myself in the third person, as though this were not happening to me, but to someone else:

Had phoned Eve to change this meeting to about a month earlier, as will be overseas. Jana nervous will lose paper with Piet's number on. Procrastinated re call, nervous about it. Finally - phone at around 6 p.m. on weekday and Piet answers cellphone immediately. (Observation 2, December 2004)

From a psychodynamic perspective my worry about losing Piet's phone number could be interpreted as a reaction formation, the actual wish being to lose contact with the family (Bateman & Holmes, 1995). My defensiveness can also be noted in my forgetfulness. For example, the vegetable garden, a humanising touch that I noted in the first observation, is described as something seen for the first time in the second observation. My dissociative tendencies also led to a sense at times of being in the wrong place at the wrong time:

Cloudy, floods elsewhere in country. Ek sien op (I don't look forward). Weird, road looks unfamiliar - am I in the right place? (Observation 2, December 2004)

Things are pretty much a blur until Moretown. It's coming back now. (Observation 27, August 2005)

The latter observation was also undated. This loosening from experience was mirrored in the seminar process, where I once arrived at an 8 a.m. meeting that was actually scheduled for 8 p.m. Mrs K had not been clear that it was, unusually, an evening appointment. Similarly, I regularly got lost or drove past the road that led to the family's house:

A small dog is scratching itself in the road and while watching it, thinking that I shouldn't drive over it, I nearly miss the turn-off again. I drive past the school and wonder what it is like for Natasha to come from this school back to her small house every day. (Observation 30, September 2005)

There was also an interesting issue around names in this particular process. In a phenomenon that was only amusing in hindsight, we often could not remember or pronounce each other's names correctly. For example, Mrs K could not get the pronunciation of my name right in a year and I did not correct her. At times she got it right and then reverted to the wrong pronunciation again. Similarly, I had many issues with names in the observation itself. As pointed out, I initially did not know that Piet was the father of the child, for example, and also erroneously called Eve by her maiden name at first. I understood, in a confusing communication to me by Eve, that the baby was to be called by her middle name. Later, however, it transpired that everyone was calling her by her first name but me. This led to my changing the baby's name in the reports (from Milla to Maria), much to the seminar's consternation. I also struggle to stick to a uniform spelling of "Milla". I worried that I would accidentally use the

participants' pseudonyms when speaking to them (for example, in Observations 13 and 18). Both Piet and Eve struggled to remember my name:

[Piet] starts again, now that Eve is here: Ek sou kon sê, ek soek nie meer vir…vir…(smiling) ek vergeet altyd u naam (Jana) - ek soek nie meer vir Jana hier nie… (I could say, I don't look for…for…(smiling) I always forget your name (Jana) - I don't look for Jana to be here anymore…) (Observation 5, February 2005)

Eve: He didn't.. it's not every time he asks... he asks me sometimes what does the woman say.. what.. (**I:** Mmm..) so I told him, last week when.. about the woman that was here on Wednesday (**I:** Mmm..) and she told me.. about what-do-you-call-it and then he told me, then I told him but.. her.. her name.. it doesn't want to come [to me now].
I: Her name, Jana yes. (Interview 1 with Eve, March 2005)

Eve knew my name and even had it written down, as did Piet (and Mrs K). It seemed that for the family the issue was about saying it, instead of just calling me "Mevrou". Eve never did say my name to my face until a full year after the observation process had ended. One of my fantasies was to ask her to say my name to me at termination. Retrospectively, I attribute everyone's difficulties with names to a defensive process, which was about keeping something or someone distant and unknown. I can also link it to the family's struggle with how to address me and my struggle with how to address them, considering the history of oppression, domination and subservience in our country.

I felt there was a defensive blindness in the seminar group. I have mentioned the way in which the seminars could not engage with the mother's struggles and needed to see her as good despite, or because of, the environment. In a further example, I witnessed the child's struggle to adjust when her mother returned to work. This must have been very hard, although she handled it well. At the same time the parents were invested in showing me that they were in no way abandoning the baby as my consent form had suggested they might. Instead of considering the theme of abandonment at different levels in the observation, the seminar glossed over the baby's struggle. They concluded that the baby seemed fine without her mother and that the separation process had not been too bad. In this way I felt they colluded with the family's attempts at portraying a rosy picture for me. S. Swartz (2006b) has commented on the "debilitating paralysis in professional debates and practice" that can arise in the avoidance of naming and confronting our anxieties around the issue of race as South Africans (p. 2). In this sense I felt that my observation was akin to Ellis's (1997), one in which she observed a black baby and the seminar group was paralysed at times by their fear of their own racism.

It felt as though a whole debate was silenced in the seminars. Socio-political and cultural positioning were obscured, only to be referred to obliquely in superficial ways while the onus was always on "getting back to the baby". The awkwardness of my positioning towards the Smits was glossed over with simple solutions, such as to say more about myself, and to ask more about how things were going for the baby, and how the family was. At best, my fears could be interpreted either in the practical realm (put the gorilla lock on the steering wheel) or the realm of phantasied, unconscious attacks (the baby is in the paranoid schizoid position, and that is why you are afraid of being raped). Thus the real dangers of the environment were either acknowledged but superficially dealt with, or discounted as counter-transference phenomena. What was missed in this process was an opportunity to grapple with the way in which we all felt dangerous to each other in the light of our socio-political positioning.

Counter-transference and projection were common concepts in our observation seminar, but not as they might link to socio-political context. This meaning invariably revolved around the painful feelings and power relations that had evolved from the phenomenon of apartheid. These meanings were not traditionally part of the infant observation focus and so struggled to find a home. We struggled to speak about power, control, and how we were constructing the other with our infant observation practices (Tomlinson & L. Swartz, 2003). Kruger's (2005a) paper on "keeping the lights out" on the poor seems relevant in this regard, in that she discussed sanitising, romanticising and not being able to hear about the complexity of being poor. My suffering was a manifestation of that which it was extremely difficult, under the conditions, to talk about, almost anywhere. I often brought issues that were muddled, complex and not very politically correct, such as disgust. It was hard for the group to negotiate this.

An example of how our positioning was not taken into account is the issue around talking in observations. I began by trying to be a good observer, by watching the baby without initiating interaction with anyone. I have suggested that the mother may have experienced this as my being aloof. Talking remained extremely hard in this process. Simple things like asking "How are you?" became a very complex question in this context. Instinctively, it was not something I did until it was suggested in the seminars:

I move behind them and enter the room, saying "Hoe gaan dit?" ("How are you?") (as discussed with Mrs K). Eve looks down and sideways, mumbling, "Gaan goed" ("Things are fine") in a perfunctory way. I think that she will not tell me anyway. (Observation 9, March 2005)

My "How are you?" was an attempt at forcing this observation into a more known mode, to try to foster the kind of observer-mother relationship one reads about in the literature, where the observer is hugged, given tea and talked to. The reality though was that our relationship could not be like that, and for important reasons that needed to be noted and thought about. What was appropriate here was different. I was amused, upon analysing the observations, to realise that the first person to ask anyone how they were in this observation process was Piet, when he was drunk and confronting me (Observation 6). I answered that I was fine, and he did too. Clearly, neither of us was very well at this moment, but we were both holding steadfastly to some social convention of saying that we were! It seemed the situation only became "normal" when someone was drunk and forgot the unspoken rules. The greeting never felt comfortable or right, perhaps because the answer was such a complex one. Secondly, the question was coming specifically from me; therefore what could be said in response was affected. It also seemed rude to throw this question out when I had this awareness. It seemed to nullify what I could see and apprehend, and what was patently obvious to me: that they were as well as could be expected, under the circumstances.

As mentioned, the parents did not talk to me freely about themselves and only a little more freely about the child. Again, Mrs K suggested it was all right to ask (Observation 9). But asking in this context felt quite intrusive. It might have been more profitable to consider why I did not feel free enough to ask. Nor did the parents ask me about my holidays or comment on the fact when I was absent due to illness. In fact, they never asked any personal information of me at all (beyond where I lived), such as whether I had children or not. Mrs K suggested that I should tell them I had been overseas when I missed an observation because I attended a conference there. I felt unable to do that. Later on, I did try to find out more about the baby and to initiate conversation about how the baby was, as suggested in the seminars. This lead to an awkward exchange in which Eve and I did not really seem to

understand each other:

I ask how long Eve has been feeding Maria solids, and Eve says, "Ekskuus?" ("Sorry?") "Hoe lank eet sy nou al sulke kossies?" ("How long has she been eating such foods?") I ask, and Eve says, "Nee, ek probeer nou maar eers of sy dit wil eet. Ek het vir haar 'n koekie gegee maar dit het haar laat braak…Ek wil vir haar 'n blikkie melk ook koop en sien of sy dit sal drink…" ("No, I've only just started trying to see if she will eat it. I gave her a biscuit but it made her vomit… I want to buy her a tin of milk too and see whether she'll drink it…"). I ask whether she has been having breast milk out of the bottle then, and Eve says, smilingly making eye contact, "Nee, ek voer haar net met die bors"("No, I only feed her by breast"). She gestures with a cupped right hand under her left breast. I think, well we both know this as I have seen it often. (Observation 9, March 2005)

The question about the feeding seemed irrelevant and soon afterwards Eve changed the topic to Carol's interview with her. Eve seemed unconsciously to get back to what was important: when she would be visited, and spoken to, about herself. In other words, laying out information about Maria felt besides the point to both of us on some level that needed noting and thinking about.

In retrospect, the same defensiveness that Assistant A had shown in the process of recruiting the participants can be seen in my own actions and those of the seminar group. In different ways, we all avoided the painfulness of the contact in Moretown at times.

8.5.2.3 Two kinds of supervision

The content and nature of my two supervision processes were very different and I can acknowledge a splitting process within this. The preliminary interpretation of the observation material in these two arenas differed profoundly. This difference was characterised by the stance taken towards the "external" reality at play in the project. The Tavistock-based observation seminar held that one needed to focus on the baby's internal life and not be distracted by the external, an overt focus on which was felt to make reverie impossible. I found that, as the external was minimised in the seminar as something outside a necessary preoccupation with the baby, it ironically became even harder for me to focus on the internal. I seemed to increasingly stand up for the environment, demanding it be seen. In the seminars it was suggested that I struggled with preoccupation with the baby, which was true. In summary, I found it hard to watch the baby because the poverty environment was novel and compelling, because the environment was dangerous and I may have been in a state of hypervigilance that did not allow me to concentrate, and because the mother was unconsciously demanding my attention. Mrs K even suggested that my struggle was due to the fact that much was undigested in my process, and that my personal issues were obstructive. Intersubjectivists might argue that this is probably always the case and that it is not possible to clear such "obstructions" away.

In contrast with Mrs K, the thesis supervision (and the related research group) held that my very struggle to "stay with the baby" was significant and a clue as to what else was demanding to be seen within the context. As Eve said in Observation 12, "Dit gaan maar altyd ommie die geld" ("It's always about the money"). One interpretation of this comment to me could be that the real topic here was relating across a substantial divide that none of us had had to before. An alternative explanation for my lack of reverie, then, is not that there was an inherent inability on my part - after all, I had observed before and experienced "reverie" - or that it was a result of tampering with the frame at

times by taking photos and making welfare referrals. Rather, another hypothesis is that preoccupation with the bigger picture is inevitable in a study of this kind (and, if we admit it, in other observations too). My immersion was in so much more than just the baby, because there was so much of importance going on around her. In the thesis supervision process extensive reflection on these issues offered me a sense of relief and renewal, and made things bearable. In contrast, the unprocessed material in the seminar laid a heavy burden on me. Without a second space in which to analyse this phenomenon, I would have stopped attending the seminars and possibly the observations as well.

The split between the supervision spaces also represents the debate between objectivity and subjectivity in the present project. Infant observation holds, as I showed in Chapter Five, that objectivity is possible to some degree: the premise is that the observer can see something in the world out there and capture it on paper. A more postmodern take was, however, needed to accommodate my experience that what really mattered in this observation was the interplay of our subjectivities and how to work with that profitably against the bleak background of apartheid. I hope I have shown that thinking ethnographically and intersubjectively about the project I was engaged in provided solutions to my struggles with the traditional infant observation frame. In so doing, I have revisited important theoretical considerations highlighted in the literature review and added my own findings in this regard.

8.6 Limitations of the present study

It can be argued that a disadvantage of the present study is that it represents a small sample. As a single case study, comparison with other infant observations, done in the same community, could not occur. This is unfortunately inevitable, as no other such studies exist at present. The present observation, however, provided material that can be compared with other case studies in future. It can also be argued that the size of the sample was not in fact a disadvantage, considering the enormous detail that was gleaned. A choice was made to produce thick description (lacking in the literature) rather than statistical information. Comparison occurred by utilising existent information about the community of Moretown in other forms, and can continue, as the results of the WMHRP are collated (Kruger, in press).

K. Gibson (2002b) made the point that the boundaries of a case study are somewhat artificially determined, being imposed by the nature of the research question. For the purpose of the present research, a boundary was drawn around observing a single child within a single family. Yet the unfolding data-collection process challenged such an artificial divide in ways that needed to be thought about. I have asked whether it is advisable to try to limit one's attention in this way when studying an aspect of a community, or whether it is even possible. There are certain kinds of knowledge that might be excluded by this focus. K. Gibson (2002b) commented that, while such limits allow a more intense focus, they might screen out potentially significant events from one's understanding. Beyond this, the researcher needs to make important decisions about what aspects of a particular case she chooses to study. In terms of infant observation, I have argued that the prescribed focus on the infant's developing internal life could potentially detract from relevant information about social and racial positioning, as seems to have been the case in other local and international cross-cultural accounts (Chapter Five). It is possible that my attempts at adhering

rigidly to the observation frame obscured data, especially at the beginning of the process.

It is also difficult to evaluate the success of the present study in community psychology terms. Where the focus of research is activist or interventionist, community psychology prizes evaluation methods (Nelson & Prilleltensky, 2005). In terms of a summative evaluation of the present research, an attempt was made to determine whether it answered the questions it posed and whether it achieved its aims. The primary focus of the present project was exploratory and not interventionist, but consideration was given to whether the research had a positive impact on the family studied. I tried to ascertain whether it assisted, as a by-product, in alleviating the problems it uncovered. This was determined through self-report by the participants, in my reflection on the process and through consideration in supervision with my promoter.

The issue of bias comes up repeatedly in a study of this nature. For example, it must be considered that participants might have censored their comments in order to please me as the observer (while confidentiality was ensured at the time, the participants were aware that the interview material would eventually be shared with me). The race, gender, experience, vocation and ages of the interviewers will certainly have impacted on the kinds of answers elicited. While the interviews were meant to be fact-finding methods, they in themselves constituted a form of relationship, the quality of which influenced the material they elicited.

8.7 Recommendations

My recommendations are chiefly around the methodology of observing in community settings. It is my contention, following on from my consideration of the literature as well as my own data, that the method will need to adapt if it is to be useful for working in South African communities. It has been noted that a degree of adaptation already occurred within the present process. I will recap these modifications and take these ideas further here. In so doing, I will incorporate the concepts of subjectivity, relationship, context, power and language that were previously highlighted as central to the discussion from a theoretical standpoint.

8.7.1 The methodology of community observation

At proposal stage I knew theoretically that the observation procedure might need to change, but did not yet know how. I was trained in infant observation at the Tavistock, in the heart of more traditional practice, and it was my aim to conduct the most classical form of infant observation in Moretown in order to explore what would happen. The extent of my struggle in applying the "Tavistock gold standard" in a community setting was unexpected. In other words, there were specific, unexpected difficulties that could not be anticipated in any way. Yet it also surprised me that there was such difficulty in working with what I found within the seminars, which translated into what felt like a lack of support - what was left out seemed to be crucial and central. It brought home the realisation that infant observation does indeed need to adapt in South African settings and that this is not an easy process, probably only discoverable through this kind of trial and error. On the other hand, I have asserted that the observation worked because I adhered to some of the boundaries of the infant observation module, such as visiting very regularly, reflecting on difficult feelings in supervision and not offering direct financial support. My conclusion is that, while the basic tenets of psychoanalytic observation are useful, we will need to take on a more

postmodern approach in our thinking about the endeavour in future studies in similar contexts. What this adds is a sense of innovation, freedom and permission to consider "the underside of experience" (Frosh, 2000, p. 63) in the widest possible sense.

I set out to observe an infant and her mother, but saw much more than this. I maintain that it is not possible or necessary to remain focused on the child or even on the dyad in such a setting. An observation in an unknown community perhaps becomes a community observation and could in fact always be called this, even in middle-class settings. Such an observation should be allowed to see whatever demands attention. For example, if something about the mother is pressing to be seen, it is not advisable to try to force the focus away from her. Instead, one should ask what is unconsciously being communicated; in other words, one should use this diagnostically. This will give valuable clues as to the potential site for intervention. Such an observation should record as much as possible about context and also be allowed to attend to aspects of the environment. In other words, I am suggesting that we use Bion's idea of being without memory or desire (the analytic attitude) not to assert that we can be impartial observers, but to assert our readiness to engage with whatever it is we encounter. What the observer feels in and about the environment needs to be taken into account more. For example, if she feels in danger or afraid, then this should be considered as another clue about the kind of environment the family is living in and what they may in part be experiencing themselves.

Secondly, relationship will be more central in such an observation, as it should probably be in all observations when seen from an intersubjective perspective. Here we also cannot be without memory or desire. Neutrality in this situation is a myth. A postmodern ethnographic lens helps us to work with the idea that subjectivities are central and that power is always at play between us. Entering a family to observe in a community setting will invariably involve power relations. Such relationships may be fraught and feel difficult. They will be filled with the unspoken, the unspeakable and the unknown, related to the history of apartheid and the positioning of observer and observed in reference to this. Strong, seemingly irrational emotions will arise. These dynamics need not necessarily scuttle an infant observation project, but as my confrontation with Piet in the present observation showed, they do need to be addressed at some level in order for the process to be able to continue. Ideally these aspects need to be laid out and addressed in a supervisory process, because they are an extremely painful part of the work.

The transference and counter-transference will be very important in such a setting, as it should be in all settings. In the present project the unspoken struggle as it developed between us gave me an experience of what the mother was dealing with, in a feeling way. I came to know some of her agony about being sidelined, marginalised and discriminated against through my own experience in the seminars of feeling different, misunderstood and unwanted. I came to understand how difficult, and almost impossible, it is to talk about such an experience and to deal with it effectively. It was split off as too painful to be conscious. Instead, we became involved in an enactment. Ultimately, that which was specifically South African about our observation stood like a wall (or a room-divider curtain!) between us - you could see through it, but it kept some things occluded. My recommendation is that this be recognised from the first in a supportive forum.

The South African material was, I contend, the actual content of the present observation in the end. It is this that an

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"infant observation" in a township reveals, at this stage in our history, and perhaps for a long time to come. By thinking about what was happening between me and the mother in the study in particular, I gained a deeper understanding of the political and emotional dynamics in the observation and therefore in the broader community intervention of which the observation was a part. In 2003 Tomlinson et al. examined the ways in which methodological compromises had to be made in transferring a blueprint for community-based intervention studies to a Third World context. They highlighted that "international large-scale studies are often relatively silent on the substance and local politics of the daily work of an intervention" (p. 208). It is my contention that, where infant observation is concerned, local politics will in many ways be the substance of the observation material in community contexts.

K. Gibson described a research process that was about uncovering questions: there are "no facts to be uncovered, only further layers of meaning to explore" (2002b, p. 83). I set out to uncover facts about mothers and children in poverty, only to realise that the present project could more profitably be articulated as the intersection of subjectivities. This is why I have described my research as a "first contact": it is about subjectivities colliding centre stage and the fact that we need to recognise the implications of this for infant observation, perhaps for the first time.

We need to ask if we are asking the wrong questions with a traditional infant observation paradigm. Which questions should we be asking in an impoverished South African community? The kind of unique insight such a project can give is an experiential one. Therefore perhaps the question is not: how do babies in conditions of poverty develop, but what are the different ways in which impoverishment manifests in this country? One relevant question might be what does poverty feel like, and how can we relieve its physical and emotional impact?

The emotional impact of observing in conditions of poverty should not be underestimated. The fact that it is such an affecting experience should not be minimised in the wish to have a "good" observation experience. It must be accepted as a pointer as to that which needs remedying. It will be essential to have a particular kind of supervisory process in such an observation. As in other community work reviewed here, firm psychodynamic supervision will be essential in order to contain the significant reciprocal anxiety aroused by cross-cultural work in South Africa. Its first principle must be to provide a listening space for whatever comes out of the observations, in a free associative way. There cannot be particular theoretical limits about what you can talk about in such supervision. Secondly, it must interpret the political, social, economic and personal unconscious, which is constantly at play. It needs to normalise and be particularly interested in the difficulty of cross-cultural relationships in a community setting. It needs to work with the many meanings behind this in a sustained way. This will provide an important source of emotional support for the observer. The observer needs to be helped to think about her own racism. Altman (2000), an analyst who demonstrated the pervasiveness of racism in our thinking and speaking, noted:

> I am advocating the use of the analyst's hostility and contempt to tune in to extremely problematic aspects of the unconscious interaction, which by virtue of their very unacceptability become of the highest importance analytically. If we do not confront such feelings in ourselves, we do not stand a chance of being able to process such interactions therapeutically, in words and in action. (p. 599-600)

While Altman (2000) was speaking about a therapeutic space, his intersubjective ideas on working with racial difference are also relevant for infant observation. The participants in a study will not be able to meet their own trepidation about the observer unless the observer is able to meet her own about them. If supervision occurs in a group, there must be great sensitivity to context. Parallel supervisory processes or multiple levels of supervision are advised, in order to counteract defensive processes. This must involve a high degree of introspection. The use of journals is recommended.

The supervision needs to accommodate the "unusual" and specific difficulties related to the South African context, such as the interplay of South African subjectivities against the background of apartheid. S. Swartz (2006a) held that "the history of apartheid cannot be disavowed: not the injuries it caused, nor the profit to some in terms of material wealth and privilege" (p. 440). One needs to both understand and be willing to work with such realities, sometimes in innovative ways. There is a sense in which there is already such a defensive process at play when one comes into contact with extreme poverty and a history of racism that the supervision needs to be even more willing to lay things open and talk about the unspeakable. Writing in the United States, Altman (2000) noted that the way towards reparation is through hatred and not around it:

> The violence and destruction visited upon black people by white people historically in this country impose a burden of guilt on white people that may promote efforts to disown individual responsibility for further hatred on the part of white individuals. These efforts are understandable but, I believe, counterproductive. My effort in this paper has been to advocate that we, as clinicians and otherwise, make room for racism, as well as love between the races, in the interest of promoting constructive, reparative action that will have a firm foundation. (p. 604)

This accords with Tanner's (1999) hope for infant observation, cited in Chapter Five, namely that it can be a way to uncover unthinkable issues such as disgust, anger and envy in a thinking space. After S. Briggs and Canham (1999), I hold that without discussion of the complexities and emotionally disturbing nature of infant observations such as the one in the present study, practitioners may not realise the weight of what they are carrying and will not be able to digest it. Rather than maintaining that we are non-judgmental observers, I recommend, in the spirit of feminist research, the scrupulous and open interrogation of the observer's own postures, views, and practices: "turning back on herself the very lenses with which she is scrutinizing the lives of the women with which she works, always looking for tensions, contradictions, and complicity" (Olesen, 2005, p. 257). It becomes necessary to think, as I have tried to do here, about how the observer influences the data and to be self-conscious about this - in other words, to become more interrogatory about it as fieldwork per se and to think of it as a social enterprise within which power operates. It also becomes important to be reflexive in our subsequent analysis, in terms of acknowledging and thinking about who the observer was. Perhaps it will be inevitable, then, that the observer also becomes more of a "character" in the reports and any other written work following on from an observation. I am suggesting that it is acceptable to record overt reflections on the failures, pleasures, hopes and confusions that Clifford and Marcus (1986) suggested are mostly left out of traditional ethnographic accounts. Amusingly, I did in fact take a photo of Maria with my own shadow in it (cf. Geertz, in Olson, 1991). There is also a photograph of me in Maria's baby album. Significantly, it is not the one of me alone with the children and the pushchair, but a head and shoulders shot of Maria, Eve and me.

The result of acknowledging the observer more could be that observation reports become more like the "messy texts" that feminists are experimenting with and that Marcus (1994) saw emerging in the postmodern ethnographic paradigm (quoted in Denzin, 1997, p. xvii). It may be necessary to experiment creatively with the writing of reports in such a way that they become a subversive third voice about the observation endeavour (after S. Swartz, 2006a) and that we even end up writing "literature". For example, in the present study I felt free enough to write two pages of the final observation report *before* conducting the last observation, detailing the assumptions contained in the farewell gifts I was planning to give the children that day. After all, Scheper-Hughes (1995) argued that First World writing about impoverished societies should be a political act aimed at subverting the status quo (Aunger, 2004).

In addition, the observation procedures may need to change in practical ways. Postmodern ethnography has taught us that how we conduct fieldwork should depend on the setting. Therefore it may be important to be more adaptable than in standard infant observation practice. Just as there are no manuals for fieldwork generally (Emerson, 1983a), so there are certainly no manuals about how to observe infants in low-income communities. For instance, the observer might end up observing in unusual circumstances, such as in a neighbour's house, or at a church in a welfare meeting. The observational attitude may need to adapt. Like Maiello (1998), I found that where difference is great, the observer may need to ask more questions, despite Bick's (1964) injunction not to do so. She may also, like Maiello (1998) did, need to say more about herself by way of introduction. I found that sharing photographs and speaking about my feelings had a positive effect on the observation.

Furthermore, it may take a long time for trust to grow and for the observer to be accepted either in the family or the wider community. This is about access. It is my recommendation that more extensive practical steps be taken, in line with the community psychology paradigm, to gain access in respectful, thought-through ways that consider the dynamics of the wider community and the immediate neighbourhood. Our action of interviewing the Smits' neighbours in order to become more of a known entity in the neighbourhood illustrates the difference this can make. Regarding community intervention, my recommendation is that the presence should be wide and long-standing so that people get to know and trust it. It might have been impossible to do such an intensive individual study if the WMHRP had not been going on for so long. Such interventions therefore always have to happen in the context of broader community intervention.

The observer might need to become more active in response to urgent need. Following S. Briggs (1997a; 1997b), the observer may need to speak up about the safety of children. She will need to make appropriate referrals. It may be necessary in some instances to observe in pairs, because more support is required for the observer than usual. Recalling the observation of premature babies in Lazar et al. (1998), it may not be possible to observe for a full hour, although a standardised time should, I maintain, be chosen. I think my study has illustrated that simply or only meeting material need could occlude an opportunity to give something valuable in an emotional sense.

It may be necessary to talk directly to parents about some of the issues revealed to the observer by her interpretation of the unconscious. This could be done to ease interpersonal relating and for the therapeutic benefit of the project. One might need to put things on the table more actively than in other observation processes. For example, it may be necessary to talk more openly and directly about the influence of apartheid. In other words,

direct interpretation to the participants may even need to occur, even though this is not an explicitly therapeutic space. Speaking about the therapeutic space and apartheid, S. Swartz (2006a) noted that the "overlap between past and present, the moment-by-moment construction of subjectivity repeating patterns of trauma, is of course helpful, but only insofar as it reaches representation" (p. 440). In the present study there were indications, such as the father's challenge to me, that apartheid and its effect on our current relationship needed to be mentioned in some way. Once apartheid's "name" was spoken, tensions eased.

Therefore I am in agreement with S. Briggs and Canham's (1999) suggestion that infant observation should continue to change in order to meet the needs of those using it. The need for practical adjustments in psychodynamic community psychology interventions in Moretown was previously noted. For example, in 2003 the practitioners in the Mother-Infant Bonding Group found that they

> …had to reconsider a traditional psychodynamic approach in lieu of the needs of the women and the challenges we encountered in working within a community. For example, logistical challenges such as transport difficulties or bad weather, required a transgression of what may be seen as "traditional" psychodynamic boundaries. We learned that providing transport and refreshments assisted in attendance rates. (Burmeister-Nel et al., 2004, p. 3)

Similarly, I wrote about my choice to bring biscuits to a therapeutic Play Group in the same community the previous year (J. Lazarus, 2005). This might be considered an unusual move in the most classical psychoanalytic view held at the Tavistock, but is quite typical, for example, in psychodynamic psychotherapy in Boston (Kruger, personal communication, April 20, 2007). Once again, the present research has uncovered the need for solutions that are tailor-made to South African contexts. Almost everything was different and needed specific and sometimes novel solutions. It has been shown that some aspects the observation frame will need to adapt to accommodate a South African reality. At the same time, its basic tenets of reliability, regularity and predictability must be retained in order for it to function so well. Psychodynamic thinking is thus enduringly useful in community contexts, but especially so when coupled with a more postmodern focus. As a psychodynamic tool, infant observation will be important for community research and the training of community psychologists only if it is committed to working with the particular situation it is operating in. As an intervention, it reminds us that paying the closest attention is paramount in community settings, as in all therapeutic settings (Kruger, 2005b).

8.7.2 Future interventions, training and research

It is recommended that more observation projects in low-income communities take place as part of needs assessment projects. These need not be framed as "infant" observations. Any aspect of the community can be studied with the same kind of careful attention and analysis of the unconscious that this psychodynamic tool offers. Alternatively, observers could enter a community without any preconceived notions of what it is they want to study and see what arises. These observations could be conducted over much shorter periods of a month to three months, as in the social work field. Clinical students at Stellenbosch University, who need to be trained both in psychodynamic thinking and community psychology models, could conduct such observations.

Possible interventions arising from the present observation could be a project that aims at witnessing lives in

Moretown. This would be a highly particularised intervention, responsive to the urgent need for affirmation found in my observation process and related to the conditions of living in a marginalised, forgotten community. It is suggested that all the inhabitants of Maroela Street be targeted in such an intervention. At the same time it seems important to involve participants in a way that does not feel as though an intervention is being "done to" them in some way.

The interviews done with the Smits' neighbours in the interests of my safety have contributed to a growing body of data gathered through other interviews in Maroela Street (Kruger, 2005a). Taking the lead from psychoanalytic ethnographic projects (Ainslie & Brabeck, 2003) as well as the photojournalism of artists like Tillim in South Africa (Hogg, 2005), these interviews should perhaps be extended into an intervention involving the photographic documentation of lives in Maroela Street. An exhibition at the new community centre could result. This idea comes from my awareness of how important photographs were as a witnessing mechanism in the present observation process, and in the lives of the participants and their community more generally. A second option is to create a forum in which people can tell their stories, because being heard emerged as an urgent need in the present study. This could be facilitated by actors and psychologists in a kind of "theatre sports" or "around the bonfire story-telling" format. In spirit, such an intervention would be allied with feminist experiments in performance as a "vital paradigm for any study of social relations" (Case & Abbit, 2004, quoted in Olesen, 2005, p. 253). This would complement current and planned interventions in Moretown around creating a safe "talking space", such as the walk-in therapeutic clinic conducted by M1 students in 2005 and 2006, and group therapy work. Psychodynamic group therapy specifically involving mothers, and aimed at collecting their own accounts of their experiences, is currently being planned for 2007/2008 and has received funding from the National Research Foundation (NRF) (Kruger et al., 2005). Another option is to continue with mother-infant psychotherapy in groups (Spedding, 2005).

In addition, following Barnett (2006) and M.E. Rustin (2002), observers could be offered to new mothers in the community, particularly single mothers. On a recent research visit to the Tavistock to discuss the findings of the present study it was suggested that other members of the Moretown community could be trained to observe so that they could fulfil this function as community mental health workers (M. Fox, personal communication, February 6, 2007). It was furthermore felt that a practitioner such as Barnett might be interested in filming mothers and infants in Moretown to add to her anthropological series about mothering practices in different cultures (*Thursday's Child*?). This could also provide a way of gathering more systematic, verifiable cultural meanings by means of discussion with the mothers involved (Barnett, 2006). In other words, the present research confirms and supports the need to work with parents, and specifically with vulnerable mothers, in the community of Moretown.

8.8 Conclusion

In overview, I discovered that infant observation is a remarkable tool that does offer South African community work something unprecedented (S. Miller, 1997). However, this is not what the literature said it might be, or what my own preconceptions or "hypotheses" dictated. There were several unexpected outcomes in the study, just as Piontelli (1992) found that in using infant observation she could investigate unknown territory in a marvellously exploratory way. Infant observation reveals itself as a way of seeing much more than just infants. Its use of the self

and the unconscious can act as a divining rod that leads us to the heart of a problem. It allows us to think about how social context affects us all, on the deepest levels. It was shown to have a tremendous impact both ways, in a bi-directional therapeutic sense. I struggled with observing in this context. But what was most difficult in the work was also where the most important issues lay. The problems that arose became the sites in which I ultimately learnt the most. I came to see them not as impediments to the work, but the very substance of the work itself (K. Gibson & L. Swartz, 2000).

Even though, theoretically, I knew that relationship is important in a variety of postmodern paradigms, the present study surprised me by revealing that the subjects of observations are in fact not babies or dyads, but all relationships in the observation space and beyond, in the broadest sense. Perhaps we could say then, extending Winnicott's thinking, that from the first the baby is in the context and the context is in the baby. When you read my description of the environment, you are in fact reading my description of the baby; it is one and the same thing. Perhaps mothers (and observers) in low-income communities have to pay more attention to the environment than to babies, and that is how they mother. Also after Winnicott (1960), it became clear to me that there is no such thing as "the observed", only an observer and observed. Nor is it a case of one person looking at another, but of mutual gazing. Maria and her family watched me quite as much, and with quite as much fascination, as I did them.

Concerning first contact, as Geertz (1991) has suggested, we must ask whether a first contact can ever be definitive when such contact is limited and occurs within a short moment in time. Will future contacts find the same people, or the same culture (if we assume that culture is not a static concept)? Who is making the contact and who may describe it? Is it even a "first" at all, when so much history precedes it? Similarly, it can be contended that the "first contact" between a mother and her new baby is never really a first either. The impact of previous generations, in personal, political, cultural and socio-economic senses, has also pre-wired this meeting in ways that need to be thought about. Perhaps, then, there is no such thing as first contact at all. However, the recognition and detailed exploration of the complexity of infant observation as a meeting space may indeed be unprecedented.

To return to the stated goals of my study: I have provided a thick description of a single low-income mother-infant dyad. I have suggested that the potential contribution that such a description might make to a needs assessment process cannot be replicated by other means. I have found that infant observation is potentially a very useful tool for psychologists working in low-income communities in South Africa, if it embraces its context and is prepared to work with what it finds. It will need to make adjustments and I have made some suggestions for these based on my own experience of observing in Moretown. Therefore I have not only critiqued the theory and methodology of classical infant observation in South African community contexts, but have also suggested ways in which it might continue to develop fruitfully. It is my hope that the first contact described here will not be the last. It is heartening to think that such unique moments of meeting are indeed possible, and to experience the way in which they are essential to change (S. Swartz, 2006a).

Postscript

(First paragraph of the final observation:)

It was a hot and windless day. I woke up early, feeling very nervous. I did some ornament rearranging in my house, putting some new stuff out. I felt mildly nauseous. I got dressed without much thought, putting on the first thing that came to mind. I took some trouble with my appearance in terms of washing my hair, putting lip-gloss and some powder on. I wondered why I was doing the latter as I did it. I had some fantasies about finally being mugged, raped or robbed of my car at knifepoint as the observation process ended. I was nervous enough to pull an angel card and the first one I saw at the bottom of the pack was St Michael (protection) and the one I pulled was FOCUS! It said that my thoughts determine my feelings and I can change my feelings by having thoughts of love. It said I have the mind of God and I thought well I hope so, that will be useful when I write this thesis. Eventually I took the bit of paper along I had made notes on when Ms L and I spoke, and that helped me to get out the door. (Observation 43, January 2006)

(Last interview with Piet:)

Piet: Man, what can I say now (The interviewer gives a short laugh.) Every visit up until now that I, has been (**I:** Mmm), good visits for me (**I:** Mmm), do you understand (**I:** Mmm). The very last visit you could say was possibly the best visit (**I:** I see, okay), you understand.
I: And why, why was it the best visit for you?
Piet: You see, it was the best visit to me because, there I saw, what she feels for a child (**I:** Mmm), or how (**I:** Mmm), how she can get along with people, you understand.
I: Is that so? So, until the last visit it wasn't always so clear to you.. how, exactly how she feels about the little one?
Piet: Yes, hey. The, at the last visit it was actually proof to me how she (**I:** Mmm), say, feels about the family (**I:** Yes, I see), not about the little one (**I:** Not, not the little one, the whole family), you understand.
I: Mmm. And that made it a good visit for you.
Piet: Yes. (Interview 3 with Piet, January 2006)

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ADDENDA

Addendum A: Current projects in Moretown

i) The Women's Mental Health Research Project in Moretown

Professor Kruger has spent most of her academic career focusing on research exploring different aspects of motherhood, specifically with low-income South African mothers. All her research is situated within a feminist social constructionist framework and the focus is mainly on qualitative methodologies. Data mainly consist of in-depth interviews with poor women about their own experiences as well as ethnographic observations. Data are analysed using social constructionist grounded theory, discourse analysis and narrative analysis. Research has been conducted in three overlapping stages: (a) a situation analysis during which all mental health care providers, welfare providers, self-help groups, support organisations in the Stellenbosch region were surveyed; (b) data collection; and (c) the implementation and evaluation of different interventions and support strategies. To date, as part of this process, Professor Kruger has coordinated several internationally and nationally funded research projects in and around Moretown:

1. A SANPAD-funded project (South Africa-Netherlands Research Programme on Alternatives in Development) on the distress and resilience of farmworkers (1999-2001);
2. A published survey of mental health services available to poor women in the region (2000);
3. Two government-funded intervention projects concerned with the impact of early interventions on the mother-infant relationship (2001 and 2003);
4. A government-funded intervention study with maternity nurses (2001);
5. An intervention study involving a Play Group with low-income children (2002);
6. An annual Depression Survey conducted in Moretown (2002-2005);
7. A study on maternity nurses (2004-2005);
8. The current infant observation study (2004-2007),
9. A study on intergenerational childcare (2006-2008);
10. A small ethnographic study on poverty and women (2005-2007);
11. An NRF-funded pilot project on preventative mental health care for poor mothers (2006-2007); and
12. The main study, a four-year project on maternal mental health (funded by Stellenbosch University) involving 270 in-depth interviews with over 90 women before and after giving birth (2002-2006).

Professor Kruger herself describes the studies as being local, long term and continuous, action-oriented, situated within a critical tradition, and as interdisciplinary. The study on maternal mental health (12) focused on the psychological distress and resilience of low-income women residing in Moretown. All women visiting the Moretown Clinic for prenatal and/or postnatal visits during March 2002 – March 2006 were asked to participate in the study. The main focus was extensive open-ended interviews with women. Each woman was interviewed on four occasions (one pre-birth and three post-birth) by a trained interviewer. These interviews covered a variety of topics (such as current symptomatology, personal and family history, coping mechanisms, violence, substance abuse,

reproductive health issues and sexuality), but focused more specifically on women's experiences of pregnancy, termination of pregnancy, birth and early motherhood. The interview questions aimed at exploring how the women themselves interpreted and made sense of their experiences. Psychology Honours students conducted approximately 215 one-hour interviews. There were few dropouts (due to miscarriages or stillbirths) in the study, and individual women as well as clinic staff consistently reported that the interviews (the opportunity to reflect on their experiences) were felt to be therapeutic by the female participants. The results of the research projects listed above have been disseminated in papers, theses and doctoral dissertations. The research is also currently being written up in book format (Kruger, in press).

ii) My own involvement in Moretown

I have personally been involved in (5) (6) and (8) above. I first made contact with the research environment as a clinical student. In 2002 I took part in the first stage of the needs assessment process here, which is still underway at the time of writing. Extensive needs assessment reports were completed in 2002, 2003 and 2004. As part of this process, and as indicated above, annual Depression Surveys were conducted between 2002 and 2005. I personally took part in the 2002 survey and co-wrote the 2002 needs assessment report with my classmates. I have had prior experience of applying psychodynamic tools in the site chosen for the present study. In 2002 I facilitated eight weekly Play Group sessions for nine children aged 7 and 8, based on both community psychology and psychodynamic principles, in Moretown (J. Lazarus, 2003). The case study which resulted demonstrated the reciprocal relationship between external contexts and the internal world, as well as the ways in which psychodynamic tools were problematic and in need of adjustment in the community setting. This case study and the literature review, which comprised my MA thesis, were published in two consecutive editions of *Psycho-analytic Psychotherapy in South Africa* (J. Lazarus & Kruger, 2004a, 2004b).

Excerpt from Observation at 31 weeks

(Mother has been back at work for one week, but is at home today as it is a Public Holiday.)

I greeted Mother who met me at the door, and then went into the kitchen where Elizabeth was sitting in a baby chair clipped on to the table. I said hello, and she immediately responded with a smile and an outstretched hand in which she held a wooden brick which she dropped on the floor. As I walked round behind her to sit down, she leaned back and tried to keep sight of me, rocking vigorously and almost seeming to push her chair out from the table. I sat down next to her. She continued to look at me and offered another smile and some babbly chatty noises. In front of her were some wooden bricks of different shapes and colours, and a rattle. She stretched out in front of her to reach and pick up one brick after another. She pulled each one to her, pushed it away again sometimes several times, put it in and out of her mouth, and then slowly and deliberately dropped it to the floor. She did not immediately move on and fetch another but continued to look down after each one for what seemed like an eternity. Sometimes while doing this she would rock vigorously, and sometimes before letting go of the brick she would look at me, then it, then me again, solemnly, and definitely giving the brick more of her attention than me.

Excerpt from Observation at 32 weeks

(An evening visit.)

Mother answered the door and took me into the kitchen where her husband was preparing dinner. Elizabeth was sitting at the table in her chair and offered no protests when her mother departed upstairs. She greeted me noisily and appeared to be in a playful mood. As I sat down next to her, she continued to watch her father closely, occasionally hurling a brick in his direction. She played with the wooden bricks on the table, banging them up and down very hard, becoming more and more excited, laughing and swinging her legs vigorously. Then she seemed to quieten, becoming quite intense and very slowly pushed each brick to the edge, and then off the table. She gazed down after them, shouting when she got to the last. Father picked up the bricks and gave them back to her saying "Here you are noisy girl," then picking her up and giving her a cuddle. Then he swung her round him and through his legs, and put her back in her chair affectionately.

(Later in the same observation, Mother has bathed Elizabeth and dressed her ready for bed.)

Once that's done, she carries her through to the bedroom. She puts the television on, saying "Elizabeth won't go to sleep without the noise of the TV in the background." She sits up on the bed and prepares to breastfeed her. Elizabeth seems tired. She starts to feed, then stops. She stops and starts several times, occasionally looking over at me. I feel

uncomfortable and suggest that I'm maybe a distraction (I guess to Mother, who has been talking almost constantly about her return to work, rather than to baby). Mother stops talking and concentrates on her feeding baby, allowing her some time at each breast. Elizabeth falls asleep, and Mother gently, tentatively, lifts her and carries her through to the bedroom. Elizabeth is sick as this is done, regurgitating her milk, which comes down her nose as well as from her mouth. "Oh dear" Mother says sympathetically, cleaning her up, then cuddling her close to her body. She goes into the bedroom where she has left only a nightlight on. I stand outside the door. As she puts her down, the baby starts to cry a little. Mother picks her up quickly and tries to reassure her. Elizabeth quietens as soon as she is picked up, and cries again as soon as put down. She tries again, then says "Oh dear, you've woken yourself up," lifts her and carries her downstairs. I leave. (McFadyen, 1991, pp. 11-12)

Addendum C: Informed consent form

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Dear Participant

Herewith we would like to invite you to take part in a research study that investigates the development of babies during their first year of life. We are interested in gaining a better understanding of specific babies, since we believe that one cannot learn from books what a baby's first year really entails. We hope that this research will contribute to more effective psychological support of pregnant women and mothers, and that in this way Moretown's babies will also benefit in the long term.

If you are willing to take part in this study, one of our researchers will visit you and your baby for an hour each week, during which your child will be closely observed. The observation period will preferably start during your baby's first week of life and continue for twelve months thereafter. The researcher would like to observe the baby in his/her natural environment, thus *the researcher will be sitting to one side and does not want to interfere with the family's normal activities*. The baby, the mother and any other family members or friends who are present in this hour can go on with their normal activities. No notes will be taken nor any tape recordings made within this hour; the researcher will write down her observations of the baby after the session. The observer will be a single female senior student in Clinical Psychology at the University of Stellenbosch. The observation hour will take place at the baby's home, on a day and at a time that suits you. We would preferably like to keep to one specific day and time for the full twelve months.

During the observation hour you and your family will not be asked any questions and *the researcher will try to cause as little interruption as possible*. In other words, we would like to know what it is like for your baby to continue with his/her normal activities during that hour. Over time it will then be possible to track your baby's development. At times you may feel uncomfortable with the observer's presence in your home, but we ask that you do not break the twelve-month contract. In spite of this request, we acknowledge your right to withdraw from the study at any given point.

To ensure the confidentiality of the research material, no real names will be used in the notes. The name of the town will also be disguised. All information will thus be kept confidential. Reports about the study (this includes all published work) will not contain any real names. No information gathered during this study will be able to be linked to any specific person or family in any way.

<u>*Please note:*</u> For ethical reasons the observer is obliged to report any acts of violence, neglect or sexual abuse of the child to the police or social services. This includes when violence, neglect or sexual abuse is suspected, even when it is not directly observed. Should the observer find it necessary to make such a report, you will however be informed of this in advance.

Should you find that the presence of the observer evokes painful or unpleasant feelings, or if you become aware of difficult issues during the observation period, the observer will be able to supply you with a list of available helping services. The researcher will also be able to refer you to appropriate psychological, social work or medical services, if necessary.

Should you agree to participate in this study, please read through the following declaration and sign below.

I understand that participation in this study is voluntary, and I am aware of the possible risks, benefits and inconvenience involved in my participation. I grant the researcher permission to observe my baby for one year on a weekly basis for an hour in his/her usual circumstances. I understand that it is optimal to complete the twelve-month period, but that I may withdraw from the project at any time. I also understand that, for ethical reasons, the observer will have to report any instances or suspected instances of violence, neglect or sexual abuse of my child. I also understand that if I have any questions or problems regarding this research, I can contact the principal researcher, Professor Lou-Marié Kruger at (021) 808-3460.

_____   _____
Signature of participant   Date

_____   _____
Signature of researcher/observer   Date

The back neighbours
4 inhabitants including Noelene

The Smit family	The right-hand neighbours	6 inhabitants
4 inhabitants	8 inhabitants	
- - - - - - - - - - - - - - - -		
Piet's extended family		
6 inhabitants including Lee	No. 88	No. 86
No. 90		

	5 inhabitants
The front neighbours	
9 inhabitants	- - - - - - - - - - - - - - -
	6 inhabitants
No. 93	**No. 84**

MAROELA STREET

Addendum E: Three interview schedules

First semi-structured interview: February 2005

*Please start by encouraging the participant to tell you <u>a story</u> of what has been happening (so start very open-ended). The first part of the interview is about eliciting this story; the second is about exploring how they feel:

I hear Jana comes every week…tell me the story; tell me what happens when she comes around.

(If she/he struggles, you can ask: For example, what did you do the last time she came around?)

How did you decide that she should come around? Tell me about it.

(Spouse)
I am wondering, what does your husband/wife think about these visits?
Does s/he say anything or ask you anything about it?
Do you discuss it?

(Neighbours)
And what do your neighbours think about Jana coming here every week?
Do they know why she visits? How do they know? (What did you tell them, if anything?)
Do they say anything about it at all (and what do they say)?
Do they treat you differently since the visits commenced?
How do your neighbours feel about the visits?
How do the visits affect you in your community? (More/less popular, etc. – bad and/or good.)

(Other family)
What do other family members think of the visits?
What (if anything) did you tell them about the visits?
What do they say to you about it?
How do they feel about it?

(General)
Why did you agree to be part of this project?
What did you think at first when you heard about the idea?
How do you currently feel about the visits?
What is difficult about it?
Is there anything nice about it?
If you could change anything about it, what would it be?
How do you think you will feel about these visits by July?
And by next January, when it is over?

(Anything else you would like me to know? We will see each other again in the middle of the year then; I will phone to make another appointment.)

Second semi-structured interview: June 2005

*Please state that the purpose of the interview is to find out how they feel about my visits *now* compared to in February – what has <u>changed,</u> if anything.

I hear Jana is still coming to visit you; it's been six months already…tell me the story, tell me everything that has happened regarding her visits in this time.

(If she/he struggles, you can ask: For instance, what did you do the last time she was here?)

And how does it feel during that hour when Jana is here? What do you think about? Are you different when she is here? (Try to get an explicit sense of <u>their experience of being with me for that time</u>)

(Change)
Is it different to the beginning? What has changed?
Is she different? Are you acting differently towards her now? How?

(Spouse)
What does your wife/husband think about the visits these days?
What do you discuss/say to each other about the visits?

(Neighbours)
And what do the neighbours think about Jana's visits these days, the fact that she is still visiting every week?
How do you know? Do you discuss the visits with the neighbours these days?
Are they treating you differently now because Jana has been visiting for six months?
What has changed for you since Jana arrived?
How do the visits affect you in your community these days? (More/less popular, etc. – bad and/or good.)

These days Jana comes around accompanied by other people…and they go asking questions at other houses in the street…how do you experience that?

(Family)
What does Natasha (sister) think about the fact that Jana visits Maria?
What does Natasha think about Jana? Does she say anything?
(And explore other family members' responses in a similar way – the family members who live in the front section of the house, Eve's mother, etc. Maybe ask a bit about who the family is and what they know of the observation process first.)

(General)
What is hard about the visits for you these days?
Is there anything enjoyable about it these days?
(Did something get better or worse with time…)
If you could change something about the visits, what would it be?

(Important – please be sure to cover these questions):

What do think Jana learns from visiting you? What do you think she is looking at when she is here?

Is there anything that *you* are learning from the visits? Do you see something different in yourselves/in the baby/ in Jana? And what do you look at when she is here?

Now that you know what is like to have Jana here, would you agree to have someone come observe Maria again?

Do you think these visits are a good thing or a bad thing? Should one continue doing such visits in the community? Why?

How do you think you will feel by January next year, when the visits are over?

And how do you experience talking to me like this?

(Anything else you would like me to know? We will see each other in around December or January again; I will phone to make another appointment.)

Third semi-structured interview: January 2006

* Please state that the main purpose of today's interview is to find out how the visits ended and how they feel about them now that they are over. So please start with a focus on the last session:

(Last session)
So, Jana tells me that last week was her last visit with you. Tell me about that visit. What happened?
How did you feel about it?
What did you think about it?

What did other people think of it? (Spouse, family, neighbours - especially the family members who live in the front section of the house, Eve's sister, and the neighbours in the back yard.)
How do you think it was for Jana?
What did you and Jana say to each other here at the end?
What would you still like to tell her if you had the chance?

(Then more general)
How was the last visit different to the previous visits?
Was Jana different?
Were you different?
Were Maria and Natasha (sister) different?
And the neighbours?

If you were to compare the very first and the very last visits with each other, how did they differ?
Was Jana any different later on? Were you acting differently towards her than at the beginning? How?

(Ending)
And now it is over. What do you think and feel about the fact that Jana won't be coming around on Wednesdays anymore?

What will you miss about it?
Is there anything good about her not coming around anymore?

What do you and your husband/wife discuss about the visits, now that they are over?
Is there anything about the visits that you do not discuss with anyone; that you only keep to yourself or think about by yourself? Like what?
What does Natasha say about Jana not coming to visit anymore?

(*Process*)
What do you remember about the visits? What happened during the visits? Tell me about one visit, perhaps a typical one.

Which visit was the best one? Tell me a bit about it.
Which visit was the worst?
Did you ever feel like saying that the visits should stop? (Explore either answer).
If you could change something about the visits, what would it be?

What did the visits mean to you?
And for your husband/wife?
And for the baby?
And for the neighbours?

Tell me a bit about how Maria reacted to Jana. What would you say she thinks of Jana? What do you notice about her when Jana is present? Who is Jana in her life?

What does Natasha think about Jana? What does she say about Jana?

If you think back about the visits, what do think about most?
What will you remember about Jana?

(Impact on them in their community)
What do the neighbours think about Jana not coming anymore? What do they say about it?
How do you know? Do you discuss Jana not coming anymore with them?
Do they treat you differently now because Jana visited here?
If you were to think back now, what changed for you because Jana came to visit?
How do you think the visits affected you in your community? What difference did it make? (More/less popular, etc. – bad and/or good.)

Towards the end Jana came to visit by herself, without other people…how was that for you in comparison? Which do you prefer?

We know that quite a few babies were born in this yard last year…what do the other mothers say about the fact that Maria was the only one to have a visitor?

(And in conclusion)
What do you think Jana learnt from her visits to you?
What do you think she will be doing with that knowledge?
Is there anything *you* learnt from the visits? Do you see something different in yourselves/in the baby/in Jana these days?

Now that it is all over, would you again agree to have someone observing your child?

Do you think such visits are a good or a bad thing? Should one carry on doing such visits in the community? Why? What do you think these visits do?

And how did you experience talking to me like this?
Is it different to the first time we talked? How? What has changed?
(Is there anything else you would like me to know?)

1. Net om te kyk (Just to watch)
2. Dat julle my kind sal wegvat as ek hier teken (That you will take my child away from me if I sign here)
3. Sy moet maar kom wanneer sy wil (She can come whenever she wants to)
4. Gaan Mevrou nou elke dag kom? (Is Madam going to come every day now?)
5. Butterfly…butterfly
6. BLOED (BLOOD)
7. As jy wil uitgaan, gaan uit…(If you want to go out, then go out…)
8. Say it together, say it for always, naturally
9. As jy nie my tete wil hê nie, sit ek hom weg (If you don't want my boob, I will put it away)
10. This love has taken its toll on me...
11. Hello and Koebaai (Goo' bye)
12. Dit gaan maar altyd ommie geld (It's always about the money)
13. My promoter
14. Observing the observer
15. Observing myself in the community
16. Dis nie net ek wat vir jou kyk nie…Ons kyk vir mekaar…(It's not just me looking at you…we're looking at each other…)
17. The storms have rendered several communities without power
18. I am surprised
19. Die pram (The pram/pushchair)
20. My grave
21. Die gas (The guest)
22. Hulle kan dit oorskryf op 'n skoon stuk papier (They can rewrite it on a clean piece of paper)
23. Mother/infant observation
24. Die model van Maroelastraat! (The model of Maroela Street!)
25. Nie jou koue hande op my têt nie…(Not your cold hands on my boob…)
26. Mevrou kannie nou gaan nie, dit reën te veel (Madam can't go now, it's raining too much)
27. Every move you make, every breath you take, I'll be watching you
28. (Untitled) Non-observation #28
29. Nie oppie grond nie (Not on the ground)
30. Sweet and Special
31. Een ding is seker - al het 'n krokodil my arm afgebyt, is ek nog steeds dieselfde mens (One thing is certain, even though a crocodile has bitten my arm off, I am still the same person)
32. If what happens to you matches your expectations, then there is no problem
33. Dis jou tweede Mammie (This is your second Mummy)
34. (No report)
35. Sies, Maria, jou kak stink (Sis, Maria, your shit stinks)
36. Dissie ek wat jou kwaad gemaak het nie! (It's not me who made you angry!)
37. We would've figured this out sooner if we had not been such racist white supremacist pigs
38. It must have been love, but it's over now/It must have been love, but I lost it somehow
39. Hulle voel nie lekker nie, hulle harte is seer (They don't feel well, their hearts are sore)
40. My business is my pram
41. They don't talk to you anyway
42. Haai, dit was Maandag Maria se verjaarsdag…ek het helemal vergeet (Gosh, Monday was Maria's birthday…I completely forgot)
43. Mamma? Mamma se kind (Mommy? Mommy's child)