

Linking poverty and violence: The South African scenario

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Abstract

In present-day South Africa we are daily confronted with individual or group scenes of violence in townships and 'shanty-towns' where people live in poverty. Frequently, it involves people clamouring for the redemption of the promises made to them by politicians prior to the first democratic election in 1994 – promises of a wonderful 'new South Africa' that would meet their needs. In reality, their common experience is of a housing shortage, poor education, few jobs and very little prospect of alleviating their profound poverty. It seems as if in our country violence has become the power of the powerless.

It would, of course, be entirely misleading to give the impression that violence is a phenomenon created by the 'New South Africa', for under the previous government we experienced violence on an enormous scale, in particular state-sponsored violence, and structural violence. But it was not accompanied with promises that this would become better. At present it is this gap between the 'promised land' and harsh reality that to a large extent seems to fuel the violence.

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This article will explore the possible and potential links between poverty and violence, in order to gain deeper insight into their intrinsic meaning and the circularity of linkage between the two. In order to do so, it will

- revisit the definitions of poverty and violence,
- emphasise the extremely important role 'human needs' play in both poverty and violence,
- examine the phenomenon of the 'behavioural sink' which refers to the negative effect of overcrowding on humans as biological beings,
- establish whether theories on male violence offer insight into the problem, and
- attempt to understand how a culture of violence might come into being.

With this in mind, this article will examine the relationship between poverty and other phenomena that may be linked to it, in order to suggest which areas of research need attention to improve our grasp of the related issues and consequences.

Clarity is therefore needed on a number of issues, for example: What do we probably mean when we use the term 'violence'? What do we mean when we use the term 'poverty'? Should we make a distinction between *absolute poverty* and *relative poverty*? Could something like a culture of poverty come into being under certain conditions? If so, what would that look like and how would it influence peoples' behaviour? How is this linked to human needs?

It is universally accepted that the existence of human needs in individuals and the urge to satisfy those needs form the wellspring of human activity. Not only is the process of 'linking' of importance in this regard but also an understanding of needs as an independent entity.

The notion that the male gender is responsible for a very large portion of the violence in most societies where this phenomenon has been studied also leads to a number of questions: Should a closer look be taken at the role of gender in this regard? Are men genetically programmed towards violent behaviour? Could we theorise that this is a societal, protective role that developed over time? Or are there other components that still need to be discovered?

As for the aforementioned behavioural sink – we live in a world where more and more people stay in cities where space is not allocated equally to all citizens; and where some people – usually the poorer members of the community – find themselves living in very close proximity to their neighbours.

The ethologist John B. Calhoun (1962) became famous for his work on overcrowding. He experimented for many years on the effects of overcrowding on rats, and coined the phrase behavioural sink for the phenomenon of behavioural collapse. Since then, these studies and the concept of the behavioural sink have become a touchstone of urban sociology and psychology. Such studies have been repeated many times with similar results. We need to examine closely the possible links between poverty and overcrowding as well as overcrowding and violence, and finally, a ‘culture of violence’. What do we mean when we use the term ‘a culture of’ and how could this concept (if it is deemed legitimate) impinge on the phenomena under discussion?

On poverty

My simple definition for the purposes of this article is: Poverty is the lack of the necessary means to sustain fundamental life processes. I do, however, concur with Oscar Lewis (1998:7) and his concept of a culture of poverty:

The people in the culture of poverty have a strong feeling of marginality, of helplessness, of dependency, of not belonging. They are like aliens in their own country, convinced that the existing institutions do not serve their interests and needs. Along with this feeling of powerlessness is a widespread feeling of inferiority, of personal unworthiness, and discrimination. People with a culture of poverty have very little sense of history. They are a marginal people who know only their own troubles, their own local conditions, their own neighbourhood, their own way of life. Usually, they have neither the knowledge, the vision nor the ideology to see the similarities between their problems and those of others like themselves elsewhere in the world although they are very sensitive indeed to status distinctions.

Lewis also concludes that when the poor become class conscious or members of trade union organisations, or when they adopt an internationalist outlook,

they no longer necessarily form part of the culture of poverty although they may still be desperately poor. The World Bank (2010:1) echoes this description by describing poverty in a somewhat similar vein: 'Poverty is hunger. Poverty is lack of shelter. Poverty is being sick and not being able to see a doctor. Poverty is not having access to school and not knowing how to read. Poverty is not having a job, is fear for the future, living one day at a time'.

Poverty is not a simple concept; it is, in fact, multi-dimensional and its psychological, political and moral aspects cannot be ignored if we want to achieve a fuller understanding of it. The lack of basic, sustainable features of a functioning way of life can lead to irreparable damage, and in itself can contribute to the cycle of poverty. There is, for example, overwhelming evidence that whatever an expectant mother ingests or fails to ingest during the gestation period may have lasting effects on her foetus and on the baby after it is born. One negative example of this phenomenon, endemic in the Western Cape, is foetal alcohol syndrome. Easily obtainable drugs are also a pervasive issue here, as is the lack of sufficient healthful nutrients (as manifested in the Cape area in having the world's highest tuberculosis figures).

There is a notion, relative to the environment in which people live or the societies to which they belong, that there should be a living standard to which all people, no matter where they live, could be measured. This implies an absolute standard against which all people from anywhere in the world could be compared. According to Keith Joseph (1975), an absolute standard means one defined by reference to the actual needs of the poor, and not by reference to the expenditure of those who are not poor. Families, or individuals, are poor if they cannot afford to eat. More pointedly, a standard of poverty needs to be narrowed to a clear equation of stating the amount of calories that is needed for physical survival, and also the combination of food components needed (vitamins and so forth).

Though this might, on the surface, seem to be a sensible unit of measurement, it has its pitfalls. Even in wealthy societies, a healthy diet may be lacking due to the availability of a wide variety of quick and not particularly healthy food choices, as well as individual idiosyncrasies. Therefore the concept of 'relative poverty' has found a wider acclaim.

Relative poverty is measured in terms of judgements about what is considered a reasonable and acceptable standard of living made by those within a particular society. This definition is therefore not a fixed one; it moves in response to changing social expectations and concomitant living standards. 'To have one bowl of rice in a society where all other people have half a bowl may well be a sign of achievement and intelligence. To have five bowls of rice in a society where the majority have a decent, balanced diet is a tragedy' (Harrington 1962). Or, as Karl Marx (1976) put it, 'Our needs and enjoyments spring from society; we measure them, therefore by society and not by the objects of their satisfaction. Because they are of a social nature, they are of a relative nature'.

Peter Townsend (1979:31) criticises the narrow subsistence notion of needs, divorced from their social context, upon which absolute definitions of poverty were based. According to his alternative relative definition, 'the poor' is taken to mean:

Individuals, families and groups in the population who lack the resources to obtain the types of diet, participate in the activities and have the living conditions and amenities which are customary, or are at least widely encouraged or approved, in the societies to which they belong. *Their resources are so seriously below those commanded by the average individual or family that they are, in effect, excluded from ordinary living patterns and activities* (my italics).

We measure ourselves against people in our neighbourhood whom we believe are like us or 'ought' to be like us. If we cannot afford the amenities that they can, we may experience that as relative deprivation. Moreover, it is not possible to understand the phenomenon of poverty fully without an understanding of human needs and human values, and of how these feed into the phenomenon of poverty.

Human needs and values

One fundamental assumption in the understanding of human behaviour is that human beings are only moved to action because they have needs that must be satisfied. In this regard, Abraham Maslow's (1943) theory of motivation is

perhaps the best known. He posits a hierarchy of needs where physiological needs are at the base – followed by security needs, societal needs, esteem needs, and the need for self-actualisation. Nowadays they are more simply classified as existential needs, relationship needs, and growth needs. We need to keep in mind that these needs have to be continually satisfied, and that survival itself is the basic and fundamental need to which all other needs are subservient. Many theorists have attempted to spell out specific needs on the different levels, but there is a large degree of agreement on the main issues.

For our purpose we will take a closer look at two approaches. One set of values in terms of a ‘human needs’ approach is described by Hadley Cantrill (1976), and forms, for a number of writers, the basis for a human needs theory. He adds to the survival-and-security-needs a further array of needs: humans need sufficient order and certainty to be able to predict the effects of their actions; they continually seek to enlarge the range, and enrich the quality of their needs for satisfaction. According to Cantrill, we are creatures of hope and are not genetically designed to resign ourselves to our lots. We do, however, have the capacity to make choices and the desire to exercise this capacity. We require freedom to exercise the choices we are capable of making, and we want to experience our own identity and integrity, as well as a sense of our own worthiness. We seek some value or system of beliefs to which we can commit ourselves, and we want a sense of confidence that our society holds a fair degree of hope that our aspirations will be fulfilled.

A second and more recent needs theory to mention here is Steven Reiss’s (2004:179–193) ‘Intrinsic Motivation and the 16 Basic Desires’. These two theories complement one another and demonstrate the wide variety of human needs and expectations that drive our behaviour. Unfortunately, however, most of the theories and definitions of poverty do not include the full range of human needs and values. The satisfaction of human needs cannot be isolated from the reality of the external world.

All human needs must be satisfied in *a world of scarce resources*. We therefore have to *contend or compete* for these material goods. To do so we require power. Although a large volume of writings exists on the subject of power, there does not

seem to be much disagreement on the fact that power is, in essence, the ability to influence either people or things. As far as *sources of power* are concerned, there is a large degree of agreement. French and Raven's (1959) theory of five bases of power is sufficient for our purposes: legitimate power (stemming from a person's position in an organisation or community); referent power (stemming from personal acceptance by others – here charisma comes into play); expert power (the source of which is the skills or knowledge one possesses); reward power (stemming from the ability to grant people things they desire); and coercive power (which stems from the ability to force people to do things even when they do not want to do it).

To be acceptable as *legitimate* to the community, power must be seen by enough people as guaranteeing a degree of *equity*. When resources are seen as adequate and the power used to contend for them as legitimate, then the mode of acquisition and of distribution would be *co-operation*. When, however, either or both of these principles are questioned, then *competition becomes the mode of acquisition*. Conflict, in this framework, is seen as an intensified form of competition, and a crisis is encountered when the costs of maintaining or living with the status quo is so high that a new form of equity is sought.

At the heart of all this lies the question of *how the legitimate needs of all members of a society can be equitably satisfied*, assuming that a finite limit of resources is a given. In other words, the fundamental ethical question is: How can the relatively powerless in a community (the poor, the aged, the young, the handicapped, the abused) achieve a position that would allow them to determine their own destinies to the greatest extent, yet remain consistent with the common good?

There are certain fundamental human values underlying this framework. These are values without which this model cannot function. Human beings have dignity or value because they are human. Human beings seek meaning in their lives. Human beings therefore should be treated with respect, not as a means to an end, but as 'ends in themselves.' These three values contribute to my thesis in a number of ways.

Empowerment is a required condition for individuals and groups to achieve the desired end-state of societal justice. Self-determination is only possible

where negotiable power is present. Ultimately, no one should speak for another. Individuals and groups ought to represent their own interests, thus proportional empowerment becomes a crucial value.

Freedom constitutes a condition in which all groups and individuals have developed their own latent power to the point where they can advocate their own needs and rights and protect themselves from wanton violation by others. It is a condition in which they are capable of negotiating their own way with other empowered groups on the sure footing of respect rather than charity. A just society is a prerequisite for the maximum attainment of freedom by all individuals in the system. Freedom in this context means the ability to make responsible choices among a number of options, and to live with the consequences of those decisions.

Justice is an ultimate social good. It is a system in which power (i.e., control of decisions) is diffused. Decision making is participatory, accountability for decisions is visible, and resources are adequate and equitably distributed. Such a system of social justice can only emerge from the interplay of empowered, meaning-seeking individuals in the group.

A person's nature is most fully honoured when he or she has the maximum degree of latitude to determine his or her destiny, consistent with the common good. It should therefore be clear that at the heart of the problem lies the question of how, given a scarcity of resources, the legitimate needs of all members of a society can be equitably satisfied.

Power is the basis of all the above, because it provides the possibility for making, or at least influencing, the decisions that affect the lives of a community. The lack of equitable power will lead to an intensified form of competition that leads to conflict. The ultimate form of this is violence.

Violence

Most dictionary definitions of violence offer the idea of physical force or strength. Johannes Degenaar's (1990:4) conceptual clarification is the one I have found most useful because of its conciseness and the way it leaves avenues open

to all different kinds or types of violence: 'Etymologically, the word violence is derived from the Latin *vis* (force) and *latus*, the past participle of *fero* (to carry).' Degenaar's conclusion concerning this combination is that violence is the carrying of force towards someone or something. If we define force as the measurable influence inclining a body to motion, the physical nature of this movement is emphasised. Moreover, 'violence is the movement of carrying extreme force against' somebody. The consequence could be called injurious to that person (Degenaar 1990:4). He also makes it quite clear that when we are talking of violence against a person we have to bring in the idea of *intentionality* (Degenaar 1990:5).

Ultimately, Degenaar defines the difference between violence and violation and thus brings a normative element into our discussion of violence. Violation is derived from the Latin *violare* – to violate, desecrate, outrage, infringe – and signifies the disturbing of a person's integrity (Degenaar 1990:5).

Degenaar concentrates on the non-metaphorical use of the concept of violence, but by using the concept of violation, the metaphorical is introduced because it brings in 'violence done to a moral right' (Degenaar 1990:7). Under the metaphorical use of violence he mentions psychological violence. '[T]here need not be any physical violence at all but the experience of injury done to the person is crucial. This injury is related to a value which is ascribed to a person and which has been violated' (Degenaar 1990:9). He adds that acts performed with an authoritarian attitude (of a parent, for instance) are metaphorical violence, and so are humiliation, indoctrination, imposition, command, restriction, threats and so forth (Degenaar 1990:10–11).

Structural violence is also a form of metaphorical violence. Johan Galtung (1969) is credited with being the first individual to formulate this concept. According to Galtung, it is present where some social structure or social institution may harm people by preventing them from meeting their basic needs. It is when human beings are being influenced so that their actual somatic and mental realisations are below their potential realisations. In other words, the violence resides in the structures that do not give citizens equal power and equal life chances.

There is also cultural violence to consider, that is, aspects of culture that can be used to justify and legitimate direct or structural violence. It may be exemplified in the areas of religion, ideology, language as well as the arts.

In 1971, Dom Hélder Câmara, the bishop of north-eastern Brazil, referred to a 'spiral of violence' as 'the violence of poverty which keeps over two-thirds of the world's people in a subhuman condition, the violence of revolt when peaceful demands have no effect and the violence of repression with which the powerful try to crush the demands of the poor' (Degenaar 1990:13). Davies (1976:131) also links structural violence with uneven distribution of power and resources: 'Structural violence shows itself when resources and powers are unequally shared and are the property of a restricted number who use them not for the good of all but for their own profit and the domination of the less favoured'.

In summary, it should be noted that all types of violence discussed so far may be part and parcel of the phenomena surrounding poverty.

The behavioural sink

As noted above, the best work on the potential influence of population density on poverty and violence has been done by the ethologist John B. Calhoun (1962:139–148) who became famous for his work on overcrowding. Experimenting on the effects of overcrowding in rats led to his notion of the 'behavioural sink' for the phenomenon of behavioural collapse that took root in popular culture as an analogy of human behaviour. There is a popular belief that a logical extension of Calhoun's work would be to apply his findings regarding the overcrowding in rats to human environments such as living in high density locations. One of the most important aspects of Calhoun's findings was that it sparked an upsurge of related research on the effects on humans in high density living. A few examples are notable.

Extremely overcrowded prisons were one of the environments in which it was postulated that a behavioural sink might occur for humans. A study funded in 1980 by the National Institute of Justice examined prisons where inmates averaged only 50 square feet each (or an area about 7 by 7 feet), compared with less crowded prisons. It was found that in the crowded prisons there were

significantly higher rates of mortality, homicide, suicide, illness, and disciplinary problems. Another finding has been that crowding produces negative effects on problem-solving abilities. One study placed people either in small, extremely crowded rooms (only 3 square feet per person) or in larger, less crowded rooms. The subjects were asked to complete complex tasks, such as placing differing shapes into various categories while listening to a story on which they were to be tested later. Those in the more crowded conditions performed significantly worse than those who were not crowded (Evans 1979).

Along with those effects, there may be a tendency to feel that other people are more hostile and that time seems to pass more slowly as density increases. There is an optimal relationship between crowding and withdrawal; the optimal point seems to be 1.18 persons per room. This relationship holds even when control variables are introduced (Evans 1979).

Additional analysis was done to see the effects of self-selection and crowded conditions. Evans found that individuals with aggressive or withdrawal behaviour self-select into lower density housing. This phenomenon has in the past tended to lower the correlations which exist between aggression and crowding, hiding the relationship if self-selection is not taken into account. Further, the inclination in the social sciences to use correlations to measure effect tends to obscure the actual situation (Evans 1979).

Although the analysis is limited to one city and does not consider the effects of overall population density on human behaviour, Evans' work does show that when people feel crowded, they tend to withdraw from that situation to less stressful situations. This response is probably normal for human and animal behaviour, but it will tend to obscure simple correlations between aggression and withdrawal in observed behaviours. It does, however, indicate that when people do not feel comfortable in a dense situation, they prefer to withdraw. In sum, environment affects human behaviour just as it does animal behaviour.

Some major theories have been generated to explain the effects of density on human behaviour. The work of Louis Wirth (1938) is the most commonly known, especially his famous proposition that size, density and heterogeneity explain the effects of urban life on the human animal. The experiments done by Stanley

Milgram (1979) suggest that when people are confronted with a large number of strangers in everyday life, they tend to withdraw and take less interest in the community in order to protect themselves from overload. Although a number of density studies with humans could not replicate the behavioural sink theory, Wendy Regoeczi (2002) has argued that the inconsistent results that plague the density literature are due to a misspecification of how density effects operate. However, if density effects are left unaddressed, this may lead to serious misrepresentations of the relationship of density to pathology. These issues pertain to self-selection and nonlinear effects of density on social behaviour.

Using data from the Toronto Mental Health and Stress study, Regoeczi looks at overcrowding in housing using the measure of persons per room. Measures of withdrawal came from questionnaire responses regarding affection and love. Aggression was measured from a series of questions asking about how aggressive people felt towards others.

It seems that all animals, including the human species, require a certain amount of personal space. When that space is invaded, especially for an extended amount of time, it causes behaviour to change. When observed from a population point of view, it can have devastating effects. In a number of studies it became clear that, in addition to plenty of food, water, and shelter, all animals need a minimal amount of space. Although all other resources seem to be sufficient, the lack of space in effect kills them.

John J. Christian (1961) studied Sika deer on James Island in the Chesapeake Bay near Washington, D.C. These deer required at least three acres per deer in order to thrive. Yet, during the six-year study, on the 280 acre island the Sika population reached nearly 300. All of a sudden the deer began to 'just drop dead'. The dead deer appeared to have no health problems or diseases. However, autopsies revealed that they died from enlarged adrenal glands. The over-population on the island proved to be too much for the herd and many died from being severely 'over stressed'. As soon as the numbers dropped back to a level that guaranteed the three acres per deer spatial need, the 'mysterious deaths' stopped occurring.

A culture of violence

A number of intellectuals from varying backgrounds such as Max Scheler (1958), Arnold Gehlen (1957) and Martin Buber (1945) have made a case for culture being the human answer to an inherent biological poverty, a lack of internal warning systems, and a lack of specialised organs adapted to specific environments. Added to this is the survival advantage of human brainpower and the ability to reason. Humans survive in hostile environments by changing the environments they find themselves in to suit their abilities and their needs, before choosing to simply move on, that is if they are able to do so. In order to function well, they need as full a description of the environment they find themselves in, as well as an understanding of the natural laws according to which they operate. This enables humans to devise technologies to substitute for that which nature did not provide. Culture enables us to change nature to suit our needs, by means of 'organ' replacement, organ substitution and organ amplification. In air travel, for example, one can see all three of these mechanisms at work: the wings nature never gave us, stronger and bigger than those of any other creature, and on top of it, almost inexhaustible motion.

But if culture is the avenue through which we try to survive in hostile environments, then it should indicate the way(s) in which we interact with one another, as well as the power relationships that underpin these. Socio-political systems are mainly about dividing available or potential resources. Most social contracts, traditions and other social-cementing mechanisms have the ethical concepts of justice and equity as an integral part of their functioning. Where these are missing, we have either the subservience of slaves or the insurrection of people who perceive themselves as legitimately opposing the forces which cannot be overcome in a peaceful way. Therefore this is viewed as a culture of legitimate violence.

A number of factors make it easier for such a culture to become established in modern times. There is, for instance, the modern miniaturisation of devices of force (as opposed to the 'blunt force' of historically bulky armies) like the AK47 assault rifle, the shoulder-fired Stinger missile, sarin gas, etc. These are all examples of 'force' with which small groups or even individuals can hold large groups to ransom. These examples are based on the perception by

people at the 'bottom of the pile' that there is no legitimate or peaceful way of climbing out of their dilemma, coupled with a philosophy of 'violence as antidote'. Franz Fanon (1961) believes that violence is the only way through which the disempowered can gain self-respect and attain the seeming success of violence as power.

In his 'Letter from Medellin' in the *New Yorker* (1991), Alma Guillermoprieto relates his interview with a young man in his early twenties from Medellin, Colombia, which at the time was the headquarters of Emilio Escobar, the notorious drug lord. This young man tried to live a decent life by means of honest manual labour and was strongly motivated by an overwhelming desire to improve the life of his mother. There were many gangs operating in his neighbourhood environment, the *barrio*, and one day he witnessed his younger brother being wounded during a gang hold-up. He felt deeply humiliated by his lack of power and the idea was born of starting a *Grupo de Autodefensa* (a self-defence unit). He discussed this idea privately with one other person on his block and then started cleaning up their *barrio*. Within the first three months they killed 30 'undesirables', and then the two groups started eliminating one another. After that, he claimed his *barrio* became a nice place to visit – *tranquillo*, calm, no problem. Asked whether he approved of the local police involvement in more or less the same type of activity, he replied that according to him police officers are murderers who massacre everybody. He saw himself as a Christian and as such he only took human life when it was absolutely necessary!

It therefore seems that there are circumstances under which the people involved may perceive a culture of violence as justified, when they feel there is no other option available. Since the time of Augustine, the notion that violence can be used to combat hostile circumstances has been encapsulated in the 'Just War' theory.

Vigilantism

A circumstance that is similar to the Medellin example is rapidly becoming endemic in South Africa since the advent of the new democratic dispensation in 1994. At that time, it was widely anticipated by the masses of poor people

that their circumstances would improve almost immediately. However, as employment opportunities failed to materialise and housing remained chronically short and often pitiful, townships remained plagued by crime and poor people have increasingly turned to vigilantism over the past several years.

Township residents believe that the police either do not care about their plight because they are less powerful than wealthier suburbs, or that indeed, they are collaborating with organised criminal gangs – a phenomenon that has sadly been established in several cases. Even Jackie Selebi, the former South African Police Commissioner, was jailed for corruption. While the rich can pay for private security, those without funds are left to deal with the problem of protecting themselves.

As a result, one of the cruelest of apartheid-era ‘punishments’ against perceived ‘informers’ has been re-invoked, the terrible death caused by ‘necklacing’. This barbaric and agonising act involves placing a car tyre around the neck of the ‘culprit’, pouring petrol into it, and setting it alight. The victim can take up to twenty minutes to die. Along with stabbings and beatings to death of ‘criminals’ caught by community members, this method of ‘mob justice’ takes place in townships in South Africa on a regular basis.

In July 2012, a demonstration outside Parliament in Cape Town highlighted the fact that in that year, nine young men had been killed by necklacing. They were all from Khayelitsha, one of the poorest and most densely populated townships on the Cape Flats and at the same time a community with one of the highest murder rates in South Africa (Phaliso 2012), or indeed, the world. Khayelitsha is a liminal township set up in the 1980s to absorb the population of the outgrown surrounding townships, as well as the influx of urban-directed people from poor rural areas elsewhere – in other words, a place of the displaced. In both May and June of 2013, two young men suspected of burglary were killed in separate attacks using the necklacing method in the Western Cape, in Wallacedene, and in the Siqalo settlement in Philippi (Lau 2013; Knoetze 2013).

These events can be linked to Hannah Arendt’s (1972) distinction between power and force in political environments. Power, she asserts, comes from the

consent of the people, while force comes from the barrel of a gun (or, in the case of South Africa, perhaps a readily available old car tyre).

Neighbourhoods with high unemployment rates are more likely to have high crime rates than communities with high densities. There is evidence that unemployment is one of the leading factors in societal violence. It is argued that in cities where unemployment is rampant, people become involved in various crimes as a result of their poverty. Unemployed individuals (especially those who were recently employed) experience a breakdown in the normal patterns of their everyday lives which may lead to criminal behaviour that would not otherwise have occurred, had they remained self-sufficient earners. Statistics South Africa (2013) gives the unemployment figure for the second quarter of 2013 as 25.6%. It must be noted that this figure refers to people out of work *who are actively looking for work*. A 'guesstimate' of *all* the people out of work, including those who are not actively looking for work, is closer to 40%.

Violence resides in the structures that do not give citizens equal power and equal life-chances. It is clear that many instances of structural violence, in this sense, are evident in the lives and living conditions of people forced to dwell in ghetto-like circumstances, for example on the Cape Flats or KwaMashu in KwaZulu-Natal, or many other similar poverty-stricken places in South Africa. Any institution which systematically robs certain people of rightful, decent options generally available to others, does violence to these people.

Anthony Altbeker (2011) argues that the majority of South Africa's population has been excluded from participating in the economy as a result of constraints on the education of the individual as well as the family. This situation includes the lack of acquisition of skills. In addition, a resource-poor environment undermines their chances of finding work. To use a well-worn but nonetheless apt phrase, the playing fields are still far from equal.

Conclusion

To the background of theory in this regard, I have attempted to identify critical aspects in the relationship between poverty and violence, in particular as they

refer to the South African situation. It is important to recognise that poverty was and is still intricately connected to the social and racial history of South Africa, and that our vast legacy of colonialism and apartheid has fed into the nexus of poverty and violence in our poorest townships, almost all of which are inhabited by the previously disadvantaged.

I have not attempted a definitive answer to the questions raised by all of this, but rather focused on possible links between poverty and violence which may not always have received due regard. We need more and deeper insights in order to understand and attempt to solve the serious problems facing us. It is notable that the word 'theory' from the Classical Greek *theorema* simply means *insight*. Thus theory and insight are inexorably intertwined.

A number of areas of research deserve closer attention. For example, the work by Ian Harris (1991) on *male violence* opens up a series of questions that should be asked: What are the messages that young men growing up in South Africa receive from their environments? Are these messages different for different groupings (i.e. rural, provincial, cultural, tribal, religious, etc.)? Do these in any way enforce violent behaviour (in the broadest sense of the word)? What sort of behaviour expectations do their communities demand from them and what type of *anger behaviour* is sanctioned by different communities? Harris sees 'inner rage' as the dynamo of violent behaviour; therefore, research should be implemented towards a greater understanding of this issue.

We also need a greater understanding of 'poverty as violence' as well as the physical and psychological damage done to people living under conditions imposed by poverty. The relationship(s) between population density and pathological behaviour need(s) to be further clarified. Some of the research seems to show that population density on its own does not show an inevitable relationship to violence, but that population density *plus* a number of related factors do have a significant influence on violent behaviour. These include unemployment, income disparities, the gap between rich and poor, and lack of resources. Unfortunately, there are no reliable statistics to illuminate the psychological and other human factors that may be influenced by the

behaviour sink in South Africa. We need this to be investigated, and we need it as a matter of urgency.

My hope is that this article assists in focusing the attention of researchers onto an extremely rich area of neglected research. If our talented researchers could team up with concerned funders, we would be on our way to solve one of the most vexing problems facing our young democracy – the link between poverty and violence.

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