

Workshopped Plays in a South African Correction Centre: Negotiating Social Relations Through Theatre

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For
Professor Margaret Lenta
who has inspired me and mentored my journey from
theatre practitioner to academic.

Declaration

Unless otherwise indicated in the text, this dissertation is my own original work, and has not been previously submitted to any other institution for degree purposes.

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Abstract

From 1999 until 2008 I worked with offenders making plays at Westville Medium B Correction Centre, using collective techniques to address social issues and involve the audience in debates. This work was inspired by the Southern African Theatre for Development of the 1980s. During 2002 and 2003 the offenders created and performed the two plays which form the case studies for this research. *Isikhathi Sewashi* (The Time of the Watch), presents their experiences of growing up under apartheid, political faction fighting, and crime and asks the audience to generate solutions to crime. *Lisekhon' Ithemba* (There is Still Hope) addresses the prejudice of the correctional staff and offenders towards those living with HIV/AIDS.

Offenders were involved in the research process and conducted group interviews with 110 members of the audience. I conducted interviews with 21 performers and used classical Grounded Theory to analyse the interviews. The theory that emerged demonstrates how the offenders, performers and audience used theatre to negotiate social relations. The plays negotiated the stereotyping of offenders, managed conflict, and increased care for offenders who were ill. Offenders also used the plays to negotiate power relations involving the correctional system and the numbers gangs.

Collective play-making techniques allowed western and African aesthetics to combine. The aesthetics of Epic Theatre and Theatre of the Oppressed combined with those of isiZulu popular performance. The theories of Freire (1996:64), Brecht (in Willet 1964: 57) and Boal (1979:xix–xxi) had the intention of promoting actions and change of a social and political nature. Both Soyinka (1976: 51) and Kamlongera (n.d. 18-26) argue that theatre that engages an African worldview has its roots in social functions involving man and his environment. The offenders' identification with characters and situations, their feelings of regret and self-pity, drove their critical engagement with the plays. They then formulated solutions and took action to effect change. Some of their actions challenged the authority of the correctional system and the numbers gangs.

The binary formulation of Aristotelian and non-Aristotelian theatre in the work of Brecht (in Willet 1964: 281) and Boal (2000: xix –xxi) is contradicted in this case study. Elements from both forms co-exist here. The audience's responses to the plays reflect what Freire (1996:33) refers to as domesticating oppression but also demonstrate praxis which emerges as forms of resistance, and self-creation. The offenders' potential to effect change in the correction centre, however, remains limited.

My findings address current debates in the field of Prison Theatre (Thompson 1998:11 and Balfour 2004: 1-18) about the potential for theatre to effect change beyond offending behaviour and to include systemic change within the correctional system.

Collective play-making provides offenders with a voice in the correction centre. The power of collective play-making is that cultural production remains in the hands of offenders and becomes a means through which they can express their concerns and sense of reality.

Further research around collective play-making in other contexts and involving communities with different cultural resources is needed to validate the emergent theory presented here or to arrive at further reformulations.

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Chapter One

Introduction

1.1 Offenders watch *Isikhathi Sewashi*

It is ten-thirty in the morning on Tuesday 11 February 2003. I am in section C3¹ at Westville's Medium B Correctional Centre to watch a performance of *Isikhathi Sewashi* (The Time of the Watch)². A long courtyard stretches before me; on one side is a high wall topped by an iron grid. The sun spills in. On the other side is a row of metal cell doors and gates, entrances to dormitory cells holding fifty to sixty offenders. Most of them are black. They are wearing green uniforms that will later be changed to the well-known bright orange. I notice the range of skin tones from which emerge the few Indian, white and Coloured offenders. Everyone is crowded together at the far end of the courtyard.

The correction centre is a noisy place. The noise of the other 4000 offenders living in the building provides deafening background noise. Out of sight, in other sections, men are moving around, playing football, dancing and singing and holding church services. They are shouting messages and trading between sections through the interior wells that connect the different floors.

I greet the *Isikhathi Sewashi* cast. They are warming up and doing Zulu dances and chants to generate energy and focus. An audience of about 300 offenders has gathered on three sides of an empty space. Some are seated on chairs or benches, some on the floor; some stand, while others have brought makeshift chairs from the cells. Most seem interested and to anticipate the event with pleasure. Staging a play in the sections is unusual. Some have already heard about the play. Away to the side and avoiding showing interest in the event but watching the crowd are the correctional staff.

The play begins. The performers enter singing. As the play unfolds the audience falls silent. At first they try to laugh and joke about the action. Plays are about *amasketches*, funny scenes. One member of the audience,

¹ In South Africa the term 'section' is used to denote a row of cells with a common public area. In some countries these are called prison wings.

² *Isikhathi Sewashi* was the title the offenders gave the play. The literal meaning is 'The Time of the Watch', idiomatic isiZulu suggesting urgency. English equivalent phrases might be, "now is the time" or "time's up".

sitting at the side on a plastic drum, tries to continue ridiculing the performers but the silent attention from the rest of the members of the audience becomes overwhelming. He too falls silent. The play continues. In the noisy building the audience's attention is compelling, broken by occasional laughter at a comic moment or excitement during a political song. After about an hour the play ends. There is no applause; the actors have moved the audience into discussion circles. Some audience members escape the discussions to resume their own activities in the courtyard or cells but most sit around animatedly discussing the play. What does the silence mean? How will the play be discussed later back in the cells? What kinds of changes might arise in the correction centre as result of the performance?

1.2 Key features of this research project

This dissertation explores the way in which offenders engaged with two plays made and performed by them at the Westville Medium B Correctional Centre, a men's maximum-security centre, and part of the Westville Correctional Facility in Durban. The plays were made using theatre work-shopping techniques and addressed issues of offending behaviour and living with HIV/AIDS in the correction centre. Key features of this study involve:

- empirical research;
- qualitative research;
- the use of case studies;
- the participation of the offenders in the research process.

The research involved making problem-posing plays with offenders; interviews with performers who worked on the plays; interviews with members of the audience and analysis of the interviews and discussion of the findings with the offenders. Performers involved in making the plays conducted the interviews with the members of the audience, were involved in the initial coding and had an opportunity to respond to findings.

A team including an offender, a member of the correctional staff, and myself ran the theatre project. Ntusi³ represented the offenders and was involved in running rehearsals with me. He used the isiZulu idiom *Injobo*

³ I have changed the names of all offenders and correctional staff mentioned in this dissertation. I provide a full explanation for this on page 3.

enhle ithugelwa ebandla to describe the collective ethos of the project. This proverbial phrase means that a beautiful thing is made when people work together⁴. The collective work he is referring to includes the play-making process as well as the group discussions with the audience that were part of each performance. In designing and conducting the research I attempted to honour this collaborative ethos by involving the offenders in the research process. I could not have conducted or organized this research without permission from the Department of Correctional Services and the involvement of the correctional staff; also it would not have been possible to generate the data without the offenders' participation and co-operation.

1.3 Conforming to regulations and the use of terminology

Permission to conduct the theatre projects and this research was granted by the Department of Correctional Services, on 3 December 2001, (Correspondence Bhengu 2001 unpublished⁵, see Appendix 1). While conducting the theatre work and research I abided by the conditions set out by the Department of Correctional Services, and this dissertation has been submitted to the Department of Correctional Services for its approval before being submitted to the University. The policies regarding research and research ethics set out by the university and the Department of Correctional Services at the time when the research was initiated and permission granted were followed.

The offenders' participation in the theatre work and in the research was voluntary. The appropriate documentation regarding permission from the offenders for me to photograph and video their work was completed and is held by the Department of Correctional Services at Westville Correctional Facility. The Correctional Services Act, 1998 (123.1) states: "No person may publish any account of prison life or conditions that may identify a specific prisoner unless the prisoner concerned grants permission for such publication (1998:94). I agreed with the offenders who participated in the plays and interviews not to use their real names. I have therefore changed all the names of offenders and correctional staff mentioned in this dissertation.

⁴ Because of western gender stereotyping the literal translation distorts badly and reads 'a beautiful thing is woven where men gather'. It refers to men weaving baskets.

⁵ Unpublished sources will be cited frequently in this study, and will be referenced with the date of composition and the word (unpublished).

In keeping with the Department of Correctional Services policy on terminology, I have used the following terms:

- Correctional Centre rather than prison when referring to a particular centre within the Westville Management Area. There are five separate centres within the complex (see pp 20);
- Correctional Facility, when referring to the entire Westville Management Area containing all five correction centres or when referring to 'prison complexes' in general;
- Staff or correctional staff rather than 'prison guards';
- Offenders rather than 'prisoners', 'inmates' 'convicts' or 'criminals'.

The Department's use of these terms reflects the post-apartheid transformation of South African correctional facilities and is in line with current international terminology in the area of criminal justice.

When discussing the Department of Prisons before 1994, during apartheid, I used the term 'Prison'. Similarly, I have followed James Thompson (1998:15) in using the term Prison Theatre when referring to the internationally established field of theatre practice and research in Correctional Facilities. The term is explained fully on page 9. I have left unchanged the use of the terms prison, inmates or jail when they appear in direct quotations from the transcripts of interviews with offenders or when they appear in quotations from other written sources.

1.4 The Case Studies: *Isikhathi Sewashi* (the time of the watch) and *Lisekhon' Ithemba* (there is still hope)

Two plays, *Isikhathi Sewashi* and *Lisekhon' Ithemba*, provide the case studies used for this research. On page 6 (photographs 1 and 2) are the posters that advertised the performances in the different sections. These plays were the more recent and complex plays which emerged from a larger body of Prison Theatre conducted at Westville Correctional Facility in conjunction with the Drama and Performance Studies programme at the University of KwaZulu-Natal between 1999 and 2003. Both plays were performed in isiZulu. *Isikhathi Sewashi* was the more complicated of the two. It was created over a longer period and dealt with broader social issues related to offending behaviour.

Lisekhon' Ithemba was created over a shorter period and addressed practical problems related to living with HIV/AIDS in the Medium B Correction Centre. In the first half of 2003 *Isikhathi Sewashi* was performed in all 12 sections, followed by performances of *Lisekhon' Ithemba*. Approximately 3500 offenders attended the performances of each play.

Isikhathi Sewashi was a fictional biography of three men which captured the offenders' own life stories and reflected their experiences of growing up during the apartheid struggle in the 1980s, living through the political violence of the 1990s and subsequent involvement in crime. The play engaged the audiences in discussions in which members of the audience proposed reasons for crime and suggested solutions.

Lisekhon' Ithemba addressed the problem of prejudiced behaviour towards offenders living with HIV/AIDS in the Medium B Correction Centre. The cast was comprised of performers from *Isikhathi Sewashi* and performers who were new to the theatre project. Previously, in 2002, two postgraduate students, Mbongiseni Buthelezi and Musa Hlatshwayo, had created two plays with the offenders that addressed this issue. Buthelezi returned in 2003 and together with the cast re-worked the material from these plays and created *Lisekhon' Ithemba*. The play involved the audience in identifying prejudiced behaviour towards sick people by the correctional staff and offenders, and explored alternative behaviours of a more pro-social nature. The audience worked with the performers in discussion circles and used Image Theatre (Boal 2000:135) to create tableaux that first expressed the problem behaviour and then proposed a solution. Boal (2000:135) describes how Image Theatre involves the spectator in performance by asking him to express his views on a theme of common interest, without speaking and only using the bodies of other participants and 'sculpting' with them a group of statues in such a way that his opinions and feelings are evident.

Isikhathi Sewashi

Akuwona umdlalo wasesiteji nje kodwa ithuba lokufundisana kudlalwa. Umdlalo wakhiwe ababoshwa base Medium B Prison, uxoxa ngodaba lamabhungu amathathu ohambeni lwawo eyongena empilweni yobugebengu. Izibukeli zawo kulindeleke ekubukeni kwazo lomdlalo zakhe izinhlaka ezizo kwazi ukubuyisa ubuntu kubantu ngokuthi ziqhamuke nokuziphatha okudingekayo nendlela yokufinyelela kukho okumele kuthuthukiselwe emphakathini ukuze kunciphe ubugebengu.



Usuku:

Ilanga:

Isikhathi:

Woza Uzokhuluma!

Poster for *Isikhathi Sewashi*

The text reads:

Not just a play, but an informal education experience. The play, created by inmates at the Medium B Prison, tells the story of how three men journey into a life of crime. The audience will, in response to the story, create a moral regeneration statement suggesting values and actions that need to be promoted in our communities in order to reduce crime.

Date:

Time:

Date

Come and speak out!

Photograph 1. Poster for *Isikhathi Sewashi*

Lisekhon' Ithemba

Nanso-ke indaba – nako phela siphela ubhubhane lwengcalazi! Nokucwasa abantu asebenatesisifo asikuyekile neze. Nali-ke ithuba lokubuka umdlalo siphinde sibonisane ngokuthi singayixazulula kanjani lenkinga ukuze siphilise ngale kokuhtukumezana.



Usuku:

Ilanga:

Isikhathi:

Woza Uzokhuluma!

Poster for *Lisekhon' Ithemba*

The text reads:

Here is a big problem – AIDS is claiming our lives! And we have not stopped showing prejudice against people with the disease at all. Here is a chance then to watch observe and discuss how we can solve our problems and live together without treating one another badly.

Date:

Time:

Date

Come and speak out!

Photograph 2. Poster for *Lisekhon' Ithemba*

After the plays were performed in the correction centre *Isikhathi Sewashi* was played to Grade Ten schoolchildren at the recreation hall, outside the Medium B Correction Centre but within the larger Westville Correctional Facility area. Subsequently, offenders began to initiate their own plays and the AIDS Control Committee, an organization in the correction centre that involved offenders in managing HIV/AIDS related issues, initiated a theatre competition for AIDS education plays.

1.5 Establishing a focus for the research

This research seeks neither to test nor validate the theatre work in terms of correctional imperatives. This is counter to Ann Peaker and Jill Vincent's (1990:184) recommendation, from an extensive report on arts in British correctional facilities, that correctional imperatives should provide the framework within which arts activities in correctional facilities are assessed. Nor does this research seek to validate the Freirian methodology that informs this particular type of theatre work. The present research was not initiated in order to validate notions that the theatre in some way rehabilitates offenders or that it successfully conscientizes them. It is exploratory and seeks to generate insights into the ways in which offenders engaged with this type of theatre work within the context of the correctional system.

Earlier research (Hurst 2001 and Hurst *et al* 2002) had helped to establish that the theatre projects at Westville Correctional Facility had achieved a certain kind of social impact. Still, I felt we were imposing criteria that would meet with the Department of Correctional Services expectations that recreational projects should meet rehabilitation criteria. Certainly the offenders had recognized that theatre work helped them to think more broadly and improved their problem-solving and communication skills, but this did not fully explain their high levels of commitment to and ownership of the theatre projects.

Why did men who previously had no interest in performance take such an interest in the project? Why did the audience for *Isikhathi Sewashi* watch with such concentrated silence and attention? Why did so many members of the audience participate in the discussion circles for *Isikhathi Sewashi* and *Lisekhon' Ithemba*?

1.6 Key Research Questions

Four key questions emerge:

- What factors emerged as significant for offenders who participated in making and performing the plays?
- What factors emerged as significant for the offenders who were members of the audience?
- How are the paradigms and intentions of this type of participatory theatre work sustained or transformed by the correctional context?
- What factors emerged as important concerning the practice of this type of participatory theatre in a South African correction centre?

1.7 Choosing to use Grounded Theory

I have already referred to the limitations I felt applied to the reports (Hurst 2001 and Hurst *et al* 2002) evaluating the theatre projects at Westville Correctional Facility. I felt there might be other dynamics present that had not been revealed or fully accounted for in these reports.

I chose to use Classical Grounded Theory as the method for gathering and analyzing data for this study because it would allow information to emerge from the data and would not impose a lens or criteria on the analysis. The theatre work at Westville Correctional Facility was new and Prison Theatre, in South Africa particularly and Africa generally, is not a well-researched area. It was, therefore, useful, at this point, to conduct an exploratory piece of research that would attempt to generate explanations of the dynamics involved in conducting participatory workshop theatre in South African correctional facilities.

Grounded Theory is a well-established method for conducting research of this nature and has as its objective the generation of hypotheses and substantive theory (Glaser and Strauss 1999: 31-35). These research objectives contrast with those of other types of research where theories are applied and tested and in which validation is the main objective (Glaser and Strauss 1999:1 and Charmaz 1994:97).

In 2002 I had visited the United Kingdom to look at Prison Theatre work and was introduced to the work of Jenny Hughes (2001a and 2001b).

Her reports, *Looking Good: An evaluation of 'Openshaw Uncovered' – a participatory film project with young people* (2001a) and *A Better Place: An evaluation of a exploring citizenship with pupils from primary schools in Miles Platting and Openshaw in Manchester* (2001b) used Classical Grounded Theory method to evaluate two dynamic and complicated community education projects. She was able to make sense of complex arts projects in dynamic 'real life' teaching situations. It seemed to me that it might be useful to follow Hughes's example and examine the work at Westville Correction Centre in a way that would allow information to emerge freely from the data. Categories of information that were not predetermined and were grounded in the inmates' reality might reflect more fully how the plays worked in the correctional environment. Further, this methodology, grounded in the offenders' reality, would be more consistent with the general ethos of collective work that informed the whole theatre project.

1.8 Gathering data, conducting and analyzing the interviews

The data that formed the basis of the analysis came from interviews with performers and members of the audience. Performers from the cast of *Isikhathi Sewashi* conducted group interviews with members of the audience who had attended performances of the plays. I conducted individual interviews with performers.

After analyzing this data I have generated a substantive theory that explains how offenders, both performers and audience, engaged with this type of theatre and how they used it, from their position as offenders within the correctional system, to re-negotiate social relations within the correction centre and with the outside world. This has enabled me to formulate some recommendations about the uses of participatory theatre within the context of the South African correction system. I have also identified areas for further research.

1.9 Prison Theatre: a field of practice with in Theatre Arts

This dissertation seeks to add to the understanding and practice of Prison Theatre. It explores the implications of theatre as cultural production, rather than therapy or rehabilitation, within the correctional environment. The most

significant condition that informs this analysis of theatre work is the correctional context. James Thomson (1998:15) observes that the field ‘Prison Theatre’, unlike other community or social change theatre, is defined by the place, the correctional facility, rather than the constituency, offenders, as is the case with, for example, Black Theatre, Gay Theatre, or Worker Theatre. He argues that this inclusive title reflects more clearly the range of work that occurs in correction centres and serves the debate around what might constitute good practice more effectively than categories such as ‘offender theatre’ or ‘theatre for rehabilitation’. The term ‘Prison Theatre’ is important for another reason: it makes the space and the social relations that occur there, particularly relations of power, primary to understanding of the role performance might play in such an environment.

1.10 Contradictions between the intentions of the theatre work and the correctional environment

Even today the official business of the criminal justice system is conducted in English. The plays were created and performed in isiZulu. This gave preference to the public use of isiZulu over Afrikaans and English, in a space linked in memory with abusive apartheid authority.

The collective play-making processes, including the discussions involving the audience, were inspired by the Theatre for Development movement that community theatre groups in the region embraced during the 1970s and 1980s (Kerr 1995:149-171). Theatre for Development uses popular performance forms and may express a grassroots consciousness. The plays at the Medium B Centre used South African popular performance genres such as *Isicathamiya*, *Izimbongo*, *Izingoma neziqubulo* of the *amabutho*, *Toyitoyi*, and *Kwaito*⁶. A clear and inclusive definition, however, of the term ‘popular theatre’ in an African context remains contested and elusive (Rohmer: 1999:31). The plays also engaged aesthetics drawn from Theatre for Development, Epic Theatre, and Theatre of the Oppressed, with roots in Freirian popular education. The work engaged the offenders in dialogical

⁶ *Isicathamiya* involves a capella singing; *Izimbongo* are praise poems; *Izingoma neziqubulo* are war songs and war chants; *Toyitoyi* is a form of protest song; and *Kwaito* is isiZulu rap.

interaction of a consciousness-raising and problem-posing nature, from which some kind of altered behaviour might be expected.

Making this type of theatre in a correction centre poses certain problems and contradictions. What happens when the impulses of Freirian education, involving conscientization and action, collide with the process of correction where an individual's potential for action is limited? How does the theatre work resist or become co-opted into the shifting terrain of power dynamics in the correctional environment?

1.11 Background to the theatre project at Westville Correctional Facility

I worked with the correctional staff and offenders for two years at the Medium B Correction Centre, from 1999 to 2001, before the relationship between the two institutions, then the University of Natal, and Department of Correctional Services was formalized (Bengu 2001). During this period we were able to ensure that benefits were identified for all the partners: the university, offenders, and the Department of Correctional Services. Conducting a theatre project in the correction centre was new and not understood clearly by the staff, offenders or myself. Learning took place at creative, personal and institutional levels. Working for the first two years in terms of a merely tacit agreement allowed the power dynamics in these relationships to remain flexible and evolve slowly. This allowed me to develop relationships of trust with a wide range of people including correctional staff, senior managers and offenders. The creative work also developed collaboratively and involved close working relationships between staff, offenders and myself.

The Department of Correctional Services officially introduced cultural activities at the correction facility in 1996; these primarily involved music, singing, and traditional dance. In 1999, I was invited by a member of the corrections staff working in the Education Department at the correctional facility and an offender, Ntusi, to see a play they had been working on called *Shibobo 2000* (Mkhize 2000). Ntusi worked with Kaba Mkhize⁷ organizing the rehearsals and directing the play. He had dropped out in the final year of

⁷ Kaba Mkhize has worked with SABC on a number of important projects involving community development. As well as this project with offenders he created a number of projects to promote peace in KwaZulu-Natal during the political unrest of the 1990s.

study at the University of Natal where he had intended to major in drama. Katherine Kendal, then the head of the drama programme at Pietermaritzburg, had given my name to him. She was aware of my background in community theatre and had asked me if I would support Ntusi if he engaged in any kind of drama project while serving his sentence. The meeting at *Shibobo 2000* led to the formation of a team that would lead the theatre work and consisted of the offender, a corrections officer⁸, and myself.

At that performance of *Shibobo 2000* a large cast of offenders, women and men, performed Mkhize's play on the football field to a large audience of offenders. The play used the offenders' music and dance skills to tell a 'Jim comes to Jo'burg' type of story about a group of migrant labourers coming from the rural areas to seek work in Durban and their confrontation with modernity and urban living. The performers worked from a written script; later a smaller group of men in the Medium B Correction Centre adapted *Shibobo 2000* to promote anti-crime and AIDS awareness messages.

After *Shibobo 2000* and in order to increase the effectiveness of theatre as a tool for raising consciousness and for self-expression, the theatre project team, of which I was now a part, agreed to let offenders make their own plays. The opportunity to do this came when I adapted the practical project from the first level module in the Drama and Performance Studies Programme, *Theatre for a Developing Nation*, to enable offenders and students to develop short interactive plays on social topics and perform them for each other. The theatre work at Medium B Correction Centre was supported by the Senior Management at Westville Correctional facility and a theatre project developed that spread from the Medium B Correction Centre, to the Female Correction Centre and the Youth Centre. Colleagues, Beki Nkala and Miranda Young-Jahangeer from the Drama and Performance Studies programme at the university joined the project.

The *Theatre for a Developing Nation* module involved plays made separately by university students and offenders, who shared the stage and discussed their work. Over a period of six years we made plays that explored

⁸ The corrections officer died in a car accident in 2000. His place was eventually taken by another member of staff who became responsible for all the music and theatre work at the Medium B Correction Centre.

themes such as spouse-abuse, alcoholism, HIV/AIDS, racism and xenophobia, gender relations, and class conflict. The plays employed a participative agitprop style that required the learners to create scenes that explored a topic and included discussion with the audience, using simple structured facilitation techniques as part of the play. Mda (1993:118-119) describes the characteristics of participatory agitprop plays as message-orientated and aiming to persuade the people in a particular direction. The involvement is limited to discussion after the play or as a segment within the performance.

A course for postgraduate students titled *Prison Theatre: Performance Interventions with Offenders* was added in 2002. The practical work involved postgraduate students in working closely with offenders for two weeks to develop plays around social issues. This was when Musa Hlatshwayo and Mbongiseni Buthelezi created the two plays about living with HIV/AIDS that later became *Lisekhon' Ithemba* in the correction centre. It was through these projects that the use of collective work-shopped theatre was established. The offenders explored the use of this kind of theatre further when we made *Isikhathi Sewashi* and *Lisekhon' Ithemba*.

1.12 Evaluation of the theatre projects at Westville Correctional Facility

The evaluation reports on the modules *Theatre for a Developing Nation* at Westville Correctional Facility (Hurst 2001, and Hurst *et al* 2002) explored the social impact of the theatre work. The reports identified benefits under the headings 'Personal Development' and 'Increased Social Cohesion'. These were the categories used by Matarassos (1997) in his report on the social impact of participation in the arts. He argued for the value of the creative arts in the context of the rise of neo-liberal economics in Britain during the 1980s and in response to the increased use of outcomes-based terminology to justify spending on the arts.

The first report (Hurst 2001) on *Theatre for a Developing Nation*, a module run in 1999 and 2000, found the theatre work made an impact on learners, students and offenders, in the following areas:

- Social Cohesion
Offenders and students

- Felt less isolated after making friends and working in a team;
 - Found they had increased their problem solving skills;
 - Had increased ability to cross boundaries of race, culture and class;
 - and were aware that stereotypical notions had been challenged.
- Personal development
Offenders and students
 - Felt increased confidence and self-esteem;
 - Explored positive risk taking;
 - Explored opportunities for creativity;
 - Gained knowledge about performance;
 - Gained knowledge related to the play's content;
 - Explored their identity in relation to others.
 (Hurst 2001:1-2)

The 2002 evaluation report (Hurst *et al* 2002) produced similar findings. The offenders who participated in the *Theatre for a Developing Nation* module across three sites, the Medium B Correction Centre, the Female Correction Centre and the Youth Centre perceived the following benefits:

- Increased self-confidence and self-esteem;
 - Ability to negotiate boundaries of race, ethnicity, culture and language;
 - Ability to explore identity;
 - Improved relationships between offenders;
 - Improved relationships between offenders and correctional staff (in the Medium B Correction Centre);
 - An increased use of problem-solving skills.
- (Hurst, *et al* 2002:8)

1.13 Correction centres and the apartheid legacy

During the apartheid years prisons were symbols of state authority and largely protected from public scrutiny. Steinberg (2004:3) describes how, during apartheid, the prison numbers gangs⁹ believed black offenders were being subjected to a holocaust in South African prisons and used the courts as their

⁹ South African offenders resist the correctional system through the numbers gangs (Africa Watch 1994:43). These gangs extend throughout the country and have an elaborate structure, ranking and disciplinary code that originally mirrored the militaristic structures of the South African apartheid system. They trace their origins by an elaborate oral history to the late 19th century when gangs were formed in the all-male compounds occupied by migrant labourers working in the mines on the Witwatersrand. Steinberg (2004:8) also describes how the prison numbers gangs make use of an oral tradition that mirrors the symbols of oppression in the form of colonial uniforms, weapons and military structures while expressing a fiercely anti-colonial ideology.

only public platform: these were their press galleries and witnesses were their spokespeople.

During the apartheid years the prison also acquired different meaning as a site of struggle. A number of important protest plays were set in prisons, *The Island* (Fugard 1974); *Asinamali* (Ngema 1995: 3-52) and *Survival* (Workshop '71 1992). In post-apartheid South Africa, Robben Island Prison, now a world heritage site, is an important stop on many tourists' itineraries and has been transformed from an apartheid symbol of state-power, terror and banishment, into a symbol, linked to Mandela, of moral struggle, and the triumph of good over evil.

The report on the prisons by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (Truth and Reconciliation Commission: 1998) states that during apartheid prisons were organized on a paramilitary basis, which:

[Contributed] to the impression that [they were] an extension of the security forces. This detracted from [the] fundamental duty to reform and rehabilitate, as opposed to merely punishing offenders. (TRC 1998:73.)

Prisons provided inferior food, clothing, living conditions, and medical care to black prisoners (TRC 1998:70), collaborated in the use of torture and the death penalty to eradicate opposition (1998:72), as well as establishing the prison farm system to provide cheap labour for white farmers (1998:69).

The Africa Watch report (1994: xvi) *Prison Conditions in South Africa* makes recommendations about the racial integration of prisons and the improvement of conditions in prisons that historically housed only black offenders.

1.14 Post-apartheid transformation and the Department of Correctional Services

In 1996 the Department of Correctional Services introduced cultural recreational activities into its centres. This initiative was part of a larger shift towards rehabilitation in the department's policies. The Department of Correctional Services in the *Annual Report 2002 to 2003* (2003:18-19) discusses the "Gearing for Rehabilitation" process that was taking place. It

describes new initiatives aimed at entrenching rehabilitation and security as core elements in the department's activities.

The report also acknowledges difficulties. Ridding the Department of corruption was a major issue, as was overcrowding. There was 63.2% overcrowding in South African prisons in 2003. During 2003, the Jali Commission's investigation of corruption in the prisons was continually in the news. Investigations resulted in the Department's Anti-corruption Unit receiving 270 cases, resulting in 55 dismissals, 23 criminal convictions and 175 disciplinary cases (2003:5-6).

The department has moved away from the paramilitary role established during apartheid and attempted to create a more humane environment. Nevertheless the function of the centres remains to correct as well as rehabilitate. Foucault's (1994:70-87) paradigms of panopticism, involving containment, punishment, observation, control, surveillance and categorization, to eradicate the potential for delinquent behaviour help to explain this. The description of purpose in the Department's annual report makes this clear:

The purpose of the Correctional system is to correct offending behaviour by placing the "person under correction" at the centre of key service delivery to ensure that offenders take effective control of their lives and return to their communities as productive and law-abiding citizens. Once the cycle of crime is broken, lives can be transformed and integration into the community can be achieved without any risk to society.

To achieve this objective the Department altered its strategic direction by moving from a punitive to a rehabilitative programme approach which promotes development and incarceration of offenders in conditions consistent with the maintenance of human dignity. (DCS 2003:18)

1.15 Post-apartheid transformation and the University of KwaZulu-Natal¹⁰

By 1997, the Drama and Performance Studies Programme at the University of Natal was threatened with closure in the rationalisation processes taking place in tertiary education institutions. The Universities of Natal and Westville were about to merge to form the University of KwaZulu-Natal. Educational

¹⁰ In 1999 the University was named Natal University, in 2005 the Universities of Westville and Natal merged to become the University of KwaZulu-Natal

policy at that time seemed to emphasise Science and Engineering in preference to Humanities and Arts subjects.

I had introduced the module *Theatre for a Developing Nation* in 1998 at the Howard College Campus as a response to this threat. The course succeeded in attracting increased numbers of students by teaching concepts and skills involved in using theatre as a tool for informal learning, mobilization and raising consciousness. Students, many of whom did not intend to major in Performance Studies, considered these skills and knowledge useful, and the course attracted students studying Law, Social Work, and Community Development as well as Human Sciences and Music students. The *Theatre for a Developing Nation* module became the linking project between the Westville Correctional Facility and the university. The course for postgraduate students entitled *Prison Theatre: Performance Interventions with Offenders* was added in 2002. These courses provided offenders with the basic theatre skills from which *Isikhathi Sewashi* and *Lisekhon' Ithemba* emerged. This work gained value and support when the University of KwaZulu-Natal started to promote African scholarship and community outreach as an important element in academic work.

1.16 My theatre background

I led the university's involvement in the theatre project at Westville Correctional Facility and took particular responsibility for the work at the Medium B Correction Centre. Beki Nkala ran the projects at the Youth Centre and Miranda Young-Jahangeer at the Female Correction Centre. I drew on my experience in the theatre in the United Kingdom, Zimbabwe and South Africa. It was through my teaching them that the offenders accessed the ideas and theatre techniques of Bertolt Brecht, Augusto Boal and Theatre for Development. It is therefore important that I provide some explanation of my theatre background.

For many years my interest in theatre revolved around questions about what can theatre do? What can it achieve? What use is it? How in the practice of acting does one engage notions of theatrical truth or theatrical authenticity? The project at Westville Correctional Facility and this research continue this line of questioning. I can trace the development of these

questions to my dissatisfaction with the colonial British theatre and American television I was exposed to while growing up in Rhodesia during the 1960s and early 1970s.

The theatre of my childhood, although it had captivated me, had seemed to me to be rather useless. I suspect that I sensed its lack of theatrical authenticity. It did not reflect my lived experience or context. The powerful South African protest theatre was just emerging. In 1975, I went to London to study acting at the Central School of Speech and Drama. I graduated in 1978 and worked as an actor in mainstream British theatre doing regional repertory theatre, working in the West End, with the Royal Shakespeare Company and touring to Broadway. It was while working in Britain that I came to appreciate the preoccupation that British theatre has with issues of class struggle. The Shaw and Priestley of my childhood seemed sanitized, at least in performance in colonial Rhodesia, as regards social content.. The theatre I found myself involved in seemed to continually reflect society back to itself. There seemed to me something inherently political about the way plays and acting engaged social contexts. The skill of the actor was to give flesh to the text through body language, and observed behaviour, which provided a rich contextual and social resonance for the audience to respond to. Formal acting training and exposure to the ideas of Stanislavsky, Brecht, Grotowski and Brook supported this experiential understanding of theatre.

For a brief period immediately after leaving Central I worked for Inter-Action, a community theatre project in Kentish Town. They used games to incorporate the audience actively into the narrative action of work-shopped plays. This was before Boal's Theatre of the Oppressed became well known.

I returned to Zimbabwe in 1986 to judge a National Theatre Festival. Six years after independence, the festival was crammed with colonial plays. My adjudications sparked public debate about the nature of theatre in the new Zimbabwe. I stayed on to work with Cont Mhlanga at Amakhosi Productions based in Makokoba, the oldest township in Bulawayo. I worked with Amakhosi for about three years, teaching theatre skills, putting together educational theatre projects and performing in Mhlanga's play *Workshop Negative* (1992). Mhlanga's play criticized the daytime socialism and nighttime capitalism of the ruling elite; the controversy that the play sparked

made Mhlanga and Amakhosi famous. The whole experience with Amakhosi brought me closer to understanding what kind of debates theatre could generate. I had found, back in Zimbabwe, with Amakhosi, a theatre that had not been available in my youth, that made authentic connections with its own time and place.

During this period I was exposed to the practice and ideological debates around Theatre for Development, popular theatre, and community-based theatre. In Zimbabwe during the 1980s, Theatre for Development had evolved into a successful grassroots theatre practice called community-based theatre (Rohmer 1999:55). This movement drew its inspiration from the work at the Kamĩrĩthũ Cultural Centre in Kenya. After the centre was destroyed by the Kenyan government, three of the cultural workers, Ngugi wa Mirii, Micere Mugo and Kimani Gecau fled to Zimbabwe where efforts were made to create theatre according to guidelines from the Kenyan example (Rohmer 1999:41).

My education in politics and culture continued when I worked with mainly ZIPRA ex-combatants at the Simukai Collective Farming Co-operative where I led a collective play-making project about the history of the cooperative. I was growing into an understanding of the power of performance as a cultural process and not just as a commercial venture and product.

My work with Amakhosi came to an end in 1989. I joined OTD, Organization Training and Development (Pvt.) Ltd, an Anglo-American Corporation owned company providing human resources development and training to corporates, statal, parastatal, and non-government organizations in the region. I continued to be involved in community theatre training in Harare and later in Mutare where a group of artists and I ran part-time community theatre classes that met every weekend.

My corporate work involved training line managers and workers to use role-play techniques to model behaviour for managing performance related work. Later, at Border Timbers, where I worked as Training Manager, popular performance was incorporated into training sessions and into celebrations of productivity. Workers created songs and poems to articulate the corporate vision. Team songs were sung at the beginning of training sessions and at team meetings. Celebrations would bring together the entire work force and their families on rural agro-industrial estates to celebrate the successful

implementation of training as well as marking change in organizational culture. Here the culture of the *pungwees*¹¹ used during the liberation war became incorporated into capitalist production.

In 1997, I joined the Drama and Performance Studies Programme at the University of Natal, in Durban and became involved in a project celebrating peace and development organised by the Bhambayi Reconstruction and Development Committee (BRDC). Bhambayi had been a centre for political violence during the late 1990s. Inspired by Boal's notions of Image Theatre we used video to capture images of the past violence and present development, along with the testimonies from residents living in ANC and IFP areas¹². The video was the centerpiece for two events celebrating peace and development. The screening was supported by local song and dance groups. The project resulted in residents' feeling more confident about socializing across informal boundaries and starting to imagine Bhambayi as a formal settlement.

By 1999 I was working on the theatre project at Westville Correctional Facility. Many of the creative choices I made, while working with the offenders, were informed by this body of work. This explains why I introduced the offenders to collective play-making techniques and play-making processes that could address social issues.

1.17 Westville Correctional Facility and the Medium B Correction Centre

The Westville Correctional Facility is situated in Durban and consists of five correction centres holding approximately 12 000 prisoners. The five centres are Medium A, holding men awaiting trial; Medium B, a men's maximum-security centre; Medium C, holding men serving short term sentences, the Female Centre; and the Youth Centre, holding young men between 16 and 18 years of age.

My research focuses on work conducted at the Medium B Correction Centre, about which I will give more detailed information. During 2003,

¹¹ Mass all night gatherings often held in the rural areas by guerrillas to recruit, educate and establish control during the liberation war.

¹² Bhambhayi was divided into areas controlled by shack lords with links to the two major political organization, the ANC or IFP. During the political violence of the 1990s these areas would attack each other.

staffing demographics at the Medium B Centre were 63% black; 23% Asian; 12% white; and 2% Coloured. 92% were men and 8% women (Westville Correctional Facility 2003a). Although the racial demographics of the staff had changed since 1994, many of the staff had worked in the correctional system for a long time. The shadow of past apartheid prison practice was present. Some staff members embraced the new vision involving rehabilitation while others remained committed to a punitive system. Tensions were also present due to issues such as race, ethnicity, and party politics.

In 2003, when the plays were performed, the Medium B Correction Centre held 4058 offenders (Westville Correctional Facility 2003b). 91% were black; 5% Asian; 3% Coloured; and 1% white (Westville Prison 2003b). The performers in the theatre group were all black, isiZulu-speaking men. The theatre project was perceived as a 'black' activity. This was partly because it had been claimed as an activity by black isiZulu-speaking men and partly because performance, singing dancing and acting in Zulu culture are masculine activities and do not carry the same gendered stigma that they do in white and Indian communities in South Africa.

Most of the performers were sentenced after 1994. Many were under 35 years of age, and came from urban and rural backgrounds. They had grown up during the anti-apartheid struggles of the 1980s and experienced the political violence that consumed KwaZulu Natal in the 1990s. They often described the reasons for their involvement in crime as political and used this term to cover socio-economic motives for crime as well as involvement in crimes related to party-political violence.

The daily routine for an offender at the Medium B Correction Centre in 2003 was as follows: between 07h30 and 08h00 the cells were opened and offenders counted; between 08h00 and 10h00 they went to either an early or late breakfast session. They then had half-an-hour of exercise in the courtyards outside the cells. The early breakfast groups were locked up at 10h30 and the later breakfast groups at 11h00. At the discretion of the staff, they could stay out in the courtyard until lunch. At 12h00 they were taken to one of the two lunch sessions. They were counted and locked up between 14h30 and 15h00 and stayed locked in the cells until the next morning. They therefore spent at least sixteen and a half hours in overcrowded dormitory cells with bunk beds

arranged in three tiers down the middle and at each side of the cell. The only personal space an offender has is his bed. Time becomes distorted in the prison and interactions with staff and offenders are characterized by a lack of urgency, boredom and strict adherence to routine.

1.18 The numbers gangs

Two gangs dominate Westville Medium B Correction Centre, the 28s and 26s. Gear (2002:4), in her study of sexual violence and coercion in men's prisons shows that they are an entrenched part of offender culture. She explains that the 26s, who control money, and the 28, who control sexual activity, are the major gangs in South African correctional facilities. She (2002:3) explains how sex in the correction centres happens along 'gender' lines. Depending on a person's role in the sex act, he is defined as a 'man' or a 'woman'. Some offenders are forced into the roles of 'prison wives' and the criteria for promotion to manhood often involve acts of violence against other offenders or correctional staff. The gangs impose their own discipline beneath that of the correctional authorities. Steinberg, describes the gangs as "a century old, avowedly political and yet horribly pathological" (2004:11). The Africa Watch report (1994:44) notes that during visits to correction centres, numerous offenders expressed a desire to be free of the gang system and removed from the pressures inherent in sharing cramped quarters with groups founded on violent activity.

I have already mentioned (p14) Steinberg's (2004:3) comments about how the numbers gangs used violence and the courts to speak out publically about apartheid prison conditions. They also control communication within the cells and do not allow members of one gang to communicate with members of another gang. Gang members resist the authority of the correction centre and encourage their members not to participate in education or activities organized by the correctional staff.

1.19 The 'Forum': the non-gang gang

The majority of the performers in the plays at the Medium B Correctional Centre were not gang members or wished to reduce their involvement in the gangs. Many of the performers had been sentenced after 1994 and their

behaviour reflected a post-apartheid consciousness among offenders that resisted the gangs. Steinberg (2004:9) comments that in the Cape there was a breakdown of the old gang traditions and a transformation occurring in the numbers gangs' culture. The numbers gangs had for generations been secret organisations, confined to prison but since the late apartheid years the street gangs in the Western Cape had become massive criminal empires, renaming themselves the 28s or 26s and using bastardized numbers rituals and structures.

Several performers released from Westville Correctional Facility commented disdainfully to me that township youth in Durban and Pietermaritzburg emulated the numbers gangs' behaviour but without full knowledge of the traditions and implications. They were always critical of the oppressive and violent gang culture and reported that even in the Medium B Correctional Centre gang culture was not as powerful as it used to be.

During the period when the plays were made, non-gang members at Westville Medium B Corrections Centre were beginning to organise themselves in order to resist the authority of the numbers gangs and to protect themselves. This 'non-gang gang' was named the 'Forum' by the gang members, a name the members of the non-gang group rejected. What they rejected was the numbers gangs' right to name them. The term is derived from the community policing forums in the townships during the 1990s and denoted the anti-crime and anti-gang position of the members of the 'Forum'. The performers told me about an incident in 2002, when members of the 'Forum' allegedly killed a member of the numbers gang, thereby securing a position of power and authority for non-gang members amongst the offender population. By 2008 in the Medium B Correctional Centre there were increasing incidents of violence occurring between the numbers gangs and the 'Forum'. I noticed that both offenders and correctional staff were regularly using the term 'Forum', which suggested to me that the 'Forum' had become another gang in the mix of life in the correction centre.

The exact role the theatre played in the emergence of the 'Forum' is hard to determine. It was however within this context that theatre involving public discussions about issues that were important to the offenders was being

conducted and it is likely that the members of the 'Forum' were in control of this new tool for communication in the correction centre.

1.20 General Limitations

This research is case-specific and the findings have limited application in other contexts. The performers who made the plays and the majority of audience members belonged to a specific cultural group and as a generation are defined by a particular moment in South African history. Research with older or younger offenders or with a more culturally diverse group on a similar project may produce different findings, since their work would express a consciousness shaped under different circumstances. How might a group with a different set of cultural resources build and engage a play? A group of offenders, for example, from outside Africa with inherently different aesthetic expectations about performance, engaging a similar theatre process might provide different information. Would other correction centres in South Africa or the region have similar cultural resources? These questions suggest a direction for research that would further define or develop the analysis presented in this dissertation.

The self-censoring, suspicion and hidden agendas that are part of the correction environment exert an influence on any research project there. The quality of information depends on the levels of trust between the offenders, correctional staff and researcher. To gain access to information about the offenders' lives, actions and conversations in their cells, the world they seek to control and to consider, outside the jurisdiction of correctional authority, meant I had to rely on data generated by the research team of offenders with limited research experience. The fact that such an arrangement could be negotiated with the consent of the general offender population demonstrates the level of trust achieved between us: they valued the theatre project.

The data generated consists of interviews that contain anecdotal information about conversations and actions occurring in the cells. These are layered by the perceptions and beliefs of the offender recounting them. The collection of this information was managed and mediated by offenders. My limited skill in isiZulu meant that I was at times working with information that

was mediated through translation. Interviews with performers were conducted in English and were sometimes limited by the offenders' poor English.

1.21 Structure of the dissertation

Chapter 1: Introduction establishes the area and questions addressed by this research. It also contextualizes the theatre work by providing information about the Westville Correctional Facility and background information about the Prison Theatre projects.

Chapter 2: Literature Review and Theoretical Framework, presents an overview of published work about Prison Theatre. It identifies as an overarching theme a concern with the tensions that arise between the creative processes involving theatre and the imperatives of the correctional system. I provide an overview of African and South Africa Prison Theatre work, which is not well documented. I then proceed to discuss the elements of theatre that the two plays drew on and conclude with a discussion about catharsis in relation to isiZulu storytelling and the work of Brecht and Boal.

Chapter 3: Research Methodology: Using Grounded Theory, provides a rationale for my use of classical grounded theory and an explanation of the procedures that I used. I emphasise that the object of Grounded Theory is to generate a hypothesis for opening up new areas for research. This differs from other research objectives in which applying established criteria or and validation are the objectives. I also discuss the ways in which I involved the offenders as co-researchers.

Chapter 4: Description of *Isikhathi Sewashi* provides an account of the play, the workshopping and rehearsal processes, and discusses the aesthetics that were used. Chapter 5: Description of *Lisekhon' Ithemba* provides an account of this play, which involved a shorter process. The aesthetics were simpler; it made great use of Image Theatre as a means for audience discussion. The inclusion of these two chapters substantially adds to the length of this dissertation. The need to describe the projects is necessary in order to fully contextualize the data and analysis that this research addresses.

Chapter 6 presents information generated from interviews with members of the audience, who discuss their expectations of theatre and what was memorable about the plays and discussions in the cells after

performances. This information reveals the processes they use to engage the performance and provides categories for presenting this information. Chapter 7 presents information generated from the interviews with the performers. Their responses demonstrated an interest in the ways in which the plays were useful. They also spoke about plays they have made subsequently to *Isikhathi Sewashi* and *Lisekhon' Ithemba*. Chapter 8 presents examples of the perceptions of the changes that the audience and performers feel can be attributed to the performance of the plays. The core category to emerge from this information is the renegotiation of social relationships. The offenders were able, as result of thinking or feeling differently or because of skills learnt working on the theatre project, to manage a number of relationships inside the correction centre and outside with members of the public, in new ways.

Chapter 9 offers a substantive theory about how the offenders, both performers and audience, engage the theatre work. The theory explains the processes that take place and the conditions that are necessary for these processes to occur. Critical thinking about issues raised by the plays occurs concurrently with the building of consensus related to values and meanings. Through the play, performers control the parameters of discussion. In Chapter 10: The Conclusion, I discuss the implications of this research for continued theatre work in the correctional system. I also make recommendations about further research.

Chapter Two

Literature Review and Theoretical Frame

2.1 Literature review

Thompson (1998:15) establishes Prison Theatre as a category of theatre work in order bring into view, for study, the range of theatre work taking place in correctional facilities. He suggests Prison Theatre as the most appropriate term to cover this range of work (15) (See p 9) and acknowledges (11) that as a practice, Prison Theatre tends to be marginalized by institutions, agencies of criminal justice, and theatre practitioners and that there has been little analysis of its role within the correctional system. Thompson (1998:11) provides a contemporary view of work in this field at the end of the Twentieth Century and calls for a greater understanding of the potential for theatre to effect change within the correctional system.

Natalia Kuziakina in *Theatre in the Solovki Prison Camp* (1995) gives an account of Prison Theatre in an earlier part of the century in the Soviet Union in 1922 to 1937. Although her research focuses on Prison Theatre in a particular context, her comments about the tensions between the creative impulses of theatre and the correctional environment speak to similar concerns raised by Thompson (1998) and Michael Balfour (2004). Kuziakina (1995: 62) describes how theatre achieved a privileged space within life in the camps; how it kept alive a memory of a prerevolutionary epoch. Some plays included scenes of camp life that were mildly critical of the authorities. Kuziakina reproduces an account of going to the theatre by Gennady Andreyev who served a term at Solovki Prison Camp from 1927 to 1929: he explains the kind of privileged space the theatre provided for the detainees.

Even the very fact that downstairs at the box office you are on your own, buying a ticket, holds a grain of freedom. Upstairs, at the entrance to the foyer, your ticket is torn, just as in all theatres around the world. In the foyer people are strolling, sitting along the walls, and from the auditorium come the sounds of the orchestra; you feel quite differently from the way you feel in the platoon. Walking about and conversing with the men and women: this is the only place on the Solovki where one can casually, freely, without fear, talk to a woman. If one meets a woman on the road or in the kremlin, if one exchanges a few words with her in view of everybody, it could be construed

as an illicit date, for which one, as well as the woman, could be sent to a punishment cell or a penalty prison. But in the theatre one can speak freely to a woman.

The bell goes, the music dies down, the lights go out; the curtain swings open, and another world unfolds before your eyes. At this moment, if you focus attention on the stage, if you warm to the play so as to feel that you're one of the characters, you may completely forget about the Solovki, forget altogether that you're a convict.
(Andreyev in Kuziakina 1995:58¹)

Kuziakina's conclusions about the tension between the creative human impulse of theatre and the correctional system are damning. She follows Andreyev's account of going to the theatre with the observation that, "in its confrontation with the camp system the theatre always stood to lose. It lost its actors and its spectators, as they succumbed to typhoid fever, heart attacks or tuberculosis or were quietly shot after supper" (58), and continues that in the face of this, the theatre could only undertake a limited fight for humanity. Although she (145) observes that in the fifteen years of their existence, the theatres on the Solovki and the White Sea-Baltic Canal represented nearly all the forms known to the Russian stage, including 'high art', popular theatre, and propaganda theatre, and these forms were tried out separately and in daring blends, she concludes by saying that those artists who worked in the theatre could reveal nothing new because, "the creator of art – man – was debased too much to perpetuate on the stage that interplay and sparkle without which art has no life (145)." Although they made no important creative innovations in terms of theatre, she acknowledges their struggle for humanity within a violent system: she says, "at best, actors of every rank countered violence by their humaneness, their emotive power and the brilliance of their performances (145)."

Thompson asks a range of important questions about this relationship between theatre and the correctional environment:

Does theatre bring health to the prison or does it provide a basic human need? Does it bring morality to a place where there is none? Does it provide the means to transform a person's life or does it transform the whole community? Should we bring the arts in the same way others provide food? Or are they a vehicle for something else? Is theatre a prisoner's window to view and understand society or a means of personal reflection? Is theatre in prisons about bringing 'soul' and humanizing the system, or is it to transform it?

¹ Kuziakina has reproduced this quotation from S. A Khomiakov. 1990 *The Solovetsky Islands*. In *Sever*, Archangelsk, 9, 20-1 (in Russian)

Does the very existence of theatre in prison mean that a society can be judged as civilized? (Thompson 1998:10)

Anne Peaker and Jill Vincent's (1990:185-186) in a comprehensive report on the use of Arts in British correctional facilities also note the tension between the processes involved in the production of art and the correctional context. They do not see the conflict as dramatically as Kuziakina (1995: 145). They (1990:185-186) describe this tension as a lack of practical 'fit' between arts projects and the correctional context. Core activities to do with security, discipline and good order, take precedence over activities like education or arts which are seen as peripheral. Staff may evaluate arts negatively due to the disruption to routine and the potential threat they pose to security.

The cultural lack of 'fit' is subtler. Peaker and Vincent explain how creative activities, which encourage offenders to explore their own and others' behaviour, the workings of the correctional system and the nature of the environment may seem to pose a threat to discipline and good order. Ideas that value the process of arts activities which explore, question, take risks and break new ground are often understood as opposing the views often held by correctional staff that only value the arts as products.

Peaker and Vincent (1990:185-186) explain that generally amongst correction staff arts activities are believed to be useful to keep offenders busy in order to use up energy that might be expended in useless or destructive activities. Some arts projects can provide absorbing activities and produce attractive objects for sale or exchange. The production of objects can provide an opportunity for goods to be sold, for charity, fund-raising or public relations work. In this way arts activities help to maintain discipline and good order in the correction centre. In Westville Correctional Facility, for example, 'products' would include plays, music and dance made for Correctional Services and national cultural competitions, to mark special occasions, or support health awareness campaigns.

Like Thompson (1998:11), Peaker and Vincent (1990:216,224-225) also note that most of the literature on the arts in correctional facilities provides detailed accounts of the projects, which comment on the efficacy of programmes, but note that there is often little systematic evaluation. They (184) believe that correctional imperatives should be used to evaluate arts in

correctional institutions. They identify three reports from the USA that attempted a systematic evaluation by using a correctional framework as criteria for evaluation. These are the Meta Metrics (1978) on Project Culture, which was set up by the American Correctional Association and developed arts activities in 54 adult prisons in 16 states. The second, by the Department of Political Science, San José State University (Brewster 1983), carried out an evaluation of arts in Corrections Program of the California Department of Correction. The arts engaged included drama, music, dance, writing, crafts, and media. The last, an unpublished paper by the California Department of Corrections (CDC) Research Unit (1988) compared parole outcomes for those who had taken part in the Arts-in-Corrections programme between December 1980 and February 1987 and those who had not.

Peaker and Vincent (1990:224-225) summarize the three reports: Meta Metrics (1978) and Brewster (1983) found that as a result of arts programmes tension levels in the institutions were reduced which resulted in a decline in incident rates. In Brewster this was supported by cost-benefit analysis. Other findings included that prisoners discovered and developed their talents; self-esteem was increased; attitudes towards the institution improved; and sometimes prisoners gained skills that could be used for employment upon release. Brewster (1983) also saw links between arts work and prison programmes such as education, recreation and occupational therapy. The unpublished paper by the California Department of Corrections (CDC) Research Unit (1988) showed that six months after parole 88% of participants had not returned to prison compared with 72% of all paroles; two years after release 69% of the arts-in-corrections parolees had not returned compared with 42% levels for all releases.

Lawrence Tocci, in *The Proscenium Cage* (2007: 285), conducting research involving three case studies of, theatre work in correctional facilities in the United States, was unable to establish any appreciable difference in recidivism between offenders who had participated in theatre programmes and those who had not.

The strongest example of theatre work that engages correctional imperatives is that of Geese Theatre whose work directly addresses rehabilitation and offending behaviour. The company performs plays for

offenders as well as creating workshopped plays with them and with the correctional staff. Whilst the work may involve artistic expression, and indirectly address some social issues, the primary focus is the correction of offending behaviour. The work is based on paradigms of Social Learning Theory, Cognitive-behavioural Theory and Role Theory (Baim, Brookes & Mountford 2002: 19-20). It is extensively documented in *The Geese Theatre Handbook: Drama with Offenders and People at Risk* (Baim, Brookes & Mountford 2002), *The Use of Drama in the Rehabilitation of Violent Male Offenders* (Balfour 2003); “The Violent Illusion: Drama therapy and the Dangerous Voyage to the Heart of Change” (Bergman & Hewish 1999: 92-117); and “The House of Four Rooms: Theatre, Violence and the Cycle of Change” (Mountford & Farrall 1998: 109-126). Geese Theatre’s working processes are also demonstrated in the videos *Behind The Mask* (Heaven 1993) and in the *Primetime* episode “Behind The Mask: Geese Theatre” (Haywood-Thomas 1994).

The pressure to justify or at least understand Prison Theatre projects through correctional imperatives is powerful even when the projects themselves seem primarily to engage notions of creativity and self-expression rather than rehabilitation and correction. Tocci (2007: 5) describes work in the United States as fairly evenly divided between two subcategories, productions of established dramatic literature from professional theatre, including plays by Shakespeare, and the performance of original plays made in collaboration with offenders. Some organizations are involved with both forms. The shows are mounted with casts made up entirely or partially with offenders. He observes (5) that in the case of productions of original plays written by offenders, the plays tended to be performed to closed audiences within the offender population. Productions of established dramatic literature were more often performed to the public and received more press coverage. Tocci (5-6) feels this indicates that offenders’ voices are only relevant to the offender community and only when they conform to society’s norms by working on established dramatic literature is there an interest for the general public.

Tocci (6-12) also provides an example of two important companies that conduct Prison Theatre work in the United States: Rehabilitation Through the Arts and Shakespeare Behind Bars. Rehabilitation Through the Arts

produces original and established plays, whilst Shakespeare Behind Bars produces plays from the Shakespeare cannon. Although their work engages issues of creativity and self-expression, the urge to justify the work using correctional imperatives is strong. Rehabilitation Through the Arts attempts to help offenders combat, through the arts and creative expression, the dehumanizing experience of life within the correctional system; the company asserts that to date no participant who has been released has recidivated: Tocci (9) did not have the opportunity to verify this. In the case of Shakespeare Behind Bars, Tocci (11-12) describes how the work incorporates notions of rehabilitation. He describes it as a hybrid between conventional theatrical production and drama therapy. This manner of working on the plays is also demonstrated in the documentary on the project entitled *Shakespeare Behind Bars* (Rogerson 2006). The participants are encouraged to delve into their own psyches and learn about their personal growth while exploring the dramatic circumstances of the characters they play. In this manner the project engages with correctional imperatives and uses this as justification for its work. The documentary film *Banged Up Stand Up* (Smith: 2004) also demonstrates how theatre work in correctional facilities finds its justification by attempting to link creative work with notions of rehabilitation. The film is about offenders in HM Prison Brixton engaging in a stand-up comedy workshop and using the process to reflect on their lives.

Peaker and Vincent's (1990:184) position that correctional imperatives should be used to evaluate theatre work in correctional institutions and to validate it is not unreasonable. To do so consolidates support for arts projects in terms of funding and institutional buy in. This was, for example, the case with earlier reports on the work at Westville Correctional Facility (Hurst 2001; Hurst, Young and Nkala 2002; and Young-Jahangeer 2002) (see pp 12-13). Whilst using correctional imperatives to justify their work, some theatre practitioners may tend to play down or resist acknowledging the ways in which their projects engage and collude with the correctional system.

Thompson's (1998) collection of writing on Prison Theatre, reflects a growing interest by academics and practitioners working in the area to move beyond engaging correctional imperatives, with the focus on the individual offender, and to understand the potential for theatre in correctional facilities to

engage change at a social and institutional level. The correctional system is resilient and therefore similarities about the tensions between Arts and the correctional environment occur in accounts across time and from different contexts, it is not, however, a frozen entity and is subject to social and political pressures as occurred in the post-apartheid transformation in the Department of Correctional Services (see pp14-16) in South Africa. Theatre in correctional facilities is able to engage and reflect these kinds of political and social trends.

A report by the Centre for Advanced Study in Theatre Arts, CASTA, (1983) demonstrates that in the United States during the 1980s work had occurred in correctional facilities that attempted to politicize offenders and address social change. The work engaged a number of different ways of working, which included plays written outside the correctional facility or by the offenders inside, and plays performed by theatre companies, as well as by offenders. A variety of objectives were identified. Some engaged with correctional imperatives and others addressed politicizing prisoners and social change. Here is the list of objectives:

1. To entertain, thus providing a means for recreation.
2. To change the 'system', meaning both the social system and the criminal justice system through politicizing prisoners, those who controlled prison, and the general public.
3. To help inmates to adapt to the existing social system, i.e. to 'habilitate' or 'resocialise' the inmate. This approach includes the attempt to bridge the gap between inmates and the public, with theatre acting as a communication link.
4. To develop personal skills among inmates, including language skills, voice and body interpersonal sensitivity. Some also trained for professional careers in the theatre.
5. To stretch the imagination of the inmate about the possibilities available to him.

(CASTA 1983:12-13)

Tocci (2007: 287-8) argues that the real value of theatre in the case studies he looked at was not their rehabilitative role, but that they functioned as a useful social and cultural element within the rarified society of the correctional institution. Theatre provided offenders with the means to process their experiences and express an understanding of themselves within the correctional environment. He (2007:293) evokes an understanding of theatre as ritual similar to that which Wole Soyinka (1976:51) (see pp 51) describes in

his analyses of drama with in the African worldview. Tocci (2007: 293-294) likens the shamanistic power of performance to the manner in which theatre in correctional institutions creates an aesthetic conduit between the participants and their environment. He (293-294) describes the performer-audience communion, heightened by audience participation, as feature common to all three case studies. “The participants, both active and those in the audience, [became] a symbolic force in the world. The performance [reminded] them that they [had] a place in the universe, that their voices and actions [counted] and [had] an impact on the life cycle; [...] their lives [had] larger meaning than just in the functional process of survival (293).”

Thompson seems to mean something more tangible and interventionist. At the core of *Prison Theatre: Perspectives and Practices* (Thompson 1998) he is challenging those working in the field to explore how theatre can effect change:

At the core however this book deals with how theatre effects change. How by participating and performing a person can reflect upon their lives, their environment, their community and society and in so doing contribute to a process of personal, institutional and social change. (Thompson 1998:11)

He is interested in the potential for theatre in correctional institutions to move beyond offering to offenders an opportunity for artistic expression or for engaging theatre as a means of addressing offending behaviour.

Thompson’s concern with change is informed by the work of academic practitioner/researchers working at Manchester University, including those working at the Theatre in Prisons and Probation Centre (TiPP Centre) attached to the university; those at Queen Mary College, including people working at the People’s Palace Productions at the college and in correctional institutions in Britain and Brazil; others working at Winchester University; and in organizations such as the Unit for Arts and Offenders in the United Kingdom. His concern is to reflect the range of Prison Theatre work and a variety of perspectives, including those of academics, practitioners and offenders. His collection is dominated by a western European and North American perspective but he acknowledges that he does not claim a privileged position

for this experience but rather provokes debate and urges more writing so that future collections may offer a greater range of historical insight to the field (12). He includes information about work in Brazil (Heritage 1998a: 31-42 and 1998b: 231-238).

Balfour, editing a later collection entitled *Theatre in Prisons: Theory and Practice* (2004) continues the project established by Thompson and includes examples of writing from a wider range of countries: Heritage again on work in Brazil (2004:189-202; Emman Idoko (2004:179-187) and Ken Saro-Wiwa (2004:177) on work in and the experience of incarceration in Nigeria; The Centre For Conflict Resolution (2004: 161-175) on the use of theatre games with offenders in South Africa; and Maud Clark (2004:101-106) on work in Australia.

Balfour (2004: 1-18) takes up the issue of institutional change and the correctional environment more strongly than Thompson (1998:9-23). He includes in his introduction a discussion of the history of criminology. Then he places the Stanford Prison Experiment (Zimbardo, Haney, and Banks 2004: 19-33), conducted in 1973, as the opening chapter. The account of the experiment concludes with the observation that the pathology generated by the experiment suggested that neither offenders nor correctional staff are innately cruel or necessarily 'bad' people. Through the correctional system in which they operate they have become locked into a relationship that is destructive to their humanity (32). The inclusion of this chapter gives prominence to the relations of power that characterize the correctional environment. Balfour (2004:17) explains that the common thread that runs through the chapters reflects a growing awareness of the possibilities of theatre in correctional facilities to engender change. Like Kuziakina (1995: 145), he reminds us that no matter the extent to which work might intervene in the system by negotiating spaces that are more egalitarian, democratic or humanitarian, the correctional system "remains a detestable solution to the broader and complex questions about the nature of crime, the politics of power and the type of society in which we choose to exist (17)."

Simon Ruding, (Correspondence 2003 unpublished), Director TiPP Centre, Manchester University, provides me with a model that demonstrates the range of work conducted by theatre companies in correctional facilities in

Britain. He organized them on a continuum that ranged from work that addressed artistic expression, often engaging theatre or dance involving notions of ‘high art’, through to work that addressed offending behaviour. In order to accommodate and to bring firmly into focus discussion about the emerging interest in Prison Theatre as an intervention for change within the correctional system, I shall extend Ruding’s model to include a third point (see Fig 1 p36): work that addresses social issues and institutional change. Theatre work in correctional facilities can seldom be situated exclusively at any single point of intervention; a specific project should be positioned in such a way that it is closest to one or more of the points. This would emphasize its relationship to the three different criteria.

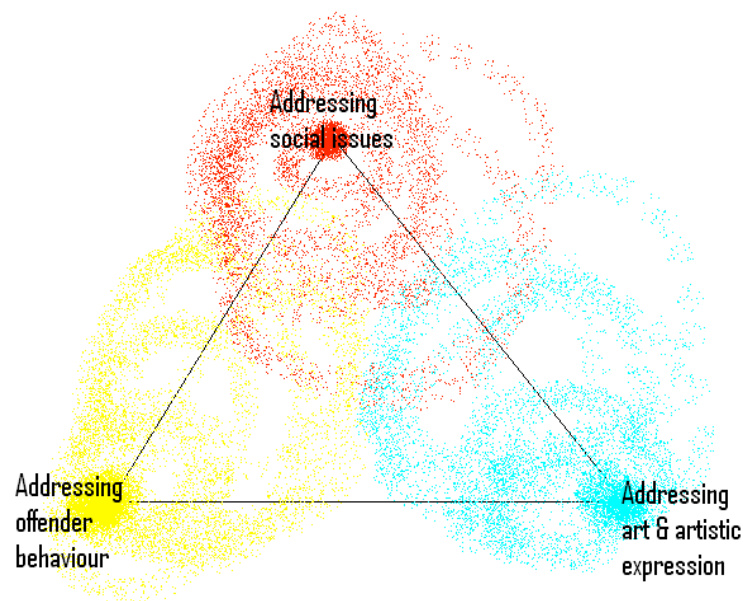


Figure 1 Key Elements for Prison Theatre as Intervention

These three points, however, tend to reflect a wish by practitioners to justify theatre in correctional facilities as being necessarily positive and valuable. Yet the discussions above show that contradictions between theatre and the correctional context are complicated and uncomfortable. One would expect

that the projects themselves should also have multiple uncomfortable and contradictory aspects to them.

Paul Heritage (1998: 31-42) expresses an irreconcilable conflict about conducting theatre with a social and political agenda within a correctional context. His dilemma involves ensuring that the offenders remain subjects rather than objects of the work, along with the difficulty of maintaining a reforming purpose within the correctional system. He says:

To ensure that the inmates remain subject and not object of the theatre process is a powerful and necessary directive if we are to claim any radical purpose to this work. How far this can be is always questionable when the inmates themselves are rarely able to organize or control the structure of their activities, even when they acquire the techniques to develop their own work sessions. Nor are theatre practitioners themselves free agents within the system that permits or prohibits such work around the margins of the greater performance of incarceration. The central characters are fixed, the dominant narratives inscribed and the main stage designed to perform a more powerful and effective ritual with the inmate's body than can ever be staged on the fringes where this work is contained. (1998: 40)

Heritage initiated the Peoples Palace Productions project in Brazil entitled *Staging Human Rights*. The project used theatre to generate human rights declarations from offenders. Augusto Boal's company Centre of the Theater of the Oppressed conducted the theatre work. Boal created theatre forms that draw on Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970). The evaluation report on *Staging Human Rights 1* (People's Palace Productions 2002) provides an account of the project. The project was obviously complex, rich, and engaged a variety of processes around consciousness and self-creation and the report contains some of the human rights declarations generated by the offenders. Certain questions remain under explored. For example, what did it mean to the offenders to speak out like this? How were issues of power understood and managed? The evaluation remains limited because it responds to agendas of correction rather than the political intentions behind the theatre work. It may have been too difficult or sensitive to explore these during the initial phase of the project. The report, therefore, offers a limited exploration of the dynamics around using Freirian processes in a correctional context. Here is the summary:

Prisoners and staff learn to put themselves in the position of "other", to feel the emotions that the others feel in those situations; living through an emotional experience similar to that produced in some psychodrama. It is still too early to evaluate to what extent these effects are long-lasting, and there is no data that correlates re-involvement in crime with contact with theatre in prisons. The data currently available suggests that the methodology works and meets the objectives it is designed to meet. Other more sophisticated evaluations, nevertheless, would need to be carried out in order to assess the effects of the workshop on re-socialisation of the prisoner into the community and the reduction in levels of violence within the prisons. (People's Palace Productions 2002:39)

Heritage (1998:40), in the quotation on page 37, makes an oblique reference to Foucault (1985) when he mentions the relations of power that characterize the correctional context. The quotation above (p38) from the report on *Staging Human Rights I* (People's Palace Productions 2002: 39), with the reference to the emotional experiences produced being similar to some psychodrama could refer to the Stanford Prison Experiment (Zimbardo, Haney, and Banks 2004: 19-33). The tensions common between creative work and the correctional context seem to become heightened and potentially volatile when the objectives of radical theatre and correctional imperatives collide. Heritage's (1998: 231-238) concluding chapter in *Prison Theatre: Perspectives and Practices* provides a dramatic example. During the period of military dictatorship in 1980 the theatre activist Ruth Escobar created a play with offenders that addressed political and social issues. It was presented at *Salão Norbe*, a São Paulo correctional institution. A few days later a major and violent riot broke out in the correction centre and many offenders were killed. Clearly the issues that gave rise to this riot were many and complex, but the play was singled out for blame. The memory of this incident remained raw and sensitive when 15 years later Heritage began a second project at the same correction center.

Heritage's comments (1998: 40) and the anecdote about Escobar's work (1998: 231-238) suggest that rather than speculate on the potential for theatre to transform the correctional institution we should be asking how theatre and performance engage and resist the "exhaustive omni-disciplinary apparatus" (Foucault 1977: 235-236) of the correctional institution and how does it become an expression of the pathological and symbiotic relationship between staff and offenders created by the system (Zimbardo, Haney and Banks and

2004:32). Then we might understand more fully the multiple and contradictory facets of this kind of theatre work.

2.2 Prison Theatre in Africa

Literature searches have produced few documented examples of Prison Theatre in Africa. This does not mean that projects do not exist, but simply that they are not evaluated or documented. I have already made mention of Idoko's (2004:179-187) use of Theatre for Development in a Nigerian correctional facility and the Centre for Conflict Resolution's chapter (2004: 161-175) about the use of theatre games at Pollsmoor Correctional facility (see p 35). Three reports have been produced for the Department of Correctional Services' evaluation of the theatre project which involved the University of KwaZulu-Natal and Westville Correctional Facility (Hurst 2001; Hurst, Young and Nkala 2002; and Young-Jahangeer 2002). A more recent report (Hurst 2008) documented recommendations developed at a symposium involving theatre practitioners, correction staff and offenders held at Westville Correctional facility. Young-Jahangeer has also published work discussing how female offenders at Westville Correctional Facility used theatre to engage issues of gender and identity (Young-Jahangeer 2004a; Young-Jahangeer 2004b; Young-Jahangeer 2005).

The work at Westville Correctional Facility is not the only Prison Theatre work happening in South Africa. A video documentary titled *Be-for(e) pilot project* (1998) documents the *B4 Pilot Project* involving art, dance and theatre workshops conducted with youth at Pollsmoor Prison. The documentary suggests that the primary value of the project was to keep the offenders occupied with constructive and positive activities. This benefit conforms to expectations which Peaker and Vincent (1990:185-186) established as important for correctional authorities. I have been told informally that *AREPP: Theatre for Life* conducted AIDS awareness plays using puppets in South African correctional facilities in the mid 1990s; in 2003 plays made by offenders were performed at a theatre festival organized by *Sibikwa Players* in Benoni; and *Victory Songqoba Theatre Company* has run a number of theatre project in Gauteng prisons. More recently Cont Mhlanga (2008) gave me a

written account of his work with offenders at Khami Correctional Facility in Zimbabwe.

2.3 The Correctional Context

The correctional environment is constituted by conditional and systemic factors that shape the social relations and behaviours that occur within this environment. Theatre work intrudes and interacts in different ways with this context. Philip Zimbardo (Zimbardo 2007 and Zimbardo et al 2004:19-33) provides a useful discussion of how conditional and systemic factors in correctional institutions affect behaviour, causing pathological behaviour amongst correctional staff and offenders which he describes as a symbiotic relationship destructive to their humanity.

Zimbardo describes how his interest in conditional and systemic factors developed:

[His] appreciation of the power residing in systems started with an awareness of how institutions create mechanisms that translate ideology – say, the cause of the evil – into operating procedures, such as the Inquisition’s witch hunts. In other words, [his] focus has widened considerably through a fuller appreciation of the ways in which situational conditions are created and shaped by higher-order factors – *systems* of power. Systems, not just dispositions and situations, must be taken into account in order to understand complex behaviour patterns. (9-10)

In *The Lucifer Effect: How Good People Turn Evil* (2007), Zimbardo provides a more detailed account of the Stanford Prison Experiment (Zimbardo et al 2004:19-33). The intention of the research was to understand some of the dynamics operating in the psychology of imprisonment and asked if the “violence that is endemic to most real prisons [would] be absent in a prison filled with good middle-class boys (2007:20).

The abuse perpetrated during the experiment by college students selected randomly to role-play correction staff and offenders mirrored the kinds of abuse perpetrated years later in 2003 by American military police on detainees at Abu Ghraib Prison in Iraq (19-20). The events at the Abu Ghraib Prison provided Zimbardo with a compelling reason to revisit his earlier study and examine the consequences his findings had for a wide range of atrocities that ‘ordinary people’ commit (2007: ix-x). His concern is with the banality of

evil; how ordinary people can perpetrate the most despicable acts of cruelty (xiii). For such behaviour to occur, he argues the following situational dynamics need to be present: power; conformity; obedience; de-individuation; dehumanization; and the evil of inaction (258-323). In order to understand these destructive dynamics of human behaviour he says we need to recognize “the extent and limits of personal power, situational power, and systemic power (x). He stresses the importance of systemic power, describing the system as producing powerful forces that create certain destructive situational factors (x). Social psychology supports the concept that “situational power triumphs over individual power in given contexts (x).”

This contrasts with the emphasis clinical psychology places on the individual and dispositional factors. The paradigms of clinical psychology enabled the military and government officials to explain the abuse at Abu Ghraib Prison as illegal, immoral, and perpetrated by “a few bad apples” (10). Zimbardo’s intention is not to excuse this abusive behaviour. He argues that if the perpetrators of the abuse at Abu Ghraib Prison are ‘a few bad apples’ then he wishes to hold accountable the ‘apple barrel’, with its potentially corrupting situational impact, and the ‘barrel makers’, the ‘power elite’ who have the power to design the barrel who work behind the scenes to arrange many of the conditions of life and institutional settings in which we live (10).

I have already discussed how the behaviour and rituals of numbers gangs reflect the paramilitary structures of the apartheid prison, especially behaviour that is pathologically violent (p22). Samuel Yochelson and Stanton E Samenow (1993), in their study of *The Criminal Personality: A Profile for Change*, observe that while working with offenders, they ‘had to deal with their boredom, anger and desire for power’ (1993:36).

The Brazilian theatre practitioner Boal remembers his own imprisonment in 1971 and lack of power:

[I] found out that no longer was I in control of myself. I could not decide anything; I had not the Free Will granted me by God. I could not programme the next minute. My tomorrow would be just like today, which had not been different from yesterday. Nothing changed, nothing ... unless somebody – other than me – decided to change. Power to the gaoler! I had no control over myself. (2001:20.)

He continues with, “[w]e, who are free in space, are prisoners of time. Those who are prisoners of space, of time become free (21).”

Michel Foucault (1994 and 1995) provides an analysis of the systematic workings of the correctional apparatus. He (1994:70-87) describes how penal, pedagogical, medical and industrial institutions form part of the panopticism that characterize the modern world. He describes the panoptic power relations generated in these institutions and applied to the individual as involving a form of continuous supervision, characterized by control, punishment, compensation, in the form of correction, that molds and transforms the individual in terms of certain norms (70). The objective is to bind the individual to production, training, or correction in terms of particular norms defined by those who own and control the means of production (78). The application of this type of power emerges as part of the nineteenth century capitalist transformation of the world. The power exercised in these institutions involved control over time and the individual’s body in order to transform time into a commodity and to convert bodies into labour power (80 – 82). Foucault describes the type of power exercised in these institutions as polymorphous and polyvalent, involving, economic power either as fees or wages, political power in terms of authority, judicial power when it functions as reward or punishment, and epistemological power when it extracts knowledge from and about individuals in order to create new norms and new forms of control (82 – 84).

Foucault’s (1995: 266 – 270) conclusions are similar to Zimbardo’s (2007). He acknowledges that “the prison cannot fail to produce delinquents (1995: 266),” and that “[i]t does so by the very type of existence that it imposes on its inmates (1995: 266).” He (271 – 273) discusses the resilience of the modern carceral system despite its proclaimed failure over the past 150 years and speculates that if the prison-institution has survived for so long, with such immobility, without being effectively questioned, it is because the carceral system is deeply rooted in and carries out precise functions:

The carceral system combines in a single figure discourses and architectures, coercive regulations and scientific propositions, real social effects and invincible utopias, programmes for correcting delinquents and mechanisms that reinforce delinquency. (271)

He recommends that we reverse the problem and ask what is “served by the failure of the prison (272).” He provides this answer:

[O]ne would be forced to suppose that the prison, and no doubt punishment in general, is not intended to eliminate offences, but rather to distinguish them, to distribute them, to use them; that it is not so much that they render docile those who are liable to transgress the law, but that they tend to assimilate the transgression of the laws in a general tactics of subjection. Penalty would then appear to be a way of handling illegalities, of laying down the limits of tolerance, of giving free rein to some, of putting pressure on others, of excluding a particular section, of making another useful, of neutralizing certain individuals and of profiting from others. In short, penalty does not simply ‘check’ illegalities; it ‘differentiates’ them; it provides them with a general ‘economy’. And, if one can speak of justice, it is not only because the law itself or the way of applying it serves the interests of class, it is also because the differential administration of illegalities through the mediation of penalties forms part of those mechanisms of domination. (272)

It is on the issue of class and system that Foucault and Zimbardo meet, with Foucault (1995: 272) acknowledging that the carceral system serves the class interests of the producers by differentiating and providing a general economy to illegalities and with Zimbardo (2007: 10) wanting to hold a ‘power elite’ accountable for the corrupting situational impact of the carceral system on the humanity of offenders and correctional staff.

The system generates the situational factors that produce a ‘Prison culture’, a culture that can produce on the one hand the kind of abuses that occurred in Abu Ghraib and on the other the ‘cold war’ between correctional staff and offenders that I sometimes observed at the Westville Correctional Centre. The offenders sometimes comply or invent, in response to the system, counter strategies and expressions of opposition; one of which is the numbers gang system, which simultaneously recreates the oppressive power relations of the carceral system while at the same time standing in opposition to it. These dynamics make the prison a particularly dense transfer point for relations of power. Foucault describes this type of expression of opposition as power’s condition of possibility, which he explains as “[t]he moving substrata of force relations which, by virtue of their inequality, constantly engender states of power, but the latter always are local and unstable (1990: 93).” These

complicated relationships of power are played out in day-to-day life in the correction centre.

2.4 Theatre For Development

Theatre for Development combines theatre techniques and popular education as a performance practice amongst peasant and working class communities; the most famous example being the Kamĩĩĩĩĩĩ Cultural Centre project in Kenya (Wa Thiong'o 1981 and 1997:131-137). Theatre for Development is well documented in Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, Zambia, Malawi, Lesotho, Botswana and Zimbabwe by Kerr (1995); Kidd (1984); Mda (1993); Kamlongera (1988) and McLaren (1994).

Processes that originate in the Theatre for Development movement in southern Africa inform the processes used to make the plays and engage the audience at the Medium B Correctional Centre. The foundation for the use of these processes was laid during courses involving university students and offender, *Theatre for a Developing Nation* and *Prison Theatre: Performance Interventions with Offenders* (see pp11 - 13).

It was the consciousness-raising objectives inherent in Theatre for Development that gave *Isikhathi Sewashi* and *Lisekhon' Ithemba* a strong Freirian paradigm. These plays also made use of theatre techniques that had their origins in Brecht's Epic Theatre (Willett 1978) and Boal's Theatre of the Oppressed (1979). Boal acknowledges that his theatre is an extension of Epic Theatre (1979:xix –xxi). David Kerr (1995:161) provides an example of the combination between Theatre for Development and Theatre of the Oppressed when he describes how the ABU Collective in Northern Nigeria engaged a sustained critical appraisal of the techniques of Theatre for Development and drew upon concepts developed by Boal in order to make radical adjustments to their work in order to move it closer to the needs of the people. Theatre for Development in a general sense continues the project of education and reflection on historic and social forces established by Brecht's Epic Theatre and draws on Freire's notions of popular education, which are sometimes combined with Boal's Theatre of the Oppressed, which is also rooted in Freirian principals.

Freire's work (1996) provided the theoretical underpinning for the theatre work at the Medium B Correction Centre. The plays in performance posed problems to the audience who generated responses using group discussions or through the use of Image Theatre. Freire (1996:52-67) presents problem-posing education as a revolutionary alternative to the dominant and oppressive practice of 'banking' education. He problematizes the power relations involved in the conventional teacher-student relationship and proposes instead the use of dialogical processes. The learners no longer remain docile listeners; they become co-investigators in dialogue with the teacher. They cease to be objects and become active subjects involved in a process of becoming more fully human in an unfinished reality. Freire describes this concept of *conscientização* (1996:64):

In problem-posing education, people develop their power to perceive critically *the way they exist* in the world *with which* and *in which* they find themselves; they come to see the world not as a static reality, but as a reality in process, in transformation. (Freire 1996:64)

Freire's liberation pedagogy stands in opposition to the systemic processes that define the carceral system. He declares that problem-posing education accepts neither a "well-behaved" present nor a predetermined future (1996:65): rooting itself in the dynamic present, it becomes revolutionary.

Kerr (1995: 149-71) outlines the growth of Theatre for Development in Southern Africa. He (149) describes how it grew out of the University travelling theatre movement of the 1960s and 70s². He identifies two dominant influences; the colonial tradition of theatre as propaganda and the more radical tradition of community theatre. Community theatre reflected a wish by adult educators to adopt a more 'bottom-up' approach to communication and this led to the integration of Freire's ideas and methods of popular education with this form of popular theatre. He (170-1) identifies limitations in its effectiveness as a tool for conscientization and subaltern activism and attributes this to the interests of practitioners from outside the community

² Kerr (1995: 133-148) describes how a number of universities in Africa started to take plays out to the rural population, initially in order to provide them with the opportunity to experience 'good' theatre. This impulse was transformed by the experience and the theatre movement started to explore work in indigenous languages.

which conflict with those in the community, as well as problematic and class-related dynamics within the community. The intervention of donors and government or traditional authority figures could shift projects towards the top down agendas of propaganda theatre.

Kerr (1995: 141 – 153) identifies the *Laedza Batanani* workshop that took place in Botswana during the 1970s, attracting attention and leading to spin-off products, as an important landmark in establishing Freirian process as a fundamental component of Theatre for Development. This project consisted of a series of week-long workshops that integrated performance and community debate into community planning. The participants were made up of extension workers, community leaders, performers, teachers and university adult educators. The topics addressed involved migrant labour, cattle theft, village development, domestic conflict, and youth problems. The project aimed to use popular theatre to concretise the practical constraints impeding development in the rural areas. The campaign made use of the *Kgotla* (village meeting place) to revive community village debate and the post-show discussions were intended to lead to direct action (152). The limitations that Kerr (170 – 171) establishes as evident in Theatre for Development work in general were apparent at the start. Reflecting on the project, he (Kerr 1995: 159) and Kidd and Byram (1981:12) are critical of the process used and question the extent to which they actually articulated a Freirian paradigm, asking whether they simply reproduce a kind of domesticating educational process because the most articulate members of the community monopolized discussion and had dominant class values.

The National Popular Theatre Workshop held in Molepolole, Botswana in 1978 helped Theatre for Development practices based on the *Laedza Batanani* model to spread to other parts of Africa (Kerr 1995:153). The Canadian University Services Overseas (CUSO) funded a regional popular theatre workshop at the Chalimbana Training Centre near Lusaka, Zambia, in 1979 (154). Kerr (1999:80) describes this as the most influential of the workshops. He also describes how the Freirian methodology that originated with *Laedza Batanani* was consolidated:

1. Researching into a community's problems;

2. Using a workshopped technique to create a play contextualizing those problems;
3. Presenting the play to the community;
4. Using the post-performance discussion as the basis for initiating action to solve the problems.
(Kerr 1999:80)

A series of smaller workshops in Zambia followed, and experimental popular theatre workshops occurred in other areas, mainly in southern and eastern Africa (156). Kerr makes mentions a project occurring as far away as Sierra Leone (156).

After independence in 1980 a workshop occurred in Zimbabwe at Morewa. Kidd (1984:10) notes a shift from intervention by outsiders and a stronger move towards community theatre occurring during this workshop. He (1995:168) comments that the workshop raised hope that the self-reliant popular control over the mobilization process that occurred in the *Pungwees* of the Zimbabwean liberation war would continue after independence in the battle against poverty, ill-health, and economic oppression. At a workshop in Harare held in 1997, Kerr (1999: 82 – 84) notes how the use of macro-media and the role of mediated arts for development were hotly debated along with the issues of patronage, which involved debates about the involvement of ‘outsiders’ in community development programmes and the role of NGOs and funding.

Kerr (1999: 80 and 1995: 156, 158, 250-251) identifies other important examples of Theatre for Development projects. These include the Marotholi Travelling Theatre in Lesotho (156), the Malya project in Tanzania (158), and the Kamĩĩĩĩĩ project in Kenya (250-251). The Malya project involved workers from the University of Dar es Salaam and achieved more sustained community participation and a deeper analysis of problems with the community (158). Practitioners had questioned the validity of using short workshop processes that lasted one or two weeks. This project lasted 18 months. The academics built a closer relationship with the team working in Malya and were able enter the social dynamism of Malya political life. A play critical of older men impregnating young girls precipitated a change in village leadership structures (1993:158). The Marotholi Travelling Theatre in Lesotho provided the case studies for Mda’s (1993:170-176) analysis of the

relationship between participation and the intervention of a facilitator in order to raise consciousness by challenging the assumptions of the audience and spectators. The Kamĩĩĩthũ Cultural Centre project in Kenya became a symbol of the power and potential of popular theatre and key practitioners involved in the work who fled to Zimbabwe promoted this work there (Kerr 1995: 250 and Rohmer 1999:41) (see p19).

Barber describes the plays made at the Kamĩĩĩthũ Cultural Centre in Kenya and the Chimurenga songs from the pungwees during Zimbabwe's liberation war as a category of African Popular Culture (1997: 2 and 5). She (3) notes the distinction made by some Latin American theatre activists between 'popular culture', which serves the interests of the people by opening their eyes to the historical conditions of their existence and 'people's culture', which emanates from the people but which is a form of false consciousness working against their interests to foster an acceptance of the status quo. With reference to the plays made at Kamĩĩĩthũ Cultural Centre and the Chimurenga songs, she (5) notes that these genres seem to combine the political notion of 'popular culture' with the spontaneous grassroots support of 'people's culture'. The two examples of African popular performance were stimulated by the intervention of activists (University staff in one case and guerrilla cadres in the other) and were taken over, endorsed and further developed by workers, peasants, and the unemployed.

In the early days of the theatre project at Westville Correctional Facility, I had wondered how theatre work that drew its inspiration from accounts of the Kamĩĩĩthũ Cultural Centre would fare in the South African correctional system.

2.5 Southern African Performance Aesthetics

Barber also (1997:1-12) discusses the clash and fusion of elements of western and African cultural that occur in African popular cultural production. She describes African Popular Culture as a porous unstable category that exists between notions of 'high art', identified as western and elite, and of traditional culture, identified as reasonably static, oral, expressed in indigenous languages, and coming from a pre-colonial past (1). Her purpose in identifying this category is to bring into focus for study the large and exuberant body of

cultural production previously obscured by the binary paradigms of ‘elite art’ and ‘traditional culture’ (1-2). She acknowledges that terms such as ‘the people’ and ‘popular’, because they carry specific connotations from their use in the context of the developed western world, become slippery when used in an African context. A common feature of this type of cultural production which differs from western popular or mass culture, is that it is produced and consumed by a single group of people. These “people” are, she says, “an unstable congeries of differentially defined groups, linguistically, ethnic, occupational, and religious, only thinkable as a category in that they are excluded from the privilege of the political, business and military elites (3-4).” The cultural products are syncretic, express cultural clash, hybridity, and creolization; they combine genres and elements from African and western sources in new and surprising ways (6). The products tend to express counter-hegemony in relation to colonial or western authority and they often identify self-betterment as a common theme: this can involve articulating common suffering and aspirations to a better life (5).

The hybridity and cultural clash noted by Barber (1997:1-12) that occurs in Theatre for Development has obvious links with the South African Worker Theatre of the 1980s described by von Kotze (1988), which introduces the influence of South African protest theatre on the plays at the Medium B Centre. Protest Theatre provided a particular South African aesthetic for the cast members to draw on; whilst Theatre for Development attempted to mobilize people around development issues, the anti-apartheid plays mobilized them around political action. Protest Theatre is well documented by Coplan (1995); Steadman (unpublished 1985), and Kavanagh (1985). The work of Gibson Kente and Mbongeni Ngema particularly informed the offenders’ understanding of theatre conventions, along with those of traditional oral performance, South African popular performance, and Zulu radio drama.

Christopher Kamlongera (n.d. 18-26), analyzing Theatre for Development in Zambia and Malawi in terms of the fusion of elements of African traditional performance with elements of western performance, provides an explanation of the contrasting aesthetics. He explains how, in the case of African performance, the roles of the audience and performer merge,

as do elements of performance and function, which in turn link the real world to the symbolic world of the performance. This makes it harder to distinguish between a work of art and the real world, a distinction commonly made in the West, where in African traditional performance, they co-exist through a connection with ritual (22). The spatial vision of theatre is not contracted into purely physical acting areas and separate audience areas where the theatre feeds on the real world by representing it without necessarily giving back to it (23). In the African model the onlooker in a single moment looks at two worlds, reality and the performance, as separate, and in another moment sees them merge and feed off each other. In this coexistence the functional nature of African theatre takes root (23). He summarizes this functional aspect: "Ritual elements are summed up in the overall intention of those who initiate the ceremonies in an attempt to reconcile man and his environment. Theatre surfaces as part of the actual fulfilment of these intentions. In this respect ritual is bigger than theatre". (n.d.:26)

The audience not only participates in the performance but finds meaning in the overarching function of the ritual (24-25). I was able to find in Kamlongera's (24-25) description a parallel although not an exact fit with Brecht's (Willett 1978:121) requirement that both the actor and the character be present during performance, with the idea of combining art and function.

Kamlongera's position is expanded by Soyinka's discussion of the African world-view in relation to ritual theatre and drama (1976:37-60). Soyinka, in his discussion of "Drama and the African world-view" (1976:37-60) also discusses the special qualities of audience participation, the performance space, and the symbolic function of the performance. His discussion emphasises the metaphysical function of ritual theatre. Tocci (2007:293) claims that theatre in correctional facilities has something of this function (see p34). Theatre that expresses an African world-view, Soyinka says (1976: 51), acknowledges the relationship between man, society and the universe. This is not only evident in ritual theatre but dramatic literature from Africa also gives expression to this particular world-view. He provides *Song of a Goat* (Clark 1964) as an example. He (Soyinka 1976:51) argues that the death of an individual is not to be seen as an isolated incident in the life of one man. Nor is individual fertility, the subject addressed in the play, separable

from the regenerative promise of earth and sea. The sickness of one individual is a sign of, or may portend, the sickness of the world around him (1976:51). In just this way the performance of ritual theatre, as Soyinka calls it, is an expression of man's intrusion into that disturbing "environment which he defines variously as void, emptiness or infinity (40)." Ritual theatre, viewed from the spatial perspective aims to reflect through physical and symbolic means the archetypal struggle of the mortal being against exterior forces:

Ritual theatre establishes a spatial medium, not merely a physical area for simulated events, but a manageable contraction of the cosmic envelope within which man – no matter how deeply buried such a consciousness has latterly become – fearfully exists. And this attempt to manage the immensity of his spatial awareness makes every manifestation in ritual theatre a paradigm for the cosmic human condition. (Soyinka 1976: 41)

Soyinka describes this as a cathartic process (42). He continues:

It has a far more fundamental anxiety: will the protagonist survive confrontation with forces that exist within the dangerous area of transformation. Entering that microcosm involves a loss of individuation, a self-submerged in universal essence. It is an act undertaken on behalf of the community and the welfare of the individual is inseparable from that of the total community. (Soyinka 1976: 42).

Soyinka (1997: 38-39) points out that participation is not arbitrary; it is defined by familiar sequences of liturgical exchange. More importantly, the audience provides spiritual strength to the performance and along with the protagonist is part of the collective energy and challenge with chthonic realms that the performance and protagonists engage. *Song of a Goat* (Clark 1964), Soyinka (1976:52) argues, in expressing this world-view, conveys an unselfconscious conjunction of the circumcentric worlds, of man, social community, and Nature in the minds of each character and an important element of this interior world is its moral order.

The term 'African' used by Karen Barber (1997: 1-12), Kamlongera (n.d) and Soyinka (1976: 37-60) remains problematic because it is essentialist and conflates the experiences of diverse people on a large continent; they do, however, identify in a general manner common elements that occur in much Sub-Saharan cultural production. These elements become more clearly rooted

in the South African context and find a clearer explanation in Harold Scheub's (1975) discussion of isiZulu and isiXhosa *Ingankwane* and *ntsomi* (traditional folktales), and in Liz Gunner's discussion of Zulu radio drama (2002: 223-237).

In his book *The Xhosa Ntsomi* Scheub (1975) analyses the aesthetics of Xhosa *ntsomi* and Zulu *inganekwane* (folk-tales). He is careful to point out that this is a performance form and not reliant only on words (15): equally as important as the words are the other elements of performance, such as song, dance and action (46); the skill of the performer is of paramount importance (168). Performers are often, but not exclusively, women (6). The skill of the performer includes managing the complex relationship with the audience, comprised of boys and girls who are simultaneously spectators and performers (58-61). Scheub identifies the following major functions of the audience in *ntsomi* performance:

It is first of all an audience of spectators, critically and imaginatively involved in the production. Second, it has a direct repertory of *ntsomi* images similar to that possessed by the artist; the audience is further distinguished by the fact that it is composed almost entirely of performers and potential performers. The artist realizes this, and her audience thus encourages her to create works of special merit by its very presence. Furthermore, the fact that the audience is itself so involved in and knowledgeable of this artistic tradition enables the performer to move rapidly, to take much for granted, and to rely on members of the audience to participate in the production. Finally, the audience is *used* by the artist in a complex way. She brings it into her *ntsomi* performance to such an extent that it functions as both artists and audience – though the performer is (or should be) always in control of the situation. She not only projects her *ntsomi* image on to the audience, she is assisted in the projection by the active participation of the audience. It could not participate if its members were not familiar with the *ntsomi* tradition, if they did not have their own repertoires of core-images. (Scheub 1975:58-59)

Important here is the participative role of the audience and their knowledge of the form. Scheub explains how the general theme of the stories centres on the need for order in the human community and the structure of the stories (3), through a careful use of repetition, moves from conflict to resolution (114). There are explicit links here to the ideas expressed by Soyinka and Kamlongera. Scheub (16) describes *ntsomi* as a complex artistic tradition where by the wisdom of the past is communicated to the present (16). He (41) admits the stories have an educational function, but is at pains to

establish that the performer does not moralize or engage in philosophical comment; the social elements are revealed rather than stated (16). He provides an analysis linking the manner in which the audience engage with the performance with an analysis of the narrative structure and function. He describes identification and theatrical catharsis as important elements in the way in which the stories function to promote particular meanings and values:

The emotional immersion of the audience in the developing image is essential to the artistic and didactic success of the performance. It is during the production of the *ntsomi* that education takes place – not as a rational experience, but as an emotional, sentient involvement. Thus is the ideal herd-boy represented, the obedient young daughter, the perfect mother-in-law. And thus, too, are significant social relationships explored and affirmed. Proper social responses within Xhosa traditional communities are idealized and dramatized in production, and the need for order is fulfilled by the structural patterns which define and support custom. Dramatic catharsis becomes something more than a psychological purgative associated with entertainment: in the *ntsomi* tradition, it purges the audience of anti-social views and attitudes antithetical to Xhosa tradition, and it is simultaneously a method of internalizing proper and productive social relationship. These didactic aspects of the *ntsomi* system could not be achieved without the aesthetic. Through close, immediate identification with a performer – and thereby, of course, with the actions which exists on the narrative surface – the audience ‘learns’ proper conduct, and perhaps beneath the level of consciousness comes to a comprehension of correct kinship relationships, for example. (Scheub 1975:173)

In order to analyse the stories Scheub (3-4) identifies a number of units used in their composition. The basic unit or building block is the *core-image*, which is invoked through a *core-cliché*. An English language equivalent might be the way in which the phrase, or core-cliché, “the Big Bad Wolf” evokes the core-image of the wolf in the stories of “Little Red Riding-hood” or of the “Three Little Pigs”. These titles themselves could be described as core-clichés that evoke as core-images two different stories in which a wolf occurs. He defines a core-image as, “a remembered image which is not in itself complete, a distillate of the full performance, expanded and fleshed out during the process of externalization [during performance] (47).” The core-images are arranged by the storyteller during the performance into a number of *core-plots* to create the full *ntsomi-image* or performance. He describes the core-image as the basic inherited element of the tradition, an abstract mental picture often

including nothing more than a *core-cliché* (47), which might be a song, gesture, chant or phrase (48,50,54,55):

The core-image includes the elements necessary to the memory of the performer which will enable her to call up and to externalize the full *ntsomi* image. It is discontinuous in the sense that it has no plot-form at that mental stage – it is simply a remembered song, a saying, a character, a picture which, when recalled, evokes a cluster of details or suggests original details which can then be objectified, i.e. performed. It is only in performance that the *shape* (i.e. the narrative plot) and *form* (the synthesis of the various elements brought into the narrative image which give beauty to the shape) become apparent. The core-image is but an abstract mental picture, often including nothing more than a cliché, from which the artist recalls and seeks to express. (Scheub 1975:47)

The performer has a number of core-images in her memory that she recalls through a process of cueing and scanning which enables her to arrange the images to form different plot-cores for each performance. These images are discontinuous mental pictures that are only placed in a linear continuum during performance. Scheub says:

In the development of a performance, the expansible image is joined by other such images...Interlocking images and details tie the major expansible images together, along with looser constructions such as transitional images and details. The performer seeks to achieve a thematic and structural balance through a conscious manipulation of images from her repertory. The objectification of these images is a synthesis of verbal narrative, body movement, vocal dramatics, and song. (1975:4)

Scheub explains that both the performer and the members of the audience are familiar with this process (58-59). Further, the use of core-images is not limited to *ntsomi* performance they also occur in songs and praise poetry. Scheub (22) quotes the experience of a praise-poet when he describes the informal manner in which these skills are transmitted. He notes that early training occurs when one is part of the audience and the skills are acquired in much the same manner as one learns to speak (19). It is in this manner that the audience acquires all the knowledge required for it to participate effectively in a performance. These skills seem as fundamental and no more conscious than the use of grammar for a first language speaker of one of the *Nguni* languages.

Both Gunner (2000:225) and Copland (1985:160) acknowledge that isiZulu radio drama draws its particular aesthetic from isiZulu folktales. Gunner (2000:231) describes a community of knowledgeable listeners who were the audience for both isiZulu radio drama and Gibson Kente's plays. Gunner (232) also points out that a family in the early 1990s who were listening to isiZulu radio drama were also involved with genres such as *izibongo*, *amahudo* (praises and chants) and other genres of song that people in rural and semi-rural areas engaged in, and states that it is important to understand the range of genres, both popular and traditional, that an individual might be actively involved with as listener/receiver and possibly performer.

Gunner (2000:223 – 237) argues that isiZulu radio drama has for the past fifty years constituted an important element in the larger category of popular African culture. During the apartheid years it reached a large audience, when the hostile environment made it difficult for black audiences and performers to organize and gather. Today, UKhozi FM has a listenership of between four and half and five million people and isiZulu radio dramas and serials continue playing to a large regional listenership, many of whom speak isiZulu as a first, second or third language (230). Gunner (232) also describes the importance of the producer/listener interaction that is part of the dynamic of isiZulu radio drama; members of the audience in large numbers write or phone in their comments to the writers and producers. In 1981 Bantu Language Services received five and a half million letters from their listeners (Tomaselli et al 1989:96)

Gunner argues that isiZulu radio drama was able to evoke a notional and privileged space. She says:

What may have been established early on in radio drama was a kind of expectation that, like oral narrative, it provided an arena where problems could be set out and some kind of journey towards resolution – or destruction – take place. There was also the expectation of 'play', that this was in some sense a free space outside the contingencies of daily life yet linked to them. (Gunner 2000:226)

She adds that the radio dramas do not continue endlessly to create new small crises for their characters' personal lives such as those that occur in western soap opera but "work towards a resolution and work through a

‘conversation’ on possibilities of how to live (2000:234)”, and that “the story being played out allowed a kind of public/private meditation about the issues the story raised (235).” She (231) argues that like the older more traditional forms of isiZulu performance, radio dramas are produced “in order to be” and “with the expectation of being interpreted”. She adds that the dramas established an ongoing conversation, involving in part interaction between audience and scriptwriters, about social issues such as the patriarchal home, intergenerational conflict and contradictory expectations of modern life.

2.6 Debates about Catharsis

I have already presented information about Prison Theatre, the correctional context and the process used in Theatre for Development that combine under the category African Popular Performance western and African performance aesthetics. I find Tom Andrews’s (2006:30), suggestions useful, that when using a Classic Grounded Theory method, further reading and a second literary search maybe necessary to engage with established theory and writing pertaining to categories once they have been established during the coding process. Whilst analyzing the interviews with the members of the cast and the audience, it became apparent that they drew on their own experience and understanding of oral performance. This led me to conduct a more focused second literature search around the notions of catharsis.

Barber’s description (1997: 6) of African Popular Culture as syncretic, expressing cultural clash, hybridity, and creolization, suggests that it combines elements from African and western sources in new and surprising ways. Certainly notions of hybridity and clash are apparent in the way the cast of *Isikhathi Sewashi* and *Lisekhon’ Ithemba* mixed an understanding of core-images with Boal’s notions of Image Theatre and Brecht’s use of *gestus* and montage. Further, traditional folktales provide useful insights, as they do for isiZulu radio drama, for the aesthetics used for other contemporary performance forms. This has implications for understanding the manner in which audiences might engage a play. Like traditional folktales, which demand interpretation, Theatre for Development, Epic Theatre and Theatre of the Oppressed have objectives related to the audience’s engagement with and

interpretation of the plays in a manner which raises their consciousness about historical, social and political conditions.

Soyinka (1976: 42) and Scheub (1975:173) both describe a kind of catharsis that informs the way in which the audience engage with performance to achieve social understanding and purpose. The 'lesson' they describe as provided by a performance seems to involve achieving social harmony with the forces of nature or in terms of 'correct social relations' within society. Scheub (1975:173) acknowledges emotional and sentient involvement as important for the didactic success of the performance. This catharsis involves an identification with the characters and situations, which in turn involves emotional engagement, possibly empathy; memories of personal emotions and experiences are also likely to be significant. The audience understands that performance has a functional element and expects it to involve an aesthetic in which the form demands interpretation.

Humphrey House (1958:111) describes Aristotle's catharsis as 'educative' and 'curative'. He (105-106) argues against the medical use of the word catharsis to mean purging in the sense of evacuating something, stating that purging or evacuating emotions such as pity and fear makes no sense because it is profitable for people to have them. Both pity and fear are derived from self-regarding instincts. He (202) adds that no theory of catharsis makes sense that speaks only of purging away the "painful element" in pity and fear. He (203) adds that catharsis might in fact involve a whole group of disturbing emotions. He also observes that pity springs from the feeling that a similar suffering might happen to ourselves and the objects of pity are therefore like ourselves. He (105-106) argues for catharsis to be understood in the sense of restoration to proper equilibrium, a concept which has moral and educative intentions. For him, the clearest notion of catharsis involves "giving relief to overcharged feelings (106)." He claims that "tragedy controls and directs emotions of pity and fear to objects in the right way (110)," and when they subside into potentiality after the play is over, that potentiality is more 'trained' than before.

Brecht repeatedly (in Willet 1964: 57,78, 79, 87, 181, 248), argues that Epic Theatre rejects the idea of the spectator's identification with the play in the manner which occurs in Aristotelian theatre; at the same time, Epic

Theatre has a different view of psychological effects such as catharsis. For Brecht, catharsis has negative connotations, linked to the spiritual cleansing of the spectator (87) and notions of fate (57). Walter Benjamin (1998: 38) comments that Brecht rejected catharsis, which he understood as purging emotions through identification with the hero. Unlike House (1958: 103) who rejects the concept of catharsis as a process of purging in favour of restoring equilibrium, Brecht (in Willet 1964: 181) associates the notion of catharsis with purging or cleansing from fear and pity for the purpose of pleasure. He asserts that once separated from its roots in ritual function, theatre survived with the sole purpose of offering pleasure and entertainment. In his extracts from notes to *Die Mutter*, Brecht (in Willet 1964: 57) discusses the impact of Epic Theatre, which he describes as non-Aristotelian drama. He explains it does not make free use of “passive empathy” and psychological effects such as catharsis. He adds, “[j]ust as it refrains from handing its hero over to the world as if it were his inescapable fate, so it would not dream of handing the spectator over to an inspiring theatrical experience. [It is] anxious to teach the spectator a quite definite practical attitude, directed towards changing the world (57).”

This rejection of Aristotelian theatre is evident in the use of the term ‘epic’ in relation to epic theatre, which Brecht also termed non-Aristotelian theatre (in Willet 1964: 281). He (1964:70) points out that even in the terminology of Aristotle epic and dramatic poetry involve performance but their difference lies in their methods of construction. He remains in agreement with Aristotle that story is the kernel of the tragedy even if he disagrees about the purpose (213). In discussions about emotional responses to Brecht’s theatre it is important to note that he (145, 161, 248) cautions that the rejection of empathy is not a rejection of emotion: adding that “non-Aristotelian dramaturgy has to apply a cautious criticism to the emotions it aims at and incorporates (145).”

Carol Martin and Henry Bial (2000:2) argue that Brecht’s theatre sought to disrupt the sentimental identification of spectators with characters. Brecht challenged actors to address spectators about the characters and contents of the plays. “Together spectators and actors would then reflect upon the characters’ situations as these were informed by historical and material,

rather than psychological or spiritual, conditions (2000:2).” Martin and Bail’s observation (2000:2) together with Brecht’s (1964: 213) agreement that story is the kernel of tragedy opens the possibility for unexpected fusions to occur involving notions around catharsis and the spectators critical engagement with historical and material content. This is especially the case when the plays draw on the aesthetics of Epic Theatre and isiZulu oral storytelling to engage with material closely related to the audience’s life experience, and linked to socio-political issues.

Fredric Jameson provides further useful insight which helps to identify the conditions that are required if catharsis defined in terms of isiZulu storytelling and the socio-political intentions of Epic Theatre are to merge. He (2000: 71-2) observes that Aristotelian catharsis has the intention of uniting an audience, even, symbolically, to unify a disparate audience, whilst Brecht’s non-aristotelian drama, such as *The Mother*, has the intention of dividing the audience. He argues that the theatre itself is a figure of the social, which it seeks to divide and set against itself and that it must symbolically re-enact class struggle.

Within Scheub (1975:173) and Soyinka’s (1976: 42) discussion of catharsis is acknowledgment of a similar unifying intention. Jameson (2000: 71-2), Schueb (1975:173) and Soyinka (1976: 42) are referring to a broad social group and not to the rarefied social conditions produced by incarceration. One has to consider, when working in the over-determined context of a carceral system, the implications around the notion of a cathartic process that might unify performers and audience who are offenders. Offenders are overtly stigmatized as separate, in opposition to each other as gang members, and to the society from which they are separated, as well as from the correctional staff. The possibility emerges that the offenders, feeling a more unified group through the process of catharsis described by Jameson, might also have the potential to engage, in different ways, with the other groups from whom they are divided, which in turn is closer to the division and class struggle Jameson attributes to Epic Theatre.

L M Bogad (2006:49) describes Boal’s work as based in Freirian and anti-Aristotelian theory and consciously resists Aristotelian catharsis. Randy Martin (2006:27) describes how Boal sees tragedy as a coercive force, because

the final catharsis aligns the viewer with the laws of state. Boal (2000: x) describes his work as a continuation of Brecht's and opposed to Aristotelian theatre. He describes Aristotelian theatre as structured around the concept of catharsis and states "catharsis is correction: what does it correct? Catharsis is purification: what does it purify? (27)". He concludes that it eliminates "something directed against the law (32)." This supports his claim that Aristotelian theatre represents the interests of the ruling class (ix). A large portion of Boal's *Theatre of the Oppressed* (2000) argues for the revolutionary status of his theatre in relation to oppressive forms that have their origins in the class interests of Aristotelian theatre. Jane Milling and Graham Ley (2001: 148-152) are critical of Boal's scholarship and perceive serious problems in the arguments he presents. They describe his amalgamation, synthesis, reformulation, and ultimate misrepresentation of Aristotle's writing and his various summaries which fail to make reference to any particular source and noticeably omit the *Poetics* (1996). They (154) are critical of Boal's reformulation of Aristotle's catharsis where he states "that something different from pity and fear is purged. (2000:32)" They point out that Aristotle never fully or explicitly stated his case, and offer the following interpretation for his discussion of tragedy. They (154) suggest that Aristotle is mounting a defence of tragedy after its condemnation by Plato. In *The Arts of Rhetoric* (1991) Aristotle had argued that fear and pity were two powerful emotions that orators use to manipulate people. In the *Poetics* he is arguing that tragedy's purgation of powerful emotions such as fear and pity allows it to provide a counteracting force. They also point out that empathy is not an Aristotelian term and that he makes only an oblique reference to the concept in relation to catharsis. They (2001:154-5) assert that there is no way of ascertaining if Greek Tragedy really operated in the manner that Boal (2000:40) describes and his argument merely serves his conclusion that tragedy is a 'coercive system'. He argues that that the spectator identifies or empathizes with the character and so follows the same course as the character in the action of the play and by this means is purified of antisocial characteristics. Milling and Ley (2001:155) conclude by disputing Boal's assertion that revolutionary groups cannot utilize tragedy during revolutionary periods (2000: 46) because tragedy was established and developed during a

revolutionary period in Athens. Milling and Ley's criticism of Boal's theory disrupts the apparent binary opposition he presents between his work and notions of catharsis and Aristotelian theatre. This opens up the possibility that theatre aesthetics related to a didactic engagement with issues and the use of catharsis might fuse in unexpected ways.

Ann Elizabeth Armstrong (2006:181) explains that Boal critiques Aristotelian catharsis for immobilizing the spectator whilst arguing that his techniques channel 'spect-actor'³ emotion into action. If we agree to set aside for the moment the problems around his work in relation to Aristotelian aesthetics, as she continues her explanation of his work she provide a useful description about how the work builds consensus. She explains how Boal differentiates between empathy and sympathy, acknowledging that emotions can be a source of simultaneous empowerment and collective bonding. Sympathy, she explains operates to produce a kind of commonality of feeling that can maintain the freedom of individual interpretation whilst constructing group perspective and instilling a sense of obligation. She warns that this can also be divisive and may be accompanied by antagonism and disagreement over different interpretations of reality. Armstrong's description here of the power of Boal's theatre is surprisingly similar to Jameson's (2000:71-2) description of the unifying effect of catharsis above. Armstrong acknowledges that the idea of a unified group immediately implies an 'other', outside that united group. Considering Armstrong's (2006:181) and Jameson's (2000:71-2) observations one might conclude that there is no substantial difference for the audiences regarding sympathy or empathy as the manner in which an emotional experience provides a common feeling that unites them.

The manner in which the influences of the carceral system, theatre aesthetics and their broader issues relate to the offenders' perceptions about the role of theatre, the use they made of it, and the manner in which they engage the plays will emerge from the data and from my analysis. First it is necessary to provide a detailed explanation of the plays, their content, and the aesthetics they engaged.

³ Spect-actor, combining spectator and actor, is a term used to describe audience members who actively participate in a performance. Sometimes also called a spectator-participant (Boal 2000:140)

Chapter Three

Research Methodology: Using Grounded Theory

3.1 An Anecdote: Negotiating Research at the Medium B Correction Centre

I was standing talking with Thokozani Hlengwa, one of the performers, while the audience and members of the cast of *Isikhathi Sewashi* were working in discussion circles at the end of a performance. I was explaining to him how, as part of my research, I would need to interview the cast and also members of the audience about their reaction to the play. He replied that if I wanted interviews with the members of the audience, the interviews should be conducted by members of the cast because the offenders would be reluctant to discuss conversations and activities with an outsider when they took place in the cells after lock-up. He did not overtly explain to me that gang culture divided prison-life in terms of time and space into areas controlled by the correctional authorities during the day and areas controlled by the offenders during the night. Life inside the cells after lock-up was gang territory.

Later, after agreeing with the correctional authorities and the performers that a team of six members of the cast would conduct the interviews and having agreed on the research schedule and protocols with the correctional authorities, I set about training the members of the cast who would conduct the interviews. I then had to collect the names of offenders who had attended the performances and ask them to participate in the interviews. I entered a section to brief the offenders about the research project and to gather names of potential interviewees. Mr Dingwe, the correctional staff member who worked with me on the theatre projects, accompanied me. We explained the research project, and that I wanted to discuss with them their reaction to the plays and that members of the cast would be conducting the interviews in isiZulu; that we needed to collect a list of names of people willing to participate in these interviews. In order to generate a sample we would pick by lot from this list the names of people to be interviewed. The men in the cells seemed interested in the project: they were not hostile, but not one of them volunteered to be interviewed. I left the cell. Then Ntusi, a cast member who worked closely with me organizing the theatre work, entered the

cell immediately after I left and gave the same explanation and came out with a list of names of offenders willing to participate.

The offenders' silence was potentially off-putting and difficult to interpret. As an actor working with other actors on a scene during performance or in rehearsals, one develops sensitivity to the different qualities in each moment in a scene. These moments involve more than playing the dialogue; they include working with and responding creatively and intuitively to the energies, subtext, body language and behaviour of the other actors. I think this kind of actor's sensitivity served me well while working with the offenders. I had to bring these skills into the play-making sessions as well as many of the daily interactions in the correction centre. In the cell during this particular exchange the offenders had appeared relaxed and interested in my invitation to participate in interviews. The atmosphere and physical behaviour were not hostile and had not suggested a rejection of the idea. The men had simply remained silent: they were insisting that a tacit protocol be followed and were engaging in a negotiation process that had to be conducted in silence outside of the control of the correctional system; so words could not be used. The negotiation had to take place using behaviours and actions. This negotiation stood in opposition to the official protocols of the correctional centre and, whether related to gang culture or not, insisted upon a degree of respect for the offenders and their unofficial control of the cells, along with their need to negotiate some control over the research process. The issue at the heart of all this was that I was asking for information about conversations and discussions that took place in the cells after lock-up.

My explanations, the offenders' silence, Ntusi's second engagement, were all steps in a negotiation to secure the research project. The terms of the negotiation could be outlined as follows: offenders would recruit other offenders to participate in the interviews. Offenders would conduct and translate the interviews. They understood that the information would come to me at the university; that I would code and generate research findings using this information; and that a copy of the final dissertation would be given to the Department of Correctional Services. They also knew that although their real names would be captured on the tape recordings and transcripts, no real names would be disclosed in the final dissertation or other published material related

to this research and that the raw data would remain with me at the university. Had I read their silence as a rejection of the project or a refusal to participate, the project would have collapsed. By interpreting the behaviour and not just the silence I was able to proceed with and allow a series of actions to occur that constituted the negotiation. The offenders were not objecting to the research or frustrating it; they were in fact supporting it by facilitating a negotiation that would give me access to information that would normally remain out of reach to an outsider. Clearly, through some informal network, the research project was understood by the offender population and had their support. The sample of members of the audience who were interviewed consisted of members of both the 26 and 28 gangs as well as non-gang members.

I provide this anecdote as an example of the complexities involved in negotiating research of this kind. As researcher I had to straddle the three worlds of academia, the Department of Correctional Services, and the world of the offenders. Each party had competing requirements which did not acknowledge and were not always sensitive to those of other parties. In order not to disrupt long established offender/authority relations I often had to pretend that I was not aware of the complexities I was engaging. Involving the offenders in the project as researchers was an essential step in managing these difficult relations and in opening up the possibility of this research.

The formal requirements and structure of the academic research make it difficult to discuss these kinds of dynamics. To fix informal, silent and unseen processes related to the offenders' way of surviving incarceration by presenting them overtly and capturing them in writing seems to transform and betray them.

There were other formal and structured requirements from the Department of Correctional Services. For example, they required precise information about numbers of offenders to be interviewed and a tight interviewing schedule. This made the process of theoretical sampling difficult. They too showed some flexibility and made unusual concessions by allowing the offenders to be part of the research team and to take the tape recorders back into the cells to transcribe the interviews.

3.2 A personal negotiation of the roles of theatre practitioner and researcher

Not only were there a number of different parties involved with this research, all of whose participation and needs required accommodation and had to be negotiated but also my own role in the research was complicated. I was a participant in the theatre project, where I had exerted influence on the plays as the facilitator of the play-making process in the case of *Isikhathi Sewashi* and as the project supervisor in the case of *Lisekhon' Ithemba*. I wore two hats: that of theatre practitioner and member of the theatre group and that of academic observer and researcher. Having worked on theatre projects at Westville Correctional Facility since 1999, I had an insider's knowledge and understanding of the theatre work and some contextual understanding of the correctional environment. I also had developed over time a working relationship with both offenders and correctional staff. I was a researcher who came with baggage connected to the project and the correctional context. This had some advantages in that this research could not have been negotiated without the connections and trust built up over time. It also complicated my role as researcher.

The part of me that was a theatre practitioner had to withdraw and allow the observer, listener and analytical part to move to the fore while working on this dissertation. My memories and personal responses to the plays diminished with time. As an artist and facilitator working on the project my responses had been creative and sometimes intuitive even though the theatre practice engaged particular theories and demanded self-reflection and analysis. The repeated analysis of the offenders' interviews through a process of coding and recoding revealed to me a more complete understanding of the dynamics involved in the theatre work than I had while working on the plays. At the time of making and performing the plays these dynamics were in a continual state of flux. They became more stable in the text of the interviews. With the benefit of hindsight and the discipline of research practice, a more rigorous account has emerged of the plays, their aesthetics, and the processes they engaged.

The focus of this research is the data, comments made by offenders who comprised the audience and cast. Their comments have been coded and analysed in order to reveal their perceptions about how they engaged with and

made sense of the theatre work. Classic Grounded Theory provided a method for me to do this. This is not my theatre artist's account of what we did and neither is it an account of my own journey through the project. It goes beyond my own earlier research (Hurst 2001, and Hurst *et al* 2002), which tended to validate the theatre work as a socially beneficial activity. This project allowed me to listen to what the offenders had to say and to find in their comments a way of understanding how they engaged the plays and the social functions they found in making and performing the plays. For this reason I have chosen to providing space for them to speak, for their voices to be heard, when I present the data in chapters six, seven, and eight.

Did the findings surprise me? Yes. I came to the project with a body of knowledge and experience in the practice of collective play-making. I had a sense that the plays had been pulled into the vortex of power relations that inform life within a carceral system but I had no explanation of how this had occurred. I had understood that the offenders had combined popular South African performance forms with the theatre techniques I had presented to them but I had not understood how firmly the projects rested on a foundation of isiZulu oral tradition. My insistence on a participative and collective play-making process was based on pedagogical and political imperatives and I had not been fully aware of the aesthetic components and the social forces exposed by this collective work.

3.3 Defining Classic Grounded Theory

This dissertation uses Classic Grounded Theory as its research method. Ólavur Christiansen (2007:39) points out that 'grounded theory' has become a term used to describe a range of research literature and that Classic Grounded Theory specifically refers to the research procedures described by Barney Glazer (1978; 1992; and 1999).

Are there two grounded theory methodologies? Glazer's version of Grounded Theory closely follows the procedures outlined in the book *Discovering Grounded Theory* (1999) written by himself and Anselm Strauss. Strauss-Corbin provides different procedures for using Grounded Theory, outlined in *Basics of Qualitative Research: Grounded theory procedures and techniques* (1990). Glazer (1999:105) insists that theory is generated from

using the 'Constant Comparison Method' which involves a process of comparison of incidents or phenomena from which categories and their properties are sorted until a theoretical pattern has emerged. He describes the research process in four steps; comparing incidents applicable to each category; integrating categories and their properties; delimiting the theory; and writing the theory. Christiansen (2008:19) identifies two 'hallmarks' that identify Glaser's Grounded Theory. First, finding the core variable (or core category) as the first stage of the research. The core variable sums up and explains the main concern of those being studied and accounts for most of the variation in the data. Second, whilst working on the data, the researcher suspends his/her preconceptions and prior knowledge about the area of research, and trusts in emergence of concepts from the data. The sole focus is on the participants' substantive interest, concerns and solutions. Glaser (1999:31-35) argues that Classic Grounded theory is used to generate a hypothesis, a substantive or formal theory, which explains particular social processes and that the emergent theory is grounded in data. This last point is important.

Conflict around the rationale for research, whether to verify or generate theory, and the extent to which different research procedures accomplish or compromise these different aims, is at the root of the conflict around the different uses of grounded theory. Glaser and Strauss (1999:1) and Kathy Charmaz (1994:97) emphasise the division of labour between grounded theory, which is used to generate a hypothesis, and other types of research where verification is the objective. Charmaz (1994:97) further warns that because researchers using grounded theory make systematic efforts to check and refine emerging categories, their work is sometimes confused with traditional verification methods. The theoretical hypothesis generated using Classic Grounded Theory may be refined or transcended by other studies in the same field or by an alternative examination of the same data (Glaser 1999:233; Charmaz 1994:97). A hypothesis generated by a Grounded Theory project may well need to be tested in further research, using other methodologies that have verification as their central rationale.

Glaser's work stands in contrast to the later more complex procedures for coding outlined by Strauss and Corbin (Strauss and Corbin 1990:99-107

and 158-175) involving axial coding and a conditional matrix. At the heart of the conflict is Glaser's (1999: 21-7) instance that the Grounded Theory processes outline by Strauss-Corbin in *Basics of Qualitative Research: Grounded theory procedures and techniques* (1990) breaks away from the procedures and purpose originally articulated by himself and Strauss during the 1960s in *Discovering Grounded Theory* (1999). He argues that the Strauss-Corbin coding methods attempts simultaneously to generate and validate emerging theory and therefore forces theory onto the data. Cheri Ann Hernandez (2008:41) supports Glaser's criticism by arguing that the Strauss-Corbin model focuses on a full conceptual description from the researcher's perspective rather than that of the participants. She adds that some of the distortions that occur in the application of grounded theory are often driven by a researcher's feeling, "uncomfortable about using a research methodology that they cannot attribute to some overarching grand philosophy, as if grounded theory is somehow 'legitimated' by such a connection (Hernandez 2008:51)."

Christiansen (2008:29-30) points out the problematic use of terms within different procedures for using Grounded Theory. The terms *open coding* and *selective coding* are used differently by Glaser and by Strauss-Corbin; Charmaz (2006) and Clark (2005) have no place for the *core-variable* (a hallmark of Glaser's procedure). The Strauss-Corbin *axial coding* and *conditional-matrix* are not used in Glaser's method.

The research rationale is then the key issue in making the choice whether to use Classic Grounded Theory or not. Christiansen (2007:40) acknowledges that making judgements about the superiority or inferiority of the differing methodologies is pointless but he warns against mixing research procedures from different methodologies that aim at different research rationales. "Any research outcome needs to be judged according to the *raison d'être*, procedures and standard of methodology applied (Christiansen 2007:40)."

3.4 Classic Grounded Theory: A Summary of Rationale and Method

Research using Classic Grounded Theory procedures does not attempt to verify theory; that is the task of other research (Glaser and Strauss 1999:1).

The motive behind Classic Grounded Theory as a research practice is to generate a hypothesis, a substantive or formal theory, which explains particular social processes; the theory generated is grounded in data (1999:3). Classic grounded theory is therefore empirical and inductive. Its objective is to get through conjecture and preconception to the underlying processes (Christiansen 2007:41). In order to minimize preconceptions, the research problem should not be known. It should be allowed to emerge from a systematic collection and treatment of data during the research process (Glaser 1978:3). Glaser (1978:16) argues that grounded theory should use comparative analysis to generate codes and their properties, which are captured in coding memos that are then integrated to develop a hypothesis that can explain and predict the substantive area under investigation. The theory generated should closely fit the data, and laypeople concerned with the area should be able to make use of the theory generated. Classic Grounded Theory is particularly useful when opening up an area for research (Glaser 1999:11).

3.5 Grounded Theory, research questions, and literature reviews

The researcher using grounded theory is not only faced with the problem of two different methods of grounded theory and the various adoptions of grounded theory into general qualitative research methodology; misconceptions also exist about the role of literature within grounded theory methodology. Although I have briefly addressed this matter in chapter two (p56), it needs further elaboration. Glaser's (1978:3) instance that the researcher should come to the research with as open a mind as possible and allow the core category to emerge from the data has created an impression that there should be no engagement with the research literature related to the field being studied. Glaser (1978:126) in fact argues that the literature becomes further data used for constant comparison and should be integrated into the emerging theory.

Antoinette McCallin (2006:12) presents a reasonable and pragmatic approach, arguing that novice researchers can be too purist in their interpretation of 'approaching the data without preconceptions'; she acknowledges that supervisors and research committees responsible for the student's research need some assurance that students know what they are

doing, have some focus, and are safe to enter the field. She acknowledges that pre-research literature reading is necessary to frame the problem in the introduction to the study and to establish information about previous work in the area. This position is more useful than Glaser's (1998:27) recommendation that researchers who have to present proposals to dissertation committees and funding agencies do what the people want and then address the research process. McCallin (2006:12) argues that the student needs to read literature related to the field of study as well as literature related to the debates about the use of Grounded Theory. To avoid a literature review is unrealistic when researchers are expected to be knowledgeable about their area of interest and keep up to date in their field of study. She adds that considering that all research starts with an idea, however unfocused, most researchers will be sufficiently interested to pursue that idea in order to focus and provide a rationale that will withstand academic review (2006:17). She (2006 15-16) does not disagree with the handling of data using Classic Grounded Theory. A general understanding of the area should not compromise the research process and once a core category has emerged, further reading may be necessary. Tom Andrews (2006:30) supports the idea that two literature reviews may be necessary. One will be a general look at information pertaining to the area of study and a second will focus on information related to the core category once it has been established.

3.6 My Rationale for using Classic Grounded Theory

My research seeks neither to test nor validate the theatre work in terms of correctional imperatives. This is counter to Peaker and Vincent's (1990:184) recommendation that correctional imperatives should provide the framework within which arts activities in correctional facilities are assessed. Neither does it seek to validate the use of Theatre for Development techniques within a correctional context. There is no intention to validate notions that the theatre in some way rehabilitates offenders or that it successfully conscientizes them. While issues related to notions of rehabilitation or conscientization may occur in some of the findings, the questions addressed by this research are concerned with the processes revealed in the offenders' perceptions of how they engaged

with theatre practice in the correction centre. Four crucial issues arose concerning this analysis:

- This research could not be confined to assessing whether the offenders' behaviour had 'improved'.
- The method of analysis needed to be able to accommodate a wide range of phenomena that might occur in the data; it could not be theoretically constrained.
- The analysis needed to be able to articulate processes rather than outcome.
- The analysis needed to in some way to reflect the reality of the offenders.

The *raison d'être* for this research project seemed to fit in a general way the rationale for the use of Classic Grounded Theory. It sought to open up an understanding of the use of collective play-making in a South African correctional facility and I have attempted to generate a hypothesis about the processes by which the offenders engaged theatre projects at the Medium B Correctional Centre.

In my earlier reports (Hurst 2001 and Hurst *et al* 2002) evaluating the projects, I had used categories developed by Matarasso (1997) in his report on the social impact of participation in the arts. This work had shown that the theatre work had been beneficial to the offenders and had helped them develop personal and social skills. Whilst this had been useful, I now wanted to work for a deeper understanding of the processes going on in the project. I had felt there were other dynamics present that had not been revealed or accounted for in these reports (Hurst 2001 and Hurst *et al* 2002). I chose to use Classic Grounded Theory as the method for gathering and analyzing data because it would allow information to emerge from the interviewees and would not impose a particular analytic grid on the data.

In 2002 I had visited the United Kingdom to look at Prison Theatre work and had met Jenny Hughes. Her work (2001a and 2001b) demonstrated to me the value of using Classic Grounded Theory. It seemed to me that it was useful to follow Hughes's example and engage a method of examining the work at the correction centre in a way that would allow information to emerge freely from the data. Categories of information that were not predetermined,

but were instead grounded in the offenders' reality, might offer a better understanding of how theatre operated in the correctional environment. Further, I thought treating the data in a systematic way that grounded the findings in the offenders' reality could usefully contain my own response to the work after having been creatively involved in the projects and allow me to move into the role of researcher/observer by allowing me to listen only to what the offenders had to say.

I had knowledge of the theatre forms we had engaged, the play-making processes, and I had experience of the correctional context. This experience alerted me to the need to move beyond evaluating or justifying the work and to explore dynamics and processes that I felt remained out of sight.

Idoko (2009) had already conducted research that attempted to evaluate the use of Freirian-based Theatre for Development work in a Nigerian correction centre. His conclusions that the work was largely unsuccessful and that Freirian methods and objectives could only be engaged in a limited manner (2004; 179-187) are similar to those made by Kidd and Byram (1982). I sensed that looking for explanations limited to verifying outcomes related to Freirian pedagogy, conscientization and action were not useful in the complicated power dynamic that characterize the correctional system. In order to understand and explain the ways in which offenders engaged the theatre work, I needed a method of analysis that would allow me to generate an explanation that remained close to their reality; and explained the processes they engaged with as performers and audience. Such findings would allow me to suggest further areas of research and could usefully inform further work by myself or others conducting theatre projects in South African Correctional Centres. I found I was repeatedly led back to Classic Grounded Theory as a useful methodology to fulfil these rationales.

3.7 My own engagement with literature reviews

McCallin's (2006) discussion of literature reviews and research proposals and grounded theory was useful. Certain important conditions were clearly known before I engaged the data. The over-determined correctional space was the major condition that informed this study. The Theatre for Development practice had goals and intentions which were known. Both the correctional

context and the intention behind Theatre for Development were supported by existing theory. There existed a body of literature related to Prison Theatre and to popular southern African performance aesthetics. I have addressed these in the first part of the literature review in Chapter Two (pp27-56). After analyzing the data other issues emerged that pointed me towards particular areas for further reading, as suggested by Andrews (2006:30). These areas were related to African oral performance, storytelling, and catharsis and are addressed in the second part of Chapter Two (pp57-61).

3.8 Key Research Question

I developed, for the purposes of my research, the following questions. They are:

- What factors emerge as significant for offenders as members of a cast engaging in collectively making play projects in the correction centre?
- What factors emerge as significant for the offenders as members of the audience responding to plays made collectively by their peers and played in the correctional centre?
- What factors emerge, and what are the resulting implications, for the use of collective play-making projects in South African correction centres?

3.9 The data

For clarity I will identify the data used in this research before I deal with the lengthier description about how it was generated, the sampling process and the offenders involvement in this. The data that formed the basis for much of the analysis came from interviews with offenders who were performers and with others who were members of the audience. Performers from the cast of *Isikhathi Sewashi* conducted group interviews with members of the audience who had attended performances of both the plays. They interviewed a total of 110 members of the audience and produced 19 transcripts. Four sessions were used as part of the training and questions about *Lisekhon' Ithemba* were not addressed. I discarded these from the coding process. I provide a detailed account of generating this information in the section below about the

offenders' participation in the research (pp76-78). I conducted individual interviews with twenty performers from the cast of *Isikhathi Sewashi (14)* and *Lisekhon' Ithemba (6)*. Information from two additional interviews conducted in June 2003 was added to the data. I explain this below (p81) All the interviews were recorded and sections transcribed during the coding process. The offenders' discussions of making the plays, attending performances and their subsequent conversations in the cells provided the content of the interviews to be analyzed. Some of this information was also used to develop the descriptions of the plays and provide a contextual understanding of the particular kind of theatre work we engaged (Chapters 4 and 5).

The interviews involve information about a specific intervention in a specific correctional centre and amongst a fairly homogeneous group of offenders. In this sense the data was constrained by the fact that differences were minimized. In such a case theoretical saturation is likely to occur quickly fairly easily. Glaser describes theoretical saturation "to mean that no additional data are being found whereby the sociologist can develop properties of the category (1999:61)." He (1999:58) explains that when the difference in groups is minimized the maximum similarity in data leads to:

- Verifying usefulness of categories;
- Generating basic properties;
- Establishing a set of conditions for a degree of category. These conditions can be used for prediction.

The research data, therefore, comprised:

- Transcripts of group interviews with members of the audience for both plays.
- Transcripts of individual interviews with performers.

Additional data, listed below, was used to explain the plays and play-making processes:

- Summary from the flipchart notes produced during the group discussions at the performances of *Isikhathi Sewashi*.
- My journal writing during rehearsals.
- Buthelezi's journal when making *Lisekhon' Ithemba*.

- Journal letters written by performers during the rehearsal process.
- Photographs and video recordings of the rehearsal process.
- Video recordings of performances and the play texts.
- Reports produced by myself and Miranda Young-Jahangeer about the work conducted by the Drama and Performance Studies programme at the Correctional Facility.
- Reports and journals produced by postgraduate students who worked with the offenders to create the original plays about living with HIV/Aids in a Correctional Centre that formed the content for *Lisekhon' Ithemba*

3.10 The sample

Gathering the information had two major parts:

- Sampling and interviewing members of the audience
- Sampling and interviewing performers

Part one dealt with gathering data from the audience. Approximately 3000 offenders saw each play. There are 13 areas in the Medium B Correction Centre that house offenders. 12 sections consist of six dormitory cells each and an isolation section consisting of single cells. One section accommodates newly-arrived offenders who once classified are distributed throughout the centre. This section was not included as one of sites targeted for interviews. If offenders from the isolation cells watched the plays they did so as visitors to one of the 11 sections. They were therefore not included in the sample. By agreement with the staff and the performers who comprised the research team, we interviewed 10 inmates from each of the 11 remaining sections. Ntusi compiled lists of names of offenders from each section who were willing to participate in the interviews. Each week, Ntusi gathered a list of names of people from a section due to be interviewed and together we selected 10 names by lot from the list of willing participants. This gave us as random a sample of interviewees as possible.

The main difficulty that arose was that the audience members selected to come to the interview changed, depending on who was available and willing to come at the time the interviews were scheduled. I could not enforce a rigorous selection process nor compel offenders to participate in the

interviews. I chose to give priority to keeping to the agreed interview schedule and to maintaining the numbers required to make up the groups. The interviewees all came from a list of those who had volunteered. They were therefore all people who were interested in discussing the plays. The majority of them were isiZulu-speaking. Although I could not be systematic and ask people to declare their involvement in the numbers gangs I did ask the interviewees to indicate, where they were able, which interviewees belonged to which gangs and who were non-gang members. I was therefore able to establish that there was representation from all three groups in the sample.

Part two dealt with interviewing the performers. 37 offenders were involved in making *Isikhathi Sewashi* and 12 in making *Lisekhon' Ithemba*. Not all the performers were multilingual; about half were competent in the use of English. I estimated that I would need to talk to approximately six members from the cast of *Lisekhon' Ithemba* and 14 members from the cast of *Isikhathi Sewashi*. I conducted the individual interviews with each performer.

3.11 Offender participation in the research process

The team of six researchers from the cast of *Isikhathi Sewashi* conducted and tape-recorded interviews using isiZulu with the members of the audience. They transcribed the tapes and translated the transcripts into English. I coded and analyzed the translated transcripts. Quotations presented in this dissertation are taken from these transcripts.

The interviews were conducted two to three months after the performances of the plays. *Isikhathi Sewashi* had played through out the centre on Tuesdays and Thursdays during January and February of 2003. *Lisekhon' Ithemba* followed, and played on Tuesdays and Thursdays during March and April 2003. The group interviews occurred on weekends from the end of April until the end of June 2003.

The research was not the core of the Correction Centre's daily activities. The research was not a priority for the offenders or the correctional staff. There was always the threat that it might be interrupted or collapse because other daily operational concerns would take precedence. Interview arrangements might be postponed because of the lack of staff available to collect offenders and supervise interview sessions. Other activities taking

place in the prison, such as soccer matches, school exams or church meetings, could draw offenders away who had volunteered to participate in the interviews. Performing the plays throughout the correction centre had been an unusual series of events and had caught the attention of the correctional staff and offenders. This, together with the tight time frame for the interviews provided enough interest for the interviewing schedule to hold. The performers involved in conducting the research showed great interest in the comments generated in the group discussions. They developed a deeper understanding of the uses of theatre from this experience.

The interviews with the members of the audience were conducted as group interviews, each group consisting of five people. I believed that groups larger than five would become unmanageable and make the interview process laborious. I use the term 'group interviews' and not focus group interviews because the research team did not have the skills to manage a highly interactive process.

The degree of difference between each group was minimal in that they lived in the same section and watched the same plays and it was likely that theoretical saturation would occur reasonably quickly, well within the scheduled number of interviews. The schedule for interviewing allowed time for the research team to practice and develop their interviewing skills and for the theoretical sampling process to reach saturation before the interview process either collapsed or was completed. In fact the schedule held and theoretical saturation occurred within the data.

There was a time delay between conducting the interviews and receiving the translated transcripts. I managed the theoretical sampling by conducting debriefing meetings with the research team after each interview session. This enabled me to gauge, informally, the extent to which the information being generated was similar, and reaching theoretical saturation, and how to guide the team to probe in particular directions and identify new areas to explore. Theoretical sampling allows a researcher to respond to findings and focus the research differently when needed. This does not mean that grounded theory methods lack system or process. Charmaz (2006:97) emphasises that grounded theorists shape their data collection from their

analytic interpretations and discoveries and check and extend their emerging ideas by collecting further data.

I knew the cast members of *Isikhathi Sewashi* well and was able to select people who were competent to undertake the research task. Some members of the cast had facilitated group discussions during the plays and had already developed skill and confidence in managing group discussions. They all had a practical command of English. The research team and I together agreed on the protocols for interviewing, the structure of the interviews, and the questions. We formalized the following terms on which to conduct the research. These procedures were outlined to the offenders when they were asked to volunteer to participate in the interviews and at the beginning of each interview session. The tapes and transcripts with information that might identify the offenders by name would remain at the University and would not be made public. The dissertation would be made available to the Department of Correctional Services. Offenders' names would not be used in any public material. The last point is a legal requirement and is addressed by the Correctional Services Act, (1998:123.1) (see p3). Earlier during the play-making process the performers had also, in line with the Department of Correctional Services rules and regulations, signed indemnity forms giving permission for me to take pictures and video rehearsals and the performances to school children. There is no visual record of the performances in the sections because it would have been too complicated to negotiate permission across the entire correctional centre.

We agreed that the findings from the research would be made available to cast members. I conducted two training sessions with the research team: one, a preliminary meeting to set up the interview process and the second, to look at the findings. The second training session took place after I had completed initial coding on the transcripts of the audience interviews. This was the only chance I had to provide feedback to cast members about what was emerging from the research. The research team received copies of the transcripts in both isiZulu and English. They were asked to bring to the workshop themes that they had identified in the material.

The following is a summary of the meeting, derived from a research memo I wrote in June after this training session (Hurst R3 2004 unpublished).

The team tended to see a similar range of themes to those I had found in the data. The themes included pain, anger, and grief. We talked about how, because these emotions are remembered, their quality is changed and audience members can reflect on the experience. The team thought the role of remembering in response to a story was very African; they added that the audiences' comments about needing to perform the plays to the public outside were related to feelings evoked during the plays. They felt the members of the audience wanted people outside the correction centre to see the play to understand them more clearly. One member of the research team felt the audiences needed contact with people outside, which they felt could be achieved symbolically through the performances of the plays, even though they could not be physically present at such performances. This, the research team member felt, was further support for the category 'symbolic escape'¹.

The research team and I also discussed differences in ideas or emphases that they had noticed in the isiZulu and English transcripts. This discussion allowed me to check for distortions in translation. They had often used words like "enlighten", "rehabilitate", "it develops us" and sometimes "it raises our consciousness" in translating the responses of members of the audience. These English words seemed to have evaluative connotations. We discussed what the interviewees had actually said. They had used the words such as, *ukuqwashisa* – which the research team agreed meant giving information, and *ukwakha* or *ukwakheka*, which they agreed had the sense in English of 'rehabilitate', 'teach and develop'.

Last, we agreed that the work of the research team would be conducted in such a way that it would constitute a skills development course and the team members would receive a certificate of attendance from the [then] University of Natal after completing their component of the research task.

3.12 The structure of interviews with members of the audience

The interviews followed a basic structure but allowed the interviewers discretion to explore and probe responses as and when they saw fit. As the interviewing team gained confidence, they allowed the structure of the

¹ The category "symbolic escape" later became refined and renamed "escaping for a moment".

interviews to become less rigid. These were group interviews. The actual question-and-answer process involved the respondents' answering in turns. There was not much discussion between respondents although they supported or contradicted each other when their turn came to speak.

The interviews opened by establishing the respondents' experience of theatre in the community outside, before they were sentenced. The discussions then explored what they thought, if any, were the differences between plays performed in the correctional centre and those outside. They were also asked an open question about what they thought the theatre in the correctional centre was about. Thereafter the questions focused on what the respondents remembered about the performance of *Isikhathi Sewashi* and what they remembered about the discussions of the play that took place after the performance in the cells. The same questions were then asked about *Lisekhon' Ithemba*. The interviewers then asked the respondents about their perceptions of changes, at a personal level or at a sections level, that had taken place, which they felt could be attributed to the performance of the plays. The interviewers closed by asking the respondents to identify the important issues raised by them during the interviews.

Once a substantial body of data had been collected and not much new information was being generated, the interviewing team and I decided to introduce questions that explored audiences' responses to the aesthetics used. These questions were introduced into the last three group interviews. Most of the responses addressed *Isikhathi Sewashi*. This play worked with more complex aesthetic choices. The comments about the need to use costumes and props concerned both plays.

3.13 Producing data in English

Allowing the performers to translate the tapes of their interviews seemed appropriate because they were familiar with the prison-culture and context, knew who the speakers were, and understood prison-slang. Their skill in English varied. The transcripts reflect spoken black-prison-English, to which my ear is attuned. I analysed these English translations; imprecise vocabulary and non-standard grammatical sentence structures occur in both the audience transcripts and taped interviews with the performers. When presenting

quotations from the translations and the interviews with the performers, I have made few alterations and only altered the text when I felt meaning would be too difficult for the reader to access. My main concern has been to punctuate the text to assist the reader to make sense of what, for some, will be unusual sentence structures. I have tried to maintain a sense of the speaker's voice.

3.14 Interviews with members of the cast

The organization of the individual interviews with the cast members was easier. I conducted these in an office in the Education Department inside the Medium B Correctional Centre. I conducted one interview a day over a period of 21 days during March 2004; two interviews were conducted outside this time frame. In June 2003 I conducted an extensive interview with Ntusi and one with a cast member who had been transferred away from Westville Correctional Facility to Ncome Correctional Facility.

I conducted individual interviews, which I recorded, in English, selecting those performers who would be comfortable speaking to me in English. Some respondents had good vocabularies and were able to speak conceptually about the work; others had more difficulty and their use of English had many of the problems that occur in translations of the isiZulu interviews with audience members.

I had more control over these interviews and could engage more thoroughly the principles of theoretical sampling. Although the interview schedule was tight, I reviewed the tapes and informally conducted some initial coding before the next interview. This meant that I could work with a looser structure and respond more directly by probing particular areas as they arose. I was also able to pay less attention to responses that had already been explored in preceding interviews.

An advantage of conducting individual interviews was that disruption to the daily routine of the correction centre was minimal. There were other reasons why I used individual and not group interviews: the discussions around how the performers engaged the play-making processes were more complex than the discussions with members of the audience. These discussions required personal reflections on individual experiences and I felt that some people might not wish to do this in a group process. Although there

were high levels of trust with in the theatre group, a correction centre is not an environment where people make themselves publicly vulnerable.

3.15 Analysing and Coding the Interviews

The coding work involved a detailed analysis of the offenders' discourse. The first purpose was to develop a list of general themes, and the second to establish categories that were useful to explain the processes that the members of the audience used to engage the play and the use the performers and audience members found for the theatre work within the correctional context. The coding process for the data from the interviews with the audience and performers used Glaser and Strauss's (1999:101-115) 'Constant Comparison Method'. Glaser and Strauss (1999:107) explain that the data needs to be coded repeatedly. This repeated coding or focused coding generates theoretical notions, which are captured on memos and coded. Charmaz (1994:100) describes the initial coding process as looking for leads, ideas and issues in the data. Informal initial coding occurred during the interviewing process as part of theoretical sampling and monitoring of theoretical saturation. Charmaz (1994:104–106) describes the next phase of the focused coding process as a conceptual phase, when limited sets of codes developed in the initial phase are applied to larger amounts of data. The process is selective because the researcher has already developed a useful set of categories and it is conceptual because it raises the sorting of data to an analytical level as opposed to merely summarizing the data. The purpose, she states, is to build and clarify a category by examining all the variations and data it covers. By showing relationships between categories in ways that explain the issues and events being studied, focused coding helps to provide the groundwork for developing explanations and predictions.

First, I analysed interviews with the members of the audience; second, I analysed interviews with the performers. Throughout this process I produced coding memos about patterns emerging from the data and connections between categories.

The responses were rich with information and sometimes emotional. I found the detail of the content as interesting as any underlying common process revealed by the coding exercise. I conducted initial coding manually,

generating possible themes and properties on copies of the transcripts and in coding memos. I then recoded the material capturing and sorted it using software: this constituted a focused coding process. I did this once for the individual interviews and twice for the group interviews using Microsoft Office Access 2003. Later sorting was done using Bento. Categories and comments were captured and resorted. Once this data was captured, it was repeatedly recoded, each session further refining the categories until a core-category emerged of which the sub-categories were a part. The core-categories and their subcategories emerged clearly in a final manual coding sessions in which I printed out the data and grouped the categories with their supporting comments from the interviews in a diagrammatic format. At this stage minor adjustments were made to the naming of categories and resorting of data. The core-category that emerged in the case of the audience responses was “how we watch a play”; a second core category was “negotiating social relations”. This second category was finally supported by data from interviews with the audience and performers.

I sorted back and forth through the full transcripts of the interviews with the members of the audience, generating a list of general themes from the full range of data. I then recoded the sections in which the respondents discussed what they remembered about the plays and the discussions they had back in the sections. While coding the responses to these questions in relation to *Isikhathi Sewashi*, using focused coding I was able to identify a range of categories that showed how the audience processed their experience of watching the play. This work led me to identify three primary processes the audience used to engage the plays. These three processes occurred in the majority of responses to the questions about *Isikhathi Sewashi*. For example, I was able to find a total of 149 examples in these responses.

I then re-coded the responses to the same questions: what respondents remembered about the play and what they discussed back in the cells, in regard to *Lisekhon' Ithemba*. Two of the three processes identified while working on the responses to *Isikhathi Sewashi* also occurred frequently here. From these findings I was able to generate a hypothesis about the way the offenders processed their experience of watching the plays (p243-248).

I also conducted focused coding, using software on other sections of the interviews with members of the audience. This time I focused on themes generated by the content, directly relating to each question. This re-coding produced useful focused information about the responses to specific questions. For example, I was able to sort specific kinds of changes that the respondents perceived the plays had generated. The questions about change provided information about the manner in which the audience carried their experience of watching the plays into daily life in the correction centre. This opened a way to analyse how the cast and audience used the experience of watching the play to negotiate a number of social relationships.

I have used the information from the focused coding sessions of responses to questions about aesthetics and important issues raised during the interviews sparingly and only to support the contextual information about the theatre work. The bulk of the contextual information, involving the audiences' expectations of theatre, comes from coding responses about their preconceptions of theatre and general thoughts about performing plays at the Medium B Correctional Centre.

In the case of the interviews with the performers, I coded and recoded the material by listening to the interviews and making notes. Once a clear group of categories began to emerge, I transcribed the performers' comments and re-coded them in a focused coding process using software. It became possible to group the comments, some 151 examples, under one or other of these categories:

- Thinking more broadly
- Solving problems
- Escaping for a moment
- Speaking out
- Establishing a sense of self

The responses that support these categories come from extended conversation with performers, lasting 45 minutes to an hour and in a few cases much longer. The performers did not think or speak in terms of discrete categories and qualities. At times the different segments within a single response seemed to fit into multiple categories. Also, the categories themselves have similarities and are interconnected. For example, 'speaking

out' has a relationship with 'solving problems' and/or 'establishing a sense of self'; 'thinking more broadly' and 'escaping for a moment' have a relationship to each other and to 'solving problems'. Although I have been able to tease out a range of discrete categories, they occur through out the conversations in a fluid manner.

Quantitative measurements of the responses have limited value in this study. It is, however, useful to point out that the performers made more comments about the theatre being a useful tool for solving problems in a correctional environment than in other categories. I transcribed and coded a total of 151 responses during the focused coding process. Most of the responses (44) dealt with 'solving problems'. There were 39 examples of 'escaping for a moment' and 34 of 'speaking out'. The remaining examples comprise 21 examples of 'establishing a sense of self' and 13 of 'thinking more broadly'. When first asked about the plays, however, the most common initial response was that the theatre projects made the performer think more broadly. The other categories emerged as the performers elaborated on this responses.

I used noun phrases to describe the categories. They describe the actions present in the performers' comments and this allows me to discuss the performers engagement with the theatre work in terms of a process. I conducted a final, manual sorting of the data, refining the titles of these categories to produce a core-category "negotiating social relations". This emerges as the function of the plays and later as the purpose for making plays, when the performers discuss plays they have subsequently made or would like to make. This core-category was supported by coded information about changes that the members of the audience felt they could attribute to the performance of the plays.

3.16 Limitations specific to the research methods used

The analysis is dependant on interviews containing anecdotal information about conversations and actions that occurred in the cells. These are permeated by perceptions and rationale belonging to the offenders recounting them. My own observation of conversations and interactions in the cells after the plays might have produced more accurate information, but this of course was not

possible. Also, the selection of members of the audience to participate in the interviews was not as structured as originally planned. The selection favoured offenders who were willing and able to attend on the day of the interviews.

The initial coding conducted during the gathering of information was hurried. The schedule for gathering the data was compressed, so detailed coding and recoding could not occur before more data was gathered. This limited the process of theoretical sampling. The quantity of similar responses, however, from interviews used supports the emergent categories and demonstrates that theoretical saturation occurred.

My limited skill in isiZulu meant that I was working with information that was mediated through translation, in the case of the interviews with members of the audience, and by second-language English usage, in the case of interviews with the members of the cast. Working with a research team with limited experience and skill added an educational element to the project but also meant that responses were not always fully probed during the interviews; sometimes the interviewers tended to lead the interviewees or offered explanations about the plays. My impulse to help members of the cast who were battling to find the English words to explain something sometimes ruined a response because I was not able to use it to support a category. The self-censoring, suspicion, and power politics that are part of the prison environment must always to some degree be present in the responses.

Chapter Four

A Description of *Isikhathi Sewashi*

4.1 A description of the play in performance

It is 11 February 2003; I enter section C3, cells 7 to 12 at the Medium B Correction Centre to watch a performance of *Isikhathi Sewashi*. As usual a crowd is gathering at the far end of the ‘veranda’, a long, enclosed courtyard on to which the rows of cells open. Some chairs have been brought in from the school in the correction centre, along with benches from the dining hall. These form a three-sided auditorium for the ‘theatre’ area. The noise from the other sections creates a continuous racket. Offenders who do not want to attend the play are sometimes locked-up back in the cells. Today, in this section, they are allowed to wander off to other parts of the ‘veranda’. To the side of the chairs, the cast forms a circle and sing and dance in order to warm up, focus, and build morale for the performance. Finally, a large crowd has gathered, about three hundred men, huddled together on the seats and the floor. The performers form a human wall on three sides behind the seated audience, defining the theatre space. A man comes into the centre of the open space and starts to sing:

We grew up together
We were not equal
People not the same
Living together
(Ntuli 2005:1)

The song is haunting. One by one a line of cast enter the space and line up at the back of the stage facing the audience. As each row enters the sound and harmonies in the song build up. The repetition seem to create a silence and sadness in the audience. Are they remembering the lives and identities they once had outside before being clothed in prison-green¹? Are they remembering ANC and IFP divisions, party political gangs and turf wars, the violence that brought them here? Are they remembering the divisions of apartheid and the

¹ At the time the play was performed the prisoners’ uniform was dark green. The current uniform worn by offenders is bright orange with the word prisoner printed all over it. These were introduced into the Medium B Prison after 2003.

state of emergency during the 1980s? The song subsides. A praise-poet steps forward and delivers a poem about the general struggle of Africa against the shock of imperialism and colonial conquest. The poem and song have introduced the play and placed the story in a larger, more politicised, context. The cast exit singing.

The next section of the play depicts what it was like for the cast to grow up in the 1980s. As they leave, singing, immediately a group of youths playing football appear on stage. The whole performance has a military precision. The change between scenes and focus between different areas of action has been rehearsed to a rhythm. One scene finishes – beat – the next scene begins. Sometimes after a striking image or ‘thinking moment’ there is a pause for the audience to reflect and then there is a longer pause – beat, beat – and new action.

There is a loud whistle: the football game freezes – silence. A man wearing a sandwich board enters. The sign on the board reads, “We are getting finished by bombs and guns in the township (Ntuli 2005:2).” He moves through the tableau of actors playing football so the audience can read the sign. The audience shifts and moves to read it. The man bursts a balloon – bang! The actors who were playing football rush about inside and outside the acting space, behind the audience. The cast members not in the scene and standing behind the audience on all three sides create a tableau depicting terror. A body from somewhere is flung and slides across the floor to centre stage. The actors group around it. It is one of their own, a bomb-blast victim. The body is carried off and an argument breaks out amongst those left on stage. One boy, Nkululeko, accuses another, Ayanda, of being an *impimpi*, (a sell-out); the bystanders try to defuse the dangerous moment.

The action is interrupted by a cry of *amandla*, power, from offstage – beat. Actors enter *toyi toying*; a dance of political protest. This is a political rally. The cast behind the audience forms a tableau, standing to attention and giving the clenched fist salute. Then the actors on stage at the rally drop to their knees, dead still. From behind the audience, a single actor steps forward and begins to tell his memories of being a policeman during the 1980s. The action on stage is set in the 1980s: these memories are spoken as by a policeman who survived and lives today in 2003. He recalls how the 1980s

were a difficult time for policemen, subject to apartheid prejudice at work and branded a collaborator in the township. From another part of the audience another actor steps forward. He is playing a Boer. Speaking in a mixture of Afrikaans and English he too remembers from 2003 how unnecessarily violent the blacks had seemed to him back then. He speaks about how well he had treated his maid. Throughout his speech he repeats that he is not a racist. The audience pick up on the irony in the repetition and laugh. Finally, a third man steps forward although square in build and bearded, his squeaky voice announces that he is Mavis. The audience laugh, but his gestures and concentration check the laughter. They recognize him as a mother. Mavis recalls that she lost a son in the liberation war, whose death and burial place remain unknown to her in 2003. She tells of having to endure and submit to the sexual advances of her white employer. For a moment this testimony leaves a lingering trace of sadness in the audience. But the main action centre-stage resumes with the call and response chants of *amandla* and *awethu* (power is ours). At this political meeting the audience learns that Nkululeko is going to join Mkhonthe we Sizwe² in Tanzania. The actors then exit, singing a political song. The stage space is immediately filled by *tsotsis* (thugs) walking around in a variety of high *tsotsi* styles of walking, drinking and rolling zol (marijuana), contemptuous of political fanatics. Like a ghost, the sandwich-board man moves amongst them. This time his sign reads, “The struggle between politics and living freely (Ntuli 2005:5)”.

As the noisy *tsotsis* leave the stage their exit overlaps with a liberation song sung by the cast offstage, behind the audience. Walking high in the air held on the hands of members of the cast, Nkululeko enters seeming to glide on air across the stage. The image of Nkululeko leaving to join the MK is followed by a scene of a military parade in the camps in Tanzania where guns are given out to each soldier. We see a gun, a symbol of power, being presented repeatedly to three soldiers and then to Nkululeko. Throughout this scene the actors off stage, behind the audience, have stood in a tableau with the power salute.

² Mkhonthe we Sizwe was the name of the military wing of the African National Congress. It translates into English as The Spear of The Nation.

The MK camp ‘cross-fades’ into a noisy township classroom. The shouts of the students precede their entrance. The tableau off stage changes to one of students reading books. A large, tough, charismatic, muscular actor playing Gazolo enters, walking *tsotsi* style. He proudly tells his friends how he found a white man lost in KwaMashu (a black township). He offered to help him find his way out of the township, got in the car and led the man to a rubbish dump where he called the scavenging children who survive at the dump to kill the man. Gazolo tells how as he stabbed the white man he said, “and here’s for the pass law victims of the 1960s”, and, “take this for the black students killed in 1976 (Ntuli 2005:7).” As the boys prepare the tyre to necklace the man, Gazolo takes the shopping bags from the man’s car and spills groceries out on the ground.

A teacher enters and briefly restores order in the classroom before the students protest about the Bantu education they receive. They throw the teacher out of the classroom. From behind the audience, the whole theatre seems to erupt into a political song from the 1980s with the chorus, “Release Mandela, release Mandela (Ntuli 2005:8).” The entire cast *toyi toyi* and sing. They draw on their memories of township demonstrations of the 1980s. The sound coming from all sides engulfs the audience.

The play now takes a change of direction. The period of political violence of the 1990s is recounted through song and dance. These musical segments are interrupted with soliloquies from the three protagonists in which they explain to the audience their life story and why they finally became criminals.

Nkululeko is the first to tell the audience his story. As he speaks, the man with the sandwich board wanders onto the stage to watch him. His sign reads, “The disillusionment of the cannibals (Ntuli 2005:8)”. *Zimuzimu* translated here as cannibals was a term, borrowed from folktales and used by apartheid propaganda to describe the guerrillas. Nkululeko describes growing up during the anti-apartheid struggle and choosing to leave South Africa to travel north to join the freedom fighters. He speaks of returning to South Africa and participating in the unsuccessful attempt to merge the MK cadres into the South African National Defence Force. Disillusioned with failed

promises and expectations of post-apartheid South Africa, he decided to secure his survival. He chose to use his weapons and his army skills to rob.

His exit is followed immediately by war chants and IFP slogans coming from behind one side of the audience. They are aggressively shouted towards the UDF supporters behind the audience on the opposite side of the stage. The regiment of IFP enters, singing in praise of *Shenge*, Buthelezi's praise name, and condemning the UDF. The songs and chants seem traditional and regimental. As this group leaves the stage, in a looser, urban/township style, the group of *toyi toying* UDF supporters enters from the opposite side. Their song celebrates the ANC and SACP, and condemns the IFP. As they leave, Gazolo comes forward to tell his story.

Gazolo is watched by the man with a sandwich board. His sign reads, "Foolishness is that I am uneducated (Ntuli 2005:10)". He tells of growing up during the 1980s, a period in which the townships were made ungovernable as part of the resistance to apartheid. Gazolo tells us of his feelings of inferiority because he came to town from the rural areas. Through his physical strength and ability to take a leading role in student protests, he gained some personal recognition. With the end of apartheid, after having been released from prison, in order to survive, Gazolo ended up selling drugs on the streets for Ayanda, a son of a *Bantustan* (Independent African homeland) businessman.

The third song marks the end of political violence. Four men enter from each corner of the stage and dance. Each dance is characteristic of a particular ethnic group, Sotho, Xhosa, Zulu, and Pondo. Finally all dance and sing together.:

Is true that whites are sorcerers
Dividing the black nation into groups
An Umzulu is an African
An Umxosa is an African
An UmPondo is an African
An UmSuthu is an African
(Ntuli 2005:12)

The last to speak is Ayanda. He tells of growing up in a wealthy family. He was impatient for material possessions and this drove him to crime. The sandwich-board man watches him – his sign reads, "Money, money,

model C (Ntuli 2005:12)'' At the end of Ayanda's soliloquy the man with the board speaks for the first time. He sings a song about how, as a hobo, he is the object of everyone's animosity.

The play makes another shift in style back into a series of scenes that culminate in the final cash-in-transit robbery. As political violence subsides, in a street scene, Gazolo, selling drugs, meets with Nkululeko and they recognize each other. They decide to join together to commit a robbery. The cast members, offstage behind the audience, resume making tableaux. For this scene and the following scenes when the robbery is planned the tableaux offstage are of people using drugs. For all the family scenes that interrupt those about the robbery the tableaux are of neighbours spying through the cracks in the walls of a house. The two tableaux – drug addicts and spying neighbours – alternate through the next few scenes.

After the street scene the action jumps to a family scene. We see the hypocrisy of middle-class township life. Mike and Mavis, Ayanda's parents discuss the problem of their son dating a low-class girl, Gazolo's sister.

The action jumps back to the street. Ayanda is bullying Gazolo who is selling drugs on the street corner for him. Nkululeko enters and the plan for the robbery is explained to Ayanda, who agrees to join in as the getaway driver. Gazolo and Nkululeko do not trust him enough to give him a gun. He is a soft middle-class boy; they give him a knife.

Another family scene: this family is poorer than the previous one and their behaviours are 'more rural'. Mthethwa, Gazolo's father returns home tired from seeking 'piece work', (casual labour). MaVilakazi serves him tea with milk, which surprises him. She explains that Gazolo bought the milk. Mthethwa knows that Gazolo's money comes from crime and does not like benefiting from Gazolo's earnings. Mthethwa discusses with MaVilakazi the need for the family to leave the corrupt town and return to the rural areas. Ntombi, their daughter enters to clear away the tea things. This is the girl we heard about in the previous scene with Ayanda's family. Mthethwa disapproves of her short skirt. Ntombi replies that he offers her no financial support, so she must fend for herself.

Then the cash-in-transit heist commences: the actors mime the actions. A chain with spikes is thrown across the road; the security vehicle enters, its

tyres are punctured and it stops. Gazolo and Nkululeko order the guards out of the vehicle to lie face down on the ground. They take the money. A guard shoots Gazolo in the leg. Nkululeko shoots the guard dead. Ayanda leaves the car to rescue Gazolo. Nkululeko takes the car and money and drives off, leaving Ayanda and Gazolo. The police arrive and arrest the two stranded robbers. The action on stage freezes.

On each side of the audience, where previously the offstage tableaux have occurred, a series of scenes depicting the consequences of the murder of the guard are played. The first scene depicts a policeman breaking the news to the family that the guard had been killed in the robbery. The next scene is the funeral oration. The final scene depicts the guard's daughter explaining to the headmaster that she has to leave school because the family no longer have an income. Throughout this scene the man with the sandwich board has stood centre stage wearing a sign that reads, "Do you see the impact of your crime?" (Ntuli 2005:19)"

The action centre-stage resumes. Gazolo and Ayanda are thrown into an interrogation room. Gazolo, although beaten up, does not say much to the policemen. Ayanda is terrified and tells all and blames Gazolo. They are dragged off to the cells.

Cindy, Nkululeko's girlfriend enters complaining to her friend Zinhle that Nkululeko has left her after she supported him while he was unemployed.

Nkululeko enters with an imaginary bag filled with weapons. He and three other thugs are planning another robbery. One of the thugs, recently released from prison, has second thoughts. He remembers prison-life and does not want to go back. His memories of prisons-life are represented from the 'off stage' areas by the cast shouting out to him in the slang of the numbers-gang:

- Voices 1: Here are the sixes. Here are the eights. Put them in father so we can give them an enema. Search them and do all the prison habits [...]
- Voices 2: Drop your pants so we can screw you, jerk. We have been in prison for so long, while you were busy with our girlfriends outside. We are going to be busy with you here [...]

Voices 3: What do you know about money? We of Ngelekejane³ know about money. Bring that jewellery as well, you jerk! (Ntuli 2005:22)

The play ends with a *kwaito* (isiZulu rap) song about personal choice and change. The man who refused to go back into crime leads the song. The lines from the chorus contain the title of the play *Isikhathi Sewashi*. The song emphasises that the play requires the audience to find meaning in it. Here is the chorus: “Time of the watch has arrived/ After all we have got the message” (Ntuli 2005 22).

The audience now are reconfigured into smaller discussion circles. The cast members lead discussions in each group. One cast member writes the responses on a large sheet of newsprint. They discuss the reasons for crime and suggest solutions. After about half an hour, or so, the discussion ends, because it is almost lunchtime and the correction staff are waiting to take the offenders to the dining hall. Briefly, each group discusses the outcomes of the discussions. They refer to the lists on sheets of newsprint. A member of the audience presents the information on behalf of each group. The performance and discussion end with a formal vote of thanks to the correctional authorities.

4.2 The outcomes of audience discussions

In the groups the members of the audience discussed what they thought about the play and then the discussion focussed on two questions: what changes should we make as a society to address the problem of crime and what changes should they make to address crime. These discussions were led by facilitators from the cast.

The distinction between responses to the two questions was not always successfully maintained during the discussions. The responses were summarized and translated into English by Ntusi and given to me. I have coded them for presentation here. They are grouped into the common themes that emerged as recommendations for addressing crime. The themes are supported by examples of statements from the flipchart lists. What follows is a

³ Ngelekejane is one of the founders of the 26 gang.

summary of the opinions of about 3500 offenders' about the causes and solutions to crime in South Africa:

- Increased communication;
- We need to initiate forums as the community;
- As ex-convicts, it is our responsibility to tell the young about crime and its consequences;
- Make use of counselling whenever you face difficulties or troubles;
- Convene seminars; define freedom and its meaning; identify opportunities to free ourselves;
- Let the youth speak to us to understand what they think about crime and we can help shape their thoughts using our experiences;
- Increase social capital;
- Create opportunities in the community by supporting each other's projects;
- Organize the community;
- Cooperation between the rich and poor;
- Resist peer pressure;
- Reduce the use of drugs and alcohol;
- Education is the key to a brighter future;
- Trade skills need to be acquired;
- Teach young children morals and values;
- Employment: start informal businesses on the street, such as selling fruit;
- Businesses should be encouraged to employ ex-offenders;
- Increase parenting skills;
- Parents need to be told about their responsibilities towards their children;
- Patience and compliance: if you are poor and earning little and have no immediate options that are better, persevere, be patient until solutions that are legal and morally right come up.
- Media: Our TVs and radios promote crime.

4.3 Demographic profile of the cast

The cast of *Isikhathi Sewashi* consisted of 37 men,⁴ most of who had been sentenced after 1994. Their ages ranged from 19 to 50 years. The majority, 27, were between 23 and 33 years of age. They were all maximum-security prisoners in the A privilege category⁵. 23 had received some secondary school education; 30 were serving sentences of 15 years or more; 36 were sentenced for violent crime, 16 for murder or murder and robbery, and 20 for robbery.

4.4 Source material for this chapter

I will support the discussion of the play-making process and the play's aesthetics with photographs and video clips (Appendix 6 Clips 1-20), taken during rehearsals and during a performance at the recreation hall in Westville Correctional Facility to learners from Comtech High School on 22 April 2003. I have already explained (p3) that the cast gave permission for themselves and their work to be photographed and filmed during rehearsal and in performance.

There is no visual documentation of the performances in the sections inside the Medium B Correction Centre. It was too complicated to negotiate permission with all the offenders who lived in each section and a single objection would have prevented any filming. Also, introducing an unknown outside observing presence through the camera would have changed the whole dynamic of the project. I also make reference to an unpublished English translation of the play (Ntuli unpublished 2004). In producing this English version, Ntuli tended more towards giving a sense of the actual isiZulu used, including idioms, rather than producing an English performance version of the play. I will also draw on a diary I kept (Hurst unpublished 2002) of my observations and thoughts about the work as it progressed. I invited the members of the cast to write to me, with their thoughts about the work, in the form of journal letters (Offenders Journals 1 – 47, unpublished 2002). More or

⁴ Westville Prison provided the personal data for offenders who participated in making *Isikhathi Sewashi* and *Lisekhon' Ithemba* on condition that I did not link the data to offenders by name.

⁵ The behaviour of the prisoners is categorised into groups A, B and C. A designates offenders with a record of good behaviour.

less each week I exchanged copies of my weekly journal with those members of the cast who had written to me. I will also draw on this material.

4.5 The offenders' brief to me

The offenders initiated *Isikhathi Sewashi*. Ntusi had written to me, on behalf of the offenders who worked on the *Theatre for a Developing Nation* modules, asking to work on a full-length play, as they had done earlier with *Shibobo 2000* (Mkhize1998). In the letter, he asked to work on a play about crime and specified that it should explore the topic in greater depth than is present in a simple anti-crime play in which a character commits a crime and ends up in jail. In April 2001, Mr Mbulasi died in a car crash. He had been the correctional staff member who had worked on *Shibobo 2000* (1998) and had worked closely with me on the subsequent Prison Theatre projects. After his death the drama work at the Medium B Prison was suspended until another staff member could be appointed. At Shelembe's funeral the offenders sent another letter to be read out at the service. In this letter the offenders acknowledged Shelembe's positive contribution to prison life and made a plea to the Head of the Medium B Correction Centre and to me for the theatre work to continue.

I started working on *Isikhathi Sewashi* in December 2001. At that time, only two things were established: (1) the play would try to deal with crime in a more complex way than simply preaching a 'crime doesn't pay' message; and (2) we would use the skills already acquired in the *Theatre for a Developing Nation* module.

4.6 Intentions of the project

Isikhathi Sewashi had the intention of getting the audience to think critically about their own lives in terms of offending behaviour (see p5). The play not only attempted to reflect back to the audiences issues about the topic that the cast established as important to them, but posed particular problems to the audience. The idea that audiences would critically engage the play was supported by the use of aesthetics that drew on Freirian notions of popular education expressed through theatre paradigms based on Theatre for Development, Theatre of the Oppressed and Epic Theatre.

4.7 A general overview of the project

The rehearsal period for *Isikhathi Sewashi* extended throughout 2002. I had weekly meetings with the cast and when teaching commitments at the university allowed, I worked with them for two days a week. Each session lasted between two to three hours. Through the early months of 2002, until the end of April, we used Image Theatre (Boal 2000:135) (see p5) to explore and discuss issues around masculinity, violence, power and crime in preparation for creating the play. From this material, we started to create the basic storyline for the play. We created a fictional story that captured the themes the cast felt were important and representative of their common experiences. During the second half of the year, the rehearsal process shifted to making the play, improvising scenes and creating songs and dances, editing the dialogue and action, and checking that the play expressed what the cast wanted it to say. Alongside work on the play, other members of the cast role-played the group discussions that would take place after the play in order to develop a questioning strategy and practice facilitation skills.

During January and February 2003 *Isikhathi Sewashi* was performed in all the sections inside the Medium B Correction Centre. In March and April *Lisekhon' Ithemba* followed and was played through the correction centre. The decision to open performances to the whole offender population was made by the theatre group and correctional authorities. This decision marked a significant shift in practice at the Medium B Correctional Centre. *Shibobo 2000* (Mkhize 2000) had only been a special event and the *Theatre for Development* projects had involved only the offenders in the theatre project and first-year university students. After 'touring' inside the Medium B Correction Centre *Isikhathi Sewashi* was played once a month, from March to October 2003, outside the centre to grade-ten school children who came from township schools. They were brought to the recreation hall in the residential area of Westville Correctional Facility where the play was performed, because minors are not permitted to enter a maximum-security centre.

The cast members' understanding of the material continued to deepen during the rehearsal process and also during the performances. Once the play was performed in the Medium B Prison the dialogue became sharper and more focused. Later, when performing to grade-ten school children the cast

discovered the purpose of the play shifted. Instead of being an exploration of criminal behaviour it became more about a generation of men who grew up during the 1980s, explaining themselves to a younger and different township generation.

4.8 Using image theatre to articulate the offenders' life experiences

Image Theatre was first used during the early part of the collective play-making process for the cast to explore their life experiences and to articulate and develop an understanding of their worldview with a particular focus on their own offending behaviour. They were already familiar with the use of Image Theatre from work in the *Theatre for a Developing Nation* module.

The cast found the physical activity involved in making and discussing tableaux more rewarding than a group discussion. It was entertaining and kept everyone involved but also seemed to identify an issue in an immediate manner. The tableaux contained narrative information about a particular situation whilst also containing detailed information about relationships and emotions. This information was provided by the gestures and expressions portrayed by different characters. The cast were able to explore, simultaneously, social issues and ideas as well as personal memories and emotions. The tableaux stood as evidence, which the discussions could support, or question. The tableaux provided critical distance, which enabled the cast to explore what was important to them, conceptually complex, and to which they had complicated emotional connections. Last, this combination of working in separate groups in the same venue gave to each group an enclosed and informal feeling. This enabled the members of the cast to speak out freely.

We started making tableaux about masculinity, a topic which I chose and which provided a starting point. There seemed an obvious connection between notions of masculinity, gangsters, and violence. The offenders suggested the subsequent and more personal topics for Image Theatre work. They asked to make tableaux about their own families, focusing on their relationship with their fathers. Next, they made tableaux about their memories of powerlessness contrasting these with images of how they took back, or had imagined taking back, power. Finally, they made images about the crimes they had committed.

At the time I felt we were simply using one of Boal's theatre techniques for raising consciousness. Less obvious was the way in which this work developed the offenders' theatre skills. They were in fact training themselves to act and stage scenes in the style of Epic Theatre. Brecht (in Willett 1978:121) explains that the actor must detach himself from the character portrayed in order to force the spectators to look critically at the situation portrayed. He uses an example of what he calls 'natural' Epic Theatre: an eyewitness to acting out the behaviour of a driver and victim involved in an accident, to the bystanders, in such a way that they are able to form an opinion about the accident. Such an approach to acting was developed by the cast during this early play-making process using Image Theatre; it was reinforced later when individual scenes were rehearsed and the company collectively critiqued the work in terms of how clearly it had expressed a particular situation.

The photographs of the tableaux (pp104 – 105, 107 – 109, 111 – 114, and 119 – 120) show that their work was very detailed. The expressions and gestures are full of individual emotional and psychological information and the groupings full of social information often about relationships of power.

Merlin (2003:155-156) argues in support of Stanislavsky (1937:121) that acting is a psycho-physical art form. Watching the offenders creating images one after another around different issues had something of the improvisational quality of Stanislavsky's late work using active analysis to uncover through physical action psychological and behavioural information. In this instance, we were not exploring a play text but preparing to write one. Merlin provides this succinct definition of Stanislavsky's active analysis:

This was the rehearsal process that Stanislavsky was exploring at the time of his death and that was subsequently developed by his students and assistants. At its heart lies improvisation, with the actors taking whatever information they have, 'Here, today, now,' as the starting point for creative work. Through the simple sequence of reading the text, discussing and improvising, they find that their words and actions move closer and closer to the playwright's script. With the formal learning of text reduced to a minimum. (Merlin 2003: 157).

In Stanislavsky's work the actor is exploring psychological connections with the material and seeking a particular kind of theatrical truth.

Our discussions of individuals' actions within the tableaux in relationship to each other tended to explore social conditions but did not preclude discussion about an individual's internal thoughts and feelings.

We worked in this way for about four months. During this time the cast became sensitized to using physical actions as a means of communicating emotional information, as well as how to use physical action as a part of staging in order to present information about social relations. Brecht refers to this as social *gestus*, "the gest that allows conclusions to be drawn about the social circumstances" (in Willett 1964:105).

4.8.1 Images of Masculinity

The tableaux about masculinity produced images of men exercising power in benevolent or malevolent ways. The point was that, for the cast, it was a man's prerogative to exercise power in whatever manner he might choose. One image showed a man drawing money from an ATM machine as well as other men preparing to rob him. Other examples showed men organizing their families in an orderly and productive manner; while others showed men abusing family members. The following extracts from the offenders' journal letters indicate something of the general discussions around masculinity and violence that emerged:

African men highly believe in their muscular power. The belief they had was the man is about power. No power, no man. So generation after generation we inherited behaviour. Before party political violence, people in townships used to fight over their differences in connection with their soccer teams. Then the freedom-fighting era came – we also used masculinity to eradicate apartheid.

After 1994 elections the people still had that feeling of violence; hence they became brutal criminals. Why so? Because we were born violent. We inherited violence from our forefathers. After that comment Chris questioned about *ubuntu* [the African values around humanity] that the African society used to have. I agreed that *ubuntu* is there especially in rural areas, especially in ancient times. African man is very kind when everything is okay. But once you mess with him you pay the price [...] Once an African man uses the word *uyangijwayela* [don't take me for granted] he is angry enough to fight. There are so many good things about African society but violence is one of our bad things we like.
(Offender Journal unpublished 2002 14:1)

The material used to make the tableaux became increasingly personal with corresponding depth and detail after the accompanying discussions. The following extracts from my journal demonstrate this and also show how the methods of engaging in the discussion grew more complex. Here is an early extract from the journal entry, 6 December 2001:

I asked the group to make 'pictures' that showed, "what a man is". The pictures included positive and negative representations and they sometimes mixed these connotations within the same picture [...] Many pictures were made with group members stepping in to read the pictures by describing what they saw going on and then adding what they thought the characters were thinking. Each group member made a picture. We also had one group make a picture and allowed the other group to come over and interpret it (Hurst unpublished 2002:1).

On 18 January, after the Christmas break, we continued making tableaux about men. The class split into two groups. Group one's tableaux are shown in photograph 3 and 4 (p104) and discussed here:

The offenders worked in two groups. Group one created an image of a polygamous man with two wives and relatives and children and a gardener working off to the right. The man was at the back and dominating the group. I asked them to create the opposite [an idealized version] of this image. Now the wives were working, the head wife was seated at the front with the second wife touching her in a friendly manner and the husband next to her, bent forward respecting her and looking into her face. Gathered behind were the family and servant. Everyone seemed happier. We discussed how communication was increased. The group agreed that the man had not lost his manly qualities. They felt that by giving over control, communication and a sense of belonging were increased. This led to a discussion amongst the group about patriarchal control and their own lives. I further challenged the group by asking the implications around the change of space. The father moved from the back to the front. They agreed that men and women control different spaces in the home and that maybe if the man saw himself as providing space rather than owning, controlling space, relationships could be better. (Hurst unpublished 2002:2)

Group two's tableaux are shown in photographs 5 and 6 (p105). I continue:

Group Two set up an image of a step daughter being abused by her stepfather, with the mother looking on upset and the neighbours en masse coming to arrest the father. We discussed the role of the neighbours and the offenders felt that social condemnation of criminal activity was strong. In their evaluation often they have stated that they wish to renegotiate their [personal] image with the communities in which they were identified as criminals. One inmate commented that he had experience of this issue

[perpetrating sexual abuse]. He had created the image. It seemed he wanted to explore this topic. They then created the opposite image [one that was not dysfunctional] with the mother sitting next to the man and the stepdaughter bringing them tea. The neighbours are now coming en masse to discuss something with the father, to ask his advice. When moving from one image to the next it was the mother who had to move the most, to be most active. I pointed out to the group that they had given her the key to solving the problem and asked what stopped women from successfully playing this active role of problem-solver. The group then discussed this in depth in isiZulu. We added to the discussion process members of the group speaking the thoughts of the characters in the image. They also discussed what each character was in denial about. We talked about the confused feelings of the stepdaughter, who may feel abused and angry and also like the father. When speaking for the characters the group members began to empathise more strongly for each of them. This process became quite serious and quiet. I finished with the group speaking the thoughts and feelings of the characters in the positive picture [...] The [group] members interact with the image by creating thoughts for the characters and also rewrite the original image. They had access to each other's readings and could add to or change the issues raised by the previous interpreter. The discussion and imaginative work is important because the two processes continually feed into each other. (Hurst unpublished 2002:2 - 3).

From the example above it is clear that some of the members of the cast wanted to use the sessions to explore very personal material. I only realized once we got into the discussion of the tableau how deeply personal this particular image was for the man who created it. He had recently been diagnosed HIV positive and clearly he had more issues related to this tableau to negotiate than those addressed during the session.

Subsequently we discussed as a group how these sessions might best draw on personal material. The objective was for the group to explore their personal experiences for the purpose of building a play that would be detailed and truthful. We also agreed that we would not cast people to play roles whose personal stories were very close to those of the characters. I was introducing the notion of critical distance and trying to ensure that the work did not lose its creative and educational focus and become therapy of some kind. This was an attempt to establish certain boundaries. The public performance could not be a public exploration of an individual's pain but a fictional account of circumstances that the cast had faced and that they could then address in a controlled manner in the group discussions. Later, during the run, there was a group discussion with a member of the cast, who had been an MK soldier,



Photograph 3. Image theatre about men – group one's tableau of a family scene



Photograph 4. Group One's tableaux an improved alternative to the circumstances shown in the previous tableau.



Photograph 5. Group two's tableau about a stepfather abusing his stepdaughter.



Photograph 6. Group Two's tableau; here the stepfather is not abusing his stepdaughter.

when he took over the role of Nkululeko. The group wanted to make sure he was comfortable to publicly perform this role.

Pauline Gladstone and Angus McLewin (1989:72-3) discuss the difficulties of building plays with offenders that engage their life experiences and acknowledge the tenuous border between working within an arts process and moving closer to therapy. They ask if it is possible to protect people fully during the devising process when the work is personal and painful. It seemed to me that it was impossible to avoid engaging personal trauma when working with black South Africans of this generation.

Certainly, during the play-making process, we were negotiating our way through this grey area between art and therapy. That this process remained collective, I hoped would offer to the offenders some control over how far they wished to go. Later, when we used Image Theatre to explore the members of the cast's crimes, we agreed that they could choose any crime to make a tableau and not necessarily the crime for which they had been sentenced. This protected them from releasing information in the session that might legally compromise them. It also allowed them to manage how much about themselves they wished to reveal. They could lie if they chose to. One member of the cast who was serving a sentence that included a conviction for rape chose to make a tableau about a stabbing.

4.8.2 Images about fathers

The cast suggested that they next used Image Theatre to explore their relationships with their fathers. Here are my comments from my journal about these sessions (see photographs 7 - 12 pp107 - 109):

The offenders made images about their families. They then changed the picture to create how they would have liked their family to have been. The picture focused on the role of the father in the family. Most offenders created an idealized second picture [...] Often pictures of violence occurred and pictures of fathers abandoning families [See photograph 7 and 8 p107]. The ideal of these images often involve the father at the centre, seated, and being affectionately touched by the group. I challenged whether this meant he was trapped but the offenders insisted they saw a unified and intimate family. The idealised versions of the violent families often showed everyone seated or lower on the ground [see photographs 9 and 10 p108]. The father was still powerful but power was being negotiated; communication was better. The seated figures seemed such a strong representation for stability



Photograph 7. Image theatre about families – a wealthy father abandons his family and drives off with his new wife.



Photograph 8. The wealthy father is surrounded by a loving wife and children.



Photograph 9. A violent father using power abusively.



Photograph 10. A father using power benevolently



Photograph 11. Rural family life, cattle ploughing, agriculture, and labour



Photograph 12. The family are literate and educating themselves.

[unlike the active violent image]. There was a lot of free discussion in the groups and the offenders seemed to enjoy talking about and exploring these readings of their family life. The pictures portrayed a lot of emotional detail. In conclusion, it seems that the pictures show a wide and diverse background from which this group of offenders come, ranging from middle class people with cars to rural people ploughing [see photographs 11 and 12 p109]. One picture of a rural family was idealised and became an educated family, reading books. They briefly discussed in the feedback that their families' dysfunction might play a role in their criminal activities. I proposed that maybe they should not set up an ideal family, which they guess at, and against which their own family life fails, but rather they should identify how their own needs might have been blocked. The [images of] ideal families all suggest that relationships of power need to be renegotiated and then communication and intimacy would increase. (Hurst unpublished 2002:5)

4.8.3 Images about feelings of powerlessness and taking back power

The image theatre work about masculinity and fathers revealed that many of the offenders felt it was a man's right to exercise power. The exploration of the images from family life demonstrated how this 'right' had been used effectively or misused by fathers. The cast then decided to explore their own use of power (see photographs 13 to 20 pp111 - 114). Here are my journal comments about these sessions:

The project then moved on to a new task, in which the offenders created pictures of how, in their own lives, they have experienced power being taken away from them and how they have tried to take power back. This task moved the work deeper into their personal issues. The method of making theatrical pictures creates distance between the individual and his life experience and this allows for a critical reading of his life in terms of the theme of power. The offenders portrayed both successful and less successful means of taking back power. Examples of less successful strategies were using escapist relationships with women [...], using casual sex to avoid dealing with intimacy [...] and living up to a popular stereotype of masculinity (power and wealth) by committing armed robbery. Examples of more successful solutions included starting a business and studying. Offenders described both these solutions as difficult. (Hurst unpublished 2002: 6).

This work about offenders' use of power produced images that involved violence and criminal activity. Violence and robbery were shown as



Photograph 13. Image Theatre about how the offenders used power – a man applies unsuccessfully for a job.



Photograph 14. Robbing the employer.



Photograph 15. A boy feels powerless watching other people succeed at school.



Photograph 16. The youth rob wealthy and successful people and making them feel afraid.



Photograph 17. An offender serving a life sentence feels powerless when his family visit.



Photograph 18. The offender studies whilst in prison.



Photograph 19. A Man is robbed in a train.



Photograph 20. The robbers are arrested and money returned.

solutions to unemployment. The photographs 13 and 14 (p111) show a member of the cast applying unsuccessfully for a job followed by a scene of him committing an armed robbery: his solution to his feeling powerless. Issues around education emerged as important: for example, photographs 15 and 16 (p112) show a member of the cast failing at school. This is countered by an image of hijacking. In contrast, in photographs 17 and 18 (p113) one member of the cast has created a tableau depicting the powerlessness he felt serving a life sentence behind bars and countered this with an image of himself studying. Interestingly, the offenders saw the enforcement of the law as a means of restoring power to victims of crime. One set of tableaux showed a man traveling on a train and being robbed by a gang of thugs. This was countered by a tableau depicting the thugs being arrested. (Photographs 19 and 20 p114). It seems likely from the examples discussed that in some cases the images of taking back power were fantasies about action in which the cast members might have liked to engage. An example of this was when one member of the cast produced a tableau of himself being sjamboked in public at a township kangaroo court. His tableau depicting him taking back power showed him gunning down the members of the kangaroo court with a machine gun. Whether the offenders created tableaux that showed real or imagined solutions, they were able to build candid pictures of their own thoughts, feelings and behaviour. They also seemed to enjoy making images of both pro-social and antisocial solutions to feelings of powerlessness. In my journal I comment on the level of candor and describe some of the tableaux:

This week's session continued to look at people's stories about how power has been taken away and then taken back. The images were very candid. One guy demonstrated how he had been beaten by a kangaroo court. He must hold great resentment over that. Two guys talked about going on crime sprees and talked of how it really gets 'pumping' [the adrenalin rush of excitement while committing a crime]. [...] One inmate commented that he would go on a crime spree for about a week at a time and another commented that finally he had to harm someone every day [...] One guy produced a really interesting image of his girlfriends refusing his sexual advances so he rapes or forces them to have sex. Then the two women are pregnant and now he has taken power back. Women who have your child are then totally under your control as well as subject to a host of other social controls and limitations. This was a great image because it articulated so clearly an abuse of power that seems gratifying but finally does not deliver the social

relationships that the offenders seem to [really] want. (Hurst unpublished 2002:6)

The discussion of these images was interesting because the offenders started to think more deeply and challenge their own assumptions about power and the kinds of decisions they make about its use. This is demonstrated in this excerpt from a letter to me about this session from a member of the cast.

Using ourselves to make pictures illustrated how we as individuals gained power and showed what happened when power was taken away from us, is remarkable. Slowly but surely, we would all (us offenders) understand the word power. It was clearly seen in our pictures how we understand the word power. Immediately abuse comes into mind, which is negative. What some offenders don't understand is, power can be interpreted in many positive ways. I find it true that bad deeds are remembered more vividly than good deeds. I've thought about the stereotypes; again the above statement dominated my thoughts. In my opinion, I believe that not all the pictures made by the offenders resemble their past. The reason being, some were scared to reveal the truth, not knowing what we (other offenders) would think of them. It's okay, they are frightened to face the past. It is true you know, the past can come back and haunt you. The question of power remains a big issue. It is funny, not all offenders understand power, lucky us hey, who try to define and interpret power in our own ways and at the same time raise consciousness [...].

Anyway, I'm beginning to understand myself in terms of masculinity which is power. Coming to think of it, I abused power in many ways, I guess that's what made me land up in this place. Today's session was powerful. I could see that some offenders regretted their past actions. I wonder who invented crime. Crime involves masculinity; power; as I said the word power is so complex.

Us as offenders, have no power whatsoever. I wouldn't define gangsterism as being powerful. Gangsterism itself is limited in prison. The only people who have absolute power in prisons are the warders. They can't be questioned whether right or wrong. (Offender Journal unpublished 2002 25:1 – 2)

Many of the members of the cast had been both perpetrators and victims of violent crime. The pro-social solutions to feelings of powerlessness sparked off debates about restorative justice. This discussion occurred before we made images exploring the criminal activities of members of the cast. The following extract from an offender's letter to me demonstrates that they had started to think deeply about the effect of their criminal behaviour on their victims. Here are comments about restorative justice from one journal letter:

The Department of Correctional Services has launched a form of justice called The Restorative Justice. This new form will help the society greatly

because it brings the wrong doer, the victims, the wrongdoer's next of kin and members of the community who have been exposed to crime, together. Its main idea is to separate the wrongdoer from the masses and to make him responsible for his actions and to let him explain why he committed such crime and mostly to bring both the offender and victim to meet in a suitable place for the victim to tell the offender how he [the offender] has changed his life on the day of the crime.

We have discussed this in our image making 'images of power'. I think it is a good idea for the two to meet under any circumstances.

I'm looking forward to the making of the criminal action images and I hope that our discussion escalates to different heights. The writing of the play will be a good period. The offenders are beginning to understand themselves more and more each session. (Offender Journal unpublished 2002 29:3)

4.8.4 Images of criminal activity

We started working on Image Theatre about the members of the cast's criminal behaviour on February 22 and continued until March 2. By this time they were familiar with the processes of making and discussing tableaux. They worked in groups making and discussing the tableaux and then presented a summary of their work to the whole group for further discussion.

The class split into two groups: one group produced tableaux of crimes related to political violence and the other produced tableaux of individual, self-serving, criminal acts such as murder, car hijacking, and escape from the holding cells (see photographs 21 to 24 pp119-120). In my journal notes I comment on how seriously and carefully the offenders engaged this process. I write:

The group working on political violence seemed to engage the task with great sensitivity because presumably not every story or person in the group came from the same political party. It is very powerful after a civil war for people to find enough compassion for each other's suffering to listen to stories from across political divisions. This is I hope the place from which people get the strength to avoid being drawn into this kind of violence again. (Hurst unpublished 2002:10)

The second group, working on the criminal acts, such as, a murder and car hijacking also got into a deep discussion. I felt that the offenders who were brave enough to turn their own stories into images, at times, had quite strong emotional reactions to the work. But they also controlled themselves, always allowing the discussion to reveal an understanding of crime [not just an account of what took place]. The first image, the murder, seemed to give rise to a discussion that explored how the inmate's previous experience of

political violence made crossing the line into personal murder easier for him. It seems, from his story, that he only understood what it meant for him to cross this line after he had shot the victim [...] The discussion of hijacking also seemed to go deeply into the economics of crime. This is an important theme. Certainly, issues of class are becoming very important in this project. (Hurst unpublished 2002:10-11)

During the work on these images the cast challenged their criminal behaviour by discussing it in relation to issues of class, economics, family and social relationships, and political violence. Later these issues would inform the different scenes made for the play. The member of the cast's own journal writing about these sessions demonstrates this kind of engagement. Here are two examples from letters to me:

In this session we dealt with violent crimes. After enacting some of crimes we then discussed the causes of crime. One inmate claimed that he shot somebody because the person had undermined him in front of a crowd of people in a shebeen [Photograph 23 see p 120]. Although he did not kill him immediately he rather ambushed him. What was not clear is whether the inmate grew up in a violent culture but in his adolescent stage the culture of political violence did influence him in solving his problem with violence.

Then other crime story was told by an inmate who was involved in car hijacking [see photograph 22 p119]. This activity involves a lot of violence if the owner resists in giving up his/her car. The causes he claimed were economical. He claimed that his family was struggling and he had no father-figure in his life. When he saw some of his peer group being successful in their trade he decided to join them. He also claimed that his family had no trouble in accepting his money. When his mother really understood what he was involved in, they refused to accept whatever he brought home. Incident of violence are minimal but they do occur they are not bothered if the person dies or survives because all they want was his/her car not their life. (Offender Journal unpublished 2002 31:1)

Being a prisoner and being limited in almost all your movements, you then begin to expand your thinking capacity/mental capacity. This program does develop my cognitive capacity. I believe it is one of the most powerful tools to rehabilitate the offenders. The project teaches the offenders to think and feel how the victims and the perpetrators feel on the scene of victimising the victims. Through the pictures I sometimes also feel, "Oooh I used to do that," but I didn't realize I was doing it. So the pictures bring the buried feelings to life again. As a person you feel like you've destroyed somehow without actually noticing. About today's pictures of violent crimes, we, the offenders, thought a lot about why we do or committed those crimes. What were the motives behind? What options we had? What to do to prevent those kinds of crime? How can the community be involved to decrease the crime rate? How have we been used by the elders, superiors, gang-leaders, economical imbalance (the rich use the poor), ethical and racial background? (Offender Journal unpublished 2002 34:1)



Photograph 21. Images of crime – political violence



Photograph 22. Car hijacking



Photograph 23. An ambush outside a shabeen



Photograph 24. An escape from the holding cells

In response to Image Theatre about political crimes and crimes that were more self-serving, issues of power related to economic class emerged. These were explored in discussions about accountability, in terms of who should be held accountable. It was only much later in the process that the cast engaged issues of personal accountability. Here are two examples from the letters the members of the cast wrote to me:

Another issue that was discussed was the issue of class. The different levels of class are usually overlooked because only one person is held accountable for a crime. e.g. In hijacking you get the person who sells or hires out firearms to the hijacker, then there is the hijacker who will hijack a car and sell it to a car dealer who will then tamper with the engine and illegally do paper work through the licensing office and then sell the car for ten times the amount paid for it. (Offender Journal unpublished 2002 39:2)

We only managed to create two images and both our images were of political crimes. We created the first image, then we discussed it and the discussion was mainly about who should be held accountable for the crimes, which was murder. Should it be the political party's top officials, the commanders of that specific mission, or the executives? And how should political conflict be handled? The offender who created this image did most of the talking and it was almost as if he was standing in front of a truth commission because he really personalized the discussion. This made it difficult for me to object because I did not want him to think that I was blaming or judging him since I didn't agree with some of the things he said.

The second image which was also political went well. We all contributed to the discussion, and those who were not politically conscious, like myself, were astonished by the state of mind the perpetrators are in when committing these political crimes, because it's very different from a criminal's thinking apparatus, which is designed to achieve his own personal antisocial objectives. (Offender Journal unpublished 2002 33:1)

The discussions about the effect on the victims of violent crime had started during the discussions of tableaux showing how the offenders took back their own sense of power. These discussions about restorative justice may well have influenced the very personal reflection about crime expressed in this extract from a cast member's letter:

The session that we had was incredible and the images of our violent crimes that we took were very touching, especially to myself. I fully agree with Yochelson's⁶ writing that says criminals are fragile but on the other hand I slightly disagree that violent home lives induce violent individuals. I was brought up by humble and Christian parents and I would be lying if I can say

⁶ I had provided the cast with some reading material which included the introduction to Yochelson's (1993) work about rehabilitation.

my parents were violent, in fact they did everything they could to make me a better person. In short, the political atmosphere that was existing in the country and within my vicinity changed my up bringing and I found myself doing extremely horrible things. Therefore, the images that we took remind me of how cruel I was and I hate what I've done in the past. (Offender Journal unpublished 2002 36:1)

This Image Theatre work had challenged the cast about how they understood crime and had helped them to articulate their thoughts on the issue. This extract from one letter demonstrates how this prepared them for creating the play:

To me it was like a summary of all the pictures that we have been making on the past sessions. The issue that were covered during picture making process were emotional. That is why we need to really focus on them when we collect or combine our ideas for the play. (Offender Journal unpublished 2002 37:1)

4.9 Creating the three main characters in the play

The group felt they had to first agree who the main characters would be before they could develop a believable set of circumstances and a storyline for them. This led to three long and difficult sessions in which the whole drama group discussed and argued about who the key characters in this play should be. These characters needed to represent the offenders' most typical experiences. This was probably the most difficult group discussion that took place during the whole process. The following comment made by a member of the cast indicates how difficult these meetings were and also that the offenders realized how important group collaboration was.

The discussions revolve around the few individuals. It is not to discourage their vast input but somehow other people are somehow neglected, rendering them unworthy for the discussion. This was cause by the inclusion of the *Shibobo 2000* crew and some people who seem to be making an 'impression' during our sessions. This may rob us of quality ideas especially since we are dealing with real life issues that touch almost everybody somehow. Random pointing of people during the discussion is okay but as I've said in sub-groups, we can't point anybody. To do that will aggravate the situation. Rather we can make it some kind of rule that comments need to be done in a row form. Whatever, as long as nobody owns the play, discussion and such. (Offender Journal unpublished 2002 9:2)

Finally, the group agreed on the three characters, Ayanda, Gazolo, and Nkululeko, whom they felt represented the experiences of the majority of the

offenders in the Medium B Prison. The first series of scenes in the play introduced the three main characters. These scenes established the time frame and context for the play. The characters were all shaped by the apartheid struggle during the 1980s, and the political violence ending in just after 1994, with the three characters committing a robbery. The detail that differentiated the characters was created so that the audience could more easily recognize their own stories in those of the three characters.

Ayanda was a man from a middle-class background. The cast felt his story suggested an Inkatha Freedom Party political orientation within his family, although the family were not presented as traditionalists but as middle-class and wealthy. The scenes about his family had a critical tone and the cast wanted them to reflect class conflict. A monolingual isiZulu speaker played Ayanda. The dialogue he created for Ayanda used more idiomatic isiZulu than is commonly used in urban areas. In this way he achieved an interesting effect. As he performed he held two class positions: his own and the fictional one of the character. One member of the cast, after a session spent developing the main characters, gave this description of Ayanda in his journal letter to me:

Boy 3 is fortunate to come from the family that is working for the [Nationalist] government.. Rich, he only attends school to brag and pass time. (Offender Journal unpublished 19 2002:1)

Gazolo was a poor man who had moved to town from the rural areas. He was played by a large, tough and charismatic man who claimed to have always lived in town and strongly rejected the traditionalist aspects of Zulu identity. His protests against Zulu identity seemed so strong that some members of the cast thought Gazolo's story might actually represent that of the actor's. Whether he actually came from a rural background or not was never resolved. The character Gazolo, like the actor who played the part, capitalized on his sense of masculinity, his physical power and tolerance for violence. The same cast member, quoted above, gave this description of Gazolo:

Boy 2 grew up in the rural area with his twin brother. With the influx of natives to the cities (urbanisation), his family finds itself poverty stricken, with the twists of fortune in the city he tries to focus on education ... Boy 2 is

financially struggling to further his studies. He is impatient with his education, anxious due to his family's destitute situation. If piece jobs aren't available, petty theft becomes the part-time survival strategy. His twin brother tries to convince him to keep faith [stay out of crime], but in vain. (Offender Journal unpublished 19 2002:1)

The idea of the twin brother mentioned here disappeared during the workshop process but it served the purpose of providing a contrast and this helped to problematize, for the cast, Gazolo's criminal choices.

Nkululeko, which means freedom in IsiZulu, was a freedom fighter and was originally played by a cast member who was not an ex-combatant. The cast worked in groups to create the life stories for these characters. Those who were ex-combatants provided information and helped to create this character. We had agreed that the people who were to play the three parts needed to have some personal distance from the material. However, the original Nkululeko dropped out and the part was finally played by one of the ex-combatants. One cast member, who was part of the team that created the character, wrote this account of the group discussion about Nkululeko:

At present we are currently working on all three main types of characters. Today we dealt with one which is a former member of either MK, APLA or AZANIA etc. A guerrilla.

The background is decided to be from his childhood to the time he left the country and to cross the border to be trained from outside the country with foreign aid. The situation is tense and brutality is a bread of life in the camps. Power and masculinity are in every soldiers' nerves. The training is far away from sweetness. Fear of death is of no importance. Hero is the word almost every soldier trainee wants. To kill is the game to be played. The diplomacy or tact, to destroy is highly essential for the training. Mercy is the word everyone hates.

The character is now back in the country with the very skill he acquired from his training. The ammunition and the guns are with him. He is ready to fight at any time. Financing is the game he enjoys. Fortunately or unfortunately the man is recruited through integration [the post-apartheid integration of guerillas into the South African National Defense Force⁷]. The man is facing intolerable situations in the army. He strongly believes he has got better training [than the old apartheid soldiers who still run the SANDF]. He does not deserve the position or the rank he is offered. Salary is not at a satisfying level. The lifestyle and the situation inside the camps [SANDF camps] is extremely different. The man cannot take the softness of the camp.

⁷ After 1994 guerillas who had fought in the liberation were offered positions in the South African armed forces, now controlled by the new ANC government. Many positions were still held by people who had worked for the Nationalist government and fought against the liberation forces. The integration of these two 'armies' was difficult. Many ex-combatants left finding the situation intolerable.

Shooting does not often take place. The man is gradually losing his power and masculinity is less used. Sometime everyone is compelled to pray in the morning. By praying the man thinks he is becoming more woman. Foreign training is hardly ringing in the man's mind. [...]

We haven't gone much deeper into his criminal life. We are still working on the character. The inmates have every intention to go deeper into his character. Seemingly his life is twisted back here after the foreign training he underwent. Some inmates suggested that there should be a special training for the exiles to integrate their skills before the national forced integration. I hope we are going to look more at him tomorrow (30th of March '02) on our next session. (Offender Journal unpublished 43 2002:1-2)

The cast felt it important that details about class and political affiliations should differentiate the characters; they also felt it believable that these characters could unite in the late 1990s into one criminal gang. Many of the cast members had been involved in political violence. Living communally as prisoners, many of them now had to renegotiate their personal engagement with party political conflict and tended to be suspicious of the coercive power dynamics used in party politics.

4.10 Using Image Theatre to build a 'storyboard' for the play

Image theatre was also used to create a 'storyboard' for the play. After having agreed upon who the main characters would be, we had to establish a clear narrative-line for the play before we started working-up the scenes through improvisation. The series of storyboard images provided the narrative spine for the play. This work was conducted after long meetings that established the three main characters. My journal entry for 27 April gives the list of images that comprised our storyboard. Each scene was represented by a tableau. This list and the images represent the whole play as we understood it in April before we started improvising scenes and adding songs and dances. Here is the list:

- They are playing ball, then the blast
- They're dead, injured and crying
- They're grabbing the Spy's son
- We're going to exile/the family of a government worker (spy)
- We are learning at school
- We have training at the MK camp
- Poor family

- Spoilt brat introducing the drugs
 - Ex-student introducing them on the street
 - They are gouffed up [affected by drugs]
 - Money is short (drug deal)
 - Coming back home from exile
 - Robbery planner (two robbers)
 - Robbery planner (three robbers)
 - We agree
 - We rob
 - Someone is injured
 - Roadblock
 - In jail
 - Further investigation
- (Hurst unpublished 2002:18-19)

This list could be described as core-images that contained the story of the play, or as a series of montages, if looked at in terms of Epic Theatre. The list of tableaux was the starting point from which we developed the scenes which formed a set of physical core-images that were then externalized, using improvisation, into scenes that made up the full play. This process included reflection and discussions; some scenes were altered and some additional material was added.

The video clip 1 in Appendix 6, shows how this worked. The first section of the video shows the cast performing the first section of the storyboard using Image Theatre. These are:

- Playing Football
- Bomb blast
- The sell-out
- Politics or Party
- School protest

This is followed by footage of the same sequence of scenes after the offenders had worked them up using improvisation.

We were able to run the images in sequence, so that everyone was able to participate in the discussions about the play and understand its

development. We then split into groups, some people now extrapolating the image into a full scene using improvisation, and others created the songs and dances. These would often provide comment on a scene.

4.11 The role of reflection and discussion

After creating new material the different groups would come together at the end of each session to show, test and discuss the work again. One of the key concerns in the discussions was to question if the material was truthful and if an audience would be able to clearly read and understand what was being portrayed. This process of reflection and discussion seemed to be successful. Here a number of comments from members of the cast about this process:

I like conversations because if the idea that we portray is weak or doesn't work at all which means we should go back and talk; it is very important to have conversations before we put things in action. (Offender Journal unpublished 2002 15)

We worked on how to enter the stage at the beginning of the song and the play. I think we succeeded in that task. With Chris before our eyes we were all serious. The beginning song '*Sikhule Ndawone*' [We Are Here Together] was well motivated. The work done on this day was great. I am beginning to have confidence that we will make a bomb play [a good play⁸]. (Offender Journal unpublished 2002 10:1)

In regard to the jail scene I would suggest that we need to jump straight to imprisonment life. If we start by police station scene we will be forced to make the court scene as well, of which I believe there is no much necessity of those scenes. They may prolong the play. It may also be out of line regarding the point we are trying to make to our audience. I think we need to make a clear picture of how life in prison is like, not pre-imprisonment. (Offender Journal unpublished 2002 47:1)

Comments in the letters suggest that the members of the cast were surprised that so many people could collaborate to make a play. Here are a few examples of some general comments about the creative and collaborative nature of the work:

We are going to the end of our play. We are here where we are because of our collaboration. A respect we give to each other it plays a big role. (Offender Journal unpublished 2002 16)

⁸ A "bomb play", used here is slang. It means a play with impact, a good play.

The method of dividing people [into groups] to be fully involved, like telling interesting and relevant stories, images, and also brainstorming, is powerful. I've learned so much, to me it is a great experience and I've so much to learn through this project. (Offender Journal unpublished 2002 17:1)

4.12 Developing facilitation skills

Whilst some of the cast worked on the play, others role-played the group discussions that would follow the play. In this way they developed their facilitation skills. The offenders playing the group members began to provide challenges during the role-play to test the facilitator's skills. Here are some comments from the facilitators about this process:

It looks like we still need some more skills of facing people who are very rude or inquisitive. I notice that when one of the offenders was conducting the facilitation he was attacked by two offenders where he tried to deny them but it ends up by a big issue which tells me that we are still lacking of skills but so far everything went good. (Offender Journal unpublished 2002 21:1)

After the first presentation of facilitation in our group there was a hot discussion. The question which were asked by the mock students were quite deep. I think it trained or taught facilitators a lot. It was about what can be expected from the students. The skills applied were nice and conducive. As usual we looked at both sides which are good and acceptable things when facilitating. (Offender Journal unpublished 2002 22:1)

4.13 Exploring the social context

Once we started building the scenes, the play focused strongly on explaining the social conditions under which the characters lived and which seemed to provide a rationale for them to become criminals. I was concerned that the cast members were presenting an argument that suggested that the decision during the apartheid struggle to make the townships ungovernable, along with poverty, was a justification of their criminal actions. My concern was that this suggested that there was no ideology informing the political struggle during the 1980s. One member of the cast remarked that they had been fighting for freedom but had not understood what freedom meant. It also seemed that for them the calls for mass action had obliterated a sense of personal accountability and individual choice. I challenged them by asking them to address the issue of personal accountability. They found this difficult: it took

about six months before they were able to respond to the challenge. They finally produced the series of monologues that occurred in the middle of the play in which each character explained his personal circumstances and his choice to become a criminal.

The cast members offered two major reasons for crime: poverty and politics. Although categories of class, in the Marxist sense, and race informed the play, they seemed to work with notions of economic classes defined around categories related to consumerism rather than labour. They saw themselves as consumers without purchasing power rather than a labour force or labour force-in-waiting. The following extracts from the journal letters provide examples of their perspectives on the theme of poverty discussed during the rehearsals:

You find some people have enough money but because they don't get satisfied then they want more. This is the reason that they start stealing. Another wrong thing these people do is to see others who have achieved things and steal from them. (Offender Journal unpublished 2002 5:1)

In about fourteen families there is one person employed. In those situations families struggle and it is a heavy duty to that member of the family to carry the family through. Because of job scarcity it leads to one of the family members becoming a thief. [...] Sometimes, furniture stores come and collect their furniture because you failed to pay or maintain the instalment every month. In situations like these some people turn to commit crimes and become criminals. Those who succeed are able to pay their debts and they don't stop because it had worked the first time. (Offender Journal unpublished 6 2002:1)

For the cast, the world was organized into those who could legitimately satisfy their needs and wants and those who lived in poverty outside the market system and who could not. These needs and wants were then satisfied through criminal acts. In their journal letters they described the symbiotic relationship between the legitimate world of consumerism and that of crime in a manner that paralleled that of labour and capital. Here are some examples:

The advanced criminals don't do crime themselves – they use economical power to their inferiors. They send the underdeveloped and developing criminals to get the job done. The inferiors are the ones who become the victims on the scene of crime if things do not go as planned. (Offender Journal unpublished 34 2002:2)

Another issue that was discussed was the issue of class. The different levels of class are usually overlooked because only one person is held accountable for a crime. e.g. In hijacking you get the person who sells or hires out firearms to the hijacker; then there is the hijacker who will hijack a car and sell it to a car dealer who will then tamper with the engine and illegally do paper work through the licensing office and then sell the car for ten times the amount paid for it. So if the hijacker is put behind bars, then someone else will be offered the money for a car, and business will resume as usual. (Offender Journal unpublished 39 2002:2)

The cast members also attributed criminal activity to politics. By politics, they meant the culture of violence established during the apartheid struggle and in the subsequent period of ANC and IFP political violence. Here are some of their comments:

Chris, the legacy of apartheid has much to do with why youth find gangs so attractive: black youth were marginalized⁹ by apartheid, Chris; they were disempowered, educationally, and economically, the places of cohesion and belonging, like family and workplace were destroyed. This unsticked the social fabric. For many kids, political organizations became their new homes, violence became a means to acquire status.

In the '80s and '90s it was noble to be on the wrong side of the law; when the new government was instated, these same kids were [...] left on the periphery in a changing land, many of the youth turned to criminal gangs. The same experience of marginalization that gives rise to political violence before is now called crime. Thus I believe the line between political and criminal violence is somewhat blurred. (Offender Journal unpublished 2 2002:1)

Also politics is the cause of crime. I grew up in the location of Zakheni in Ladysmith it same like iNanda, [...] when I was studying standard six because of the situation that I was facing it forced us to involve ourselves on [violence] and all my friends was becoming corrupted and mad. Then they take us to make crash course in Vaalmasstaan [to be trained as guerrillas] the situation was very terrible in my location. We going two weeks, they train us to snipe and to defend each other, after war they never take us to the therapist and physiologist to refresh the brain or ourselves. They leave us like that.

We get hungry. No food. No clothes. We want expensive things, cars like every boys of the location. We got guns. We told ourselves that we can't [go] hungry because we know how to snipe. We go travelling to towns and need money with our guns. (Offender Journal unpublished 3 2002:2)

Apartheid and segregation is one of the major causes of crime in our communities [...] Some people steal cars or shoot the cars of white people and even kill them for the same reason, reclaiming what they believe belongs to them or bringing back what Afrikaner took from their forefathers. (Offender Journal unpublished 5 2002:1)

⁹ The underlined words are the cast member's emphasis.

The cast members admitted that the money earned from their criminal activities often exceeded their immediate needs and that it was often wasted on drugs, women and entertainment. In the following two extracts from the journal letters there is a sense of how debates around personal accountability started to develop and the way in which they began to wrestle with this issue:

One guy stated that each individual has the right to choose between right and wrong and that who ever chooses between right and wrong must be responsible enough to suffer the consequences. I agree with him but then we all go back to politics and crime. Since that the TRC it could not differentiate between political crimes and criminal crimes it would be even more difficult to me to support the above statement. (Offender Journal unpublished 29 2002:2)

Apparently my fellow inmate Mr – ¹⁰ raised an issue of apartheid being the cause of crime and I think he made a good point, but my take on the discussion is that we must also remember that as human beings we have choices. And having said that, I think we should also focus on both the mindset of the criminal and the normal person as well as their response to situations. Since I've been involved in this project my ways of thinking have changed to the point that I now understand myself better than before. What I've observed in prison is that most criminals use defence mechanism technique to deviate from changing. Therefore to deal with their ill behaviour, I think focusing more on their way of thinking could perhaps produce good results. Knowing about decision-making or power of decision is fundamental as well as the outcome or consequences of our decision, in essence what I'm saying is that we should take responsibility of our actions. (Offender Journal unpublished 27 2002:1)

Finally the cast was able to create the soliloquies for the three main characters about their choices and motivation for becoming criminals. These soliloquies were placed at the centre of the play. The play now had its structure. The initial scenes set up the socio-political context of the apartheid struggle. Then using a montage of song, dance and soliloquy, and political songs of the period, the story of political violence was dealt with, culminating in a song about ethnic South African unity. This sequence was interrupted¹¹ by the three soliloquies. The play then resumed a more conventional dramatic narrative with a series of scenes set in the late 1990s in which the characters meet, plan and commit a cash-in-transit robbery.

¹⁰ At no point in writing this dissertation have I revealed the actual names of offenders.

¹¹ I have used the term 'interrupted' to indicate the fragmented manner in which the scenes formed a montage. This was a conscious technique borrowed from Epic Theatre.

The last section, building up to the robbery, was again interrupted with family scenes. These were inserted at the insistence of the cast. The point they wanted to make was that their family's lives and their relationships with women were all affected by the struggle against apartheid, violence and crime, to which they had added other dysfunctional behaviour such as alcoholism and drug addiction. The damage to the social fabric went deeper than the direct affect on the victims of crime. Below are two examples of how they raised with me the need to including the stories of female characters in the play:

People will remember that, not so long ago, many innocent people had their property stolen, wives and daughters abused and raped by thugs and comtsosis pretending to be activists in the struggle. (Offender Journal unpublished 9 2002:1)

Chris the women part is quite interesting and crucial because before and after 1994 elections I never heard even a single person talk about how violence affected women during the struggle [...] other organizations are established to promote and empower women in terms of economy, to provide information about their rights. All that is good. But no one is coming in front acknowledging, this issue of the liberation struggle and women, with the intention of creating a dialogue, mostly men are talking. (Offender journal 6 2002:1)

4.14 Developing an aesthetic

The Theatre for Development processes were known to the cast, who had worked on a number of the *Theatre for a Developing Nation* projects run by the university. Freirian notions of popular education underpinned this theatre work and informed *Isikhathi Sewashi's* structure; particularly the use of discussion circles addressing issues of criminal behaviour and the notion that the play should express the offenders' sense of reality. Freirian processes too had informed the exploration of issues during rehearsals. The play also drew on a number of other theatre forms (p10). These different theatre forms merged together to produce a particular aesthetic, the common factor being that all these forms engage the audience in a way that demands interpretation and critical engagement with the material being presented.

The play was shaped by reflective and creative responses that occurred throughout the play-making process. These were essentially creative rather than analytic responses, in the rational, scientific sense. The offenders and I

were not rigorously applying or testing Freirian or Brechtian theatre techniques but creating a play. The work became syncretic. During the play-making process, in the process of creative choices, I was not always fully aware of how these forms of theatre were interacting. With hindsight it is easier to explain the way in which we synthesized the common elements that ran through the different forms of theatre.

We linked Friere's (1996:64) idea of problem-posing education, which raises consciousness and engages the possibility of action and change, with Brecht's ideas that theatre should involve education, express sympathy with the underdog, reveal socio-political dynamics and foster change (in Willett 1964:186, 190). The common elements that merged were:

- Theatre work that was educational;
- In sympathy with an urban/rural underclass;
- Made actors and audience conscious of underlying socio-political dynamics;
- Engaged with the possibility for change and action.

The description that follows reveals that these different elements; Freirian concepts about education, Epic Theatre, Theatre of the Oppressed, Poor Theatre and African Popular Performance came together. Sometimes they emerged clear and intact; at other times they were conflated.

Poor Theatre was engaged to the extent that the cast made no use of a set, costumes or props. This placed emphasis on the physical, mental, imaginative and emotional skill of the actors. The theatricality of this work and the display of the actors' skill linked this choice to Brecht's notion of acting for the Epic Theatre (in Willett 1978: 121-129).

I found Brecht's "The Street Scene: A Basic Model for an Epic Theatre (in Willett 1978: 121-129)" the most succinct explanation of how to approach acting in terms of Epic Theatre, and shared this with the offenders. Brecht (in Willett 1978: 121) explains that the actor must detach himself from the character portrayed in order to force the spectators to look at the situation critically. He uses an example of what he calls 'natural' Epic Theatre; the example being an eyewitness to an accident acting out the behaviour of a driver and victim to bystanders so that they are able to form an opinion about the accident. Such an approach to acting was developed by the cast

during the early play-making process, using Image Theatre, and when individual scenes were rehearsed and the company collectively critiqued the work in terms of how clearly it had expressed a situation.

The offenders' use of Poor Theatre, in which the presentation of acting skill is overt and the illusion of realism limited, also had links with Brecht's notions of acting for the Epic Theatre. I have described above how the actor playing Ayanda used more rural idiomatic isiZulu to portray the character and how this provided a distancing effect between the actor and the character, creating a kind of class commentary (p123). This, along with other kinds of theatrical distancing effects, were attempts to use Brecht's notion of the alienation effect which he describes thus: "[a] representation that alienates is one which allows us to recognize its subject, but at the same time makes it seem unfamiliar (in Willett 1964:192)."

Photographs 25 and 26 (p135) provide another example of how the use of poor theatre became linked to an alienation effect. The photographs show the seated character of the mother, MaVilikazi. In these images both the bearded male actor and the female character are present. This is, in a manner of speaking, 'strange'. The mother is created imaginatively by the actor and expressed or explained to the audience through voice and gesture (Appendix 6 clip 2). The particular aspects of her speech and actions, *gestus*¹², are in this case a distillate of the attributes of a woman and mother. These are recognized by the audience and may even remind them of mothers they have known.

In this way the audience might judge the extent to which the performance seems to be true or false. The description and analysis of the play's aesthetic now starts to become complicated. The acting and staging through out *Isikhathi Sewashi* played with and linked notions of:

- *gestus*;
- core-images;
- the alienation effect;
- Poor Theatre;
- and Image Theatre.

¹² Willett (1964:42) translates the German term *gestus* used by Brecht to *gest*, which he defines as having the attributes of both *gist* (a summary or attitude) and *gesture*. A *gest* is expressible in words or action. In this dissertation I have chosen to retain Brecht's German term *gestus*, unless I am quoting directly Willett's translation.



Photograph 25. Gazolo's Mother, MaVilikazi, sitting



Photograph 26. MaVilikazi, complains about her daughter wearing short skirts.

Once in the hands of the cast these elements became linked combined with the notion of core-images (Scheub 1975:47) used in isiZulu oral performance. *Gestus* became linked to the notion of image theatre and core-images. Willett (1978:36) provides the following footnotes as an explanation for Brecht's use of *gestus*. He explains, "the eye which looks for the gest [*gestus*] in everything is the moral sense. In other words, a moral tableau;" and adds in a further footnote, "'[*G*]estus' of which '*gestisch*' is the adjective, means both gist and gesture; an attitude or a single aspect of an attitude, expressible in words or actions (Willett 1978:42)".

There is a similarity in function between Brecht's *gestus* and Scheub's (1975:47) description of core-images as a distillate of the full performance. Walter Benjamin makes the observation that, "Epic Theatre is gestural. Strictly speaking, the gesture is the material and epic theatre its practical utilization (Benjamin 2003:23)." Benjamin also explains that a tableau is interrupted action (*gestus*) and has the power to represent to the spectator a distillate of certain social conditions (2003:18).

The connection between the use of *gestus*, tableaux and Image Theatre to represent a particular social dynamic is apparent, but it is in the act of extrapolating meaning from them, whether it be an action, word, or phrase, that the link with core-images becomes secure. It is then possible to glimpse how this play at one moment made discrete use of different theatrical techniques and fused them together at another.

Brecht's ideas about the *gestus* also informed the staging of the play. He describes each incident in the play as having its basic *gestus* (in Willett 1964: 200) and adds, "[t]he grouping of the characters on stage and the movements of the groups must be such that the necessary beauty is attained above all by the elegance with which the material conveying that gest [*gestus*] is set out and laid bare to the understanding of the audience (in Willett 1964: 200-201)." This suggests that the scenes might be arranged in a kind of montage, each distinct but also making sense in their relationship one to another. Brecht confirms this in his description of 'knotting together' scenes. He says:

[T]he individual episodes have to be knotted together in such away that the knots are easily noticed. The episodes must not succeed one another indistinguishably but must give us a chance to interpose our judgement ... the parts of the story have to be carefully set off, one against another by giving each its own structure as a play within the play (Brecht in Willett 1964: 201)

In *Isikhathi Sewashi* the scenes that comprised the main story were interrupted by other material, such as Image Theatre, songs, and acted scenes, often played from offstage (see p137-138), which provided a commentary on the main action. All this was “knotted together”, to form a montage that supplied a narrative line while also presenting the socio-political currents that informed the story.

Whilst working with the cast using Image Theatre, in the early months of 2002, to explore themes related to crime and then seeing the Brecht models for *Mother Courage and Her Children* (1949) and *Life of Galileo* (1947), in Berlin in the same year, I first sensed the interconnectedness of the elements, tableaux, montage, *gestus* and core-images, in terms of staging. The Brecht models for the productions of *Mother Courage and Her Children* (1949) and *Life of Galileo* (1947) are albums of sequential photographs of the productions. They provide a series of tableaux. While looking at these photographs I realised that the physical blocking carried key messages about the social dynamics of each scene and about the characters’ relationships to each other. I began to understand what Brecht had meant in his discussions about *gestus*. The blocking expressed the social dynamics of the scene more strongly than technical priorities around sight lines and focusing the audiences’ attention on a lead player. There seemed to me a similarity of purpose between Brecht’s blocking using *gestus* and the Image Theatre work the cast had been doing during the initial rehearsals. Both were attempts to present social realities and show through physical action¹³ socio-political forces at work. Indeed, whilst the cast had been creating tableaux for discussion they had been subliminally learning how to block stage action in terms of Epic Theatre and to read staging in socio-political terms. The interconnectedness of these elements was extended through the plan I proposed for

¹³ Physical action is a technical term used in realist acting. It is more commonly used to describe Stanislavski’s work on creating and communicating emotional and psychological subtext through gesture. Here the physical action expresses issues around power, status and other social relations.

staging the play. Initially, I simply intended the staging to externalize in physical terms Freire's notion of dialogical action, with material played from the areas around the audience commenting on the main action on stage (figure 2, and photographs 27 and 28, p139). What emerged from this staging was more complex. A scene played from one of the sides behind the audience, in area C, the offstage acting area, could interrupt, comment on, and offer reflection on the main action, played in area B, the main acting area. My journal entry on the 14 April read:

I also presented a staging option that would allow [the cast] to create the main play in a central area with action outside on three sides of this performing area. In these outside areas we can present songs or scenes in the form of radio drama that depicts scenes from the protagonists' family life. For example, show family life or [...] the effect criminal action has on the victims' family. We could also create songs that are sung from this outside area that present an emotional subtext to the main action or comment on the action. (Hurst unpublished 2002:17)

Clearly, these were alienation effects, and yet my starting point had been Freire's notion of dialogical interaction. The cast made entrances from the four corners and when not performing stood behind the audience. From here a number of tableaux were made that commented on the action. This staging arrangement also had a very pragmatic objective, that of containing the audience and focussing their attention on the play. We knew we would play in the noisy sections and later to students at the recreation hall. Seating the audience in a limited number of rows and where everyone was in view of each other made it harder for other prison business to take place in the audience during the performance.

The idea of seating the audience in a semicircle in view of each other was new to the cast, as they had only experienced plays that made use of western proscenium arch conventions. I thought this staging, with the audience arranged in a semi-circle or on three sides, might more closely resemble groupings for traditional African performance and appeal to a subliminal understanding of African oral performance. It also created an alienation effect, being both strange and familiar, as this comment from a cast member's journal letter to me indicates:

Staging Plan for *Isikhathi Sewashi*

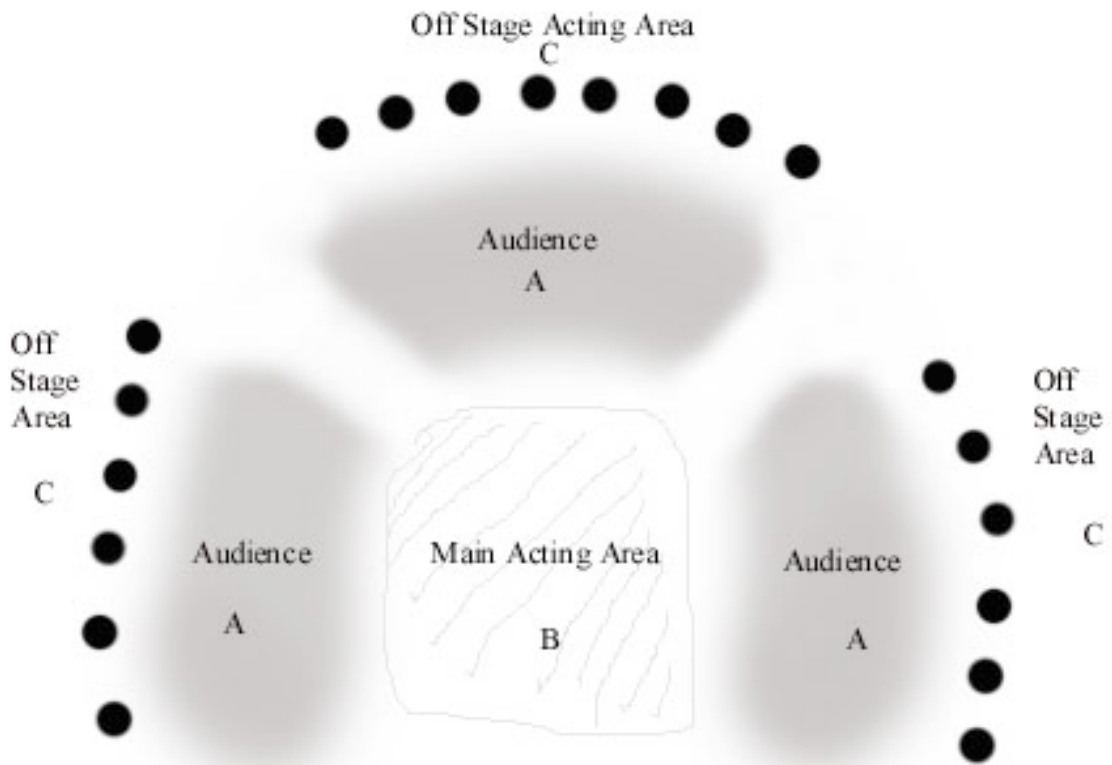


Figure 1

Figure 2 The Staging Plan for *Isikhathi Sewashi*



Photographs 27 and 28. A performance of *Isikhathi Sewashi* at the Recreation Hall in Westville Prison for learners from Comtech High School in Umlazi, April 2003.

The U-shape audience is the abnormal way as far as the drama performance is concerned. Though we are not familiar with that kind of audience around the action but it is more about our African culture. (Offender Journal unpublished 20 2002:1)

The cast and I discussed how this staging, with the audience on three sides, had similarities to the circles used in traditional African performances and that this might evoke at a subliminal level a stronger engagement by the audience. Kamlongera (1988:18-26) and Soyinka (1976:37-60) note the significance of the space and audience participation in African ritual theatre.

I was able to find in their descriptions a parallel not only with Brecht's (in Willett 1964:121) requirement that both the actor and the character be present during performance but also with the idea of combining art and function. The cast member whose journal letter I quoted above concludes by reflecting on how the power of African culture is often undervalued:

Though we are not familiar with that kind of audience around the action but it is more about our African culture. Chris reminded us that during ancient days African families used to sit around fire and elders use to tell stories. So he is applying the same model back to us. Indeed we are the lost generation that need to recover and start to be proud of our norms or customs. (Offender Journal unpublished 20 2002:1)

As we worked with the staging plan, the cast started to distinguish the relationship between material created for the central acting area, the major narrative, and the 'offstage' area, from which a kind of commentary could be made. It was now that they really started to combine all the theatrical elements I have outlined. During the play, in this 'offstage' area, the cast made images or tableaux that commented on the scene being played (Appendix 6 clip 3). For example, during the political scenes the cast members stood with fists raised in the *amandla* salute for power (photograph 29 p141); during the school scene they made images of students reading books; in the scenes about selling drugs they made images of smoking drugs and rolling joints (photograph 30 p141); during the family scenes they made images of neighbours peering through cracks in the walls.



Photograph 29. Cast members presenting the *Amandla* salute during a political scene



Photograph 30. Cast members presenting an image of drug addiction during a scene about selling drugs on the street.



Photograph 31. The cast acting as an IFP *izinziwe* (group of young men) performing *Izingoma Neziqubulo* of The *Amabutho* (war songs)



Photograph 32. Cast members acting as an ANC *izinziwe* (group of young men) performing *Toyi-toyi* (a protest song)

Songs that commented on the action and recalled a specific period were also sung from this position. Appendix 6, clips 4 and 5, provides two examples. One, the actions depicting Nkululeko leaving the country to join Umkhonto we Sizwe, was accompanied by a song about the struggle for land and two, a famous protest song from the 1980s titled *Release Mandela* was sung after the classroom scene in which the youth protested against Bantu Education.

Songs were also used to represent the period of the political violence during the 1990s. ANC and IFP songs sung were started offstage as a provocative challenge sung across the audience from one ANC *izinziwe*¹⁴ to the opposing IFP *izinziwe* (photograph 31 and 32 pp142; Appendix 6 clips 6 and 7). For this sequence the offenders mixed people who had real IFP or ANC affiliations together in each group. This was to indicate to the audience that they were remembering this period as play rather than aggressively singing these songs; another alienation effect: they were not promoting political violence. This sophistication of drawing on a high level of contextual knowledge within the audience was only possible in the closed community where many members of the audience would know the performers and would have been able to read this kind of detail.

The idea of scenes acting as a kind of commentary was developed overtly: first, in the early part of the play when the central action froze during a scene showing township violence in the 1980s, and the three characters, the policeman, a white man and a maid spoke from the present time, 2003, from behind the audience, about their memories of the 1980s (photograph 33, p144; Appendix 6, clip 8). The second occasion, involving acted scenes as commentary, occurred when the main characters murder a security guard during the cash-in-transit robbery. The consequences of the murder on the guard's family were portrayed in three scenes played in the offstage areas around the audience (see Appendix 6 clip 9). While the main action, the shooting, froze on stage, three short scenes showed the police breaking the news of the murder to the family, the funeral (photograph 34, p144) and

¹⁴ *Izinziwe* literally means young men and is used to mean the informal armies of either political party in the area it controls.



Photograph 33. An offender plays, from off stage, a white man remembering the 1980s



Photograph 34. The security guard's funeral



Photograph 35. The sandwich-board man interrupts a football match with a sign reading, “We are getting finished by bombs and guns in the township”



Photograph 36. The sandwich-board man watching Nkuloleko, the freedom fighter, with a sign “The disillusionment of the cannibal”

finally the murdered security guard's daughter having to leave school because she could no longer afford the school fees.

Finally the onstage and offstage areas were used simultaneously. The play ends with Nkululeko organizing a second robbery, which involves a young man, recently released from prison. He remembers prison life and does not want to risk going back, so he refused to take part in the robbery. These memories were represented from the 'off stage' areas by the cast shouting out in prison-gang slang while he circled the stage remembering and deciding not to participate in the robbery (see Appendix 6 clip 10).

Further use of the alienation effect was made through the creation of a madman, who could walk into the middle of any scene, wearing a sandwich-board with slogans written on it that commented on the action. This was a Poor Theatre version of Brecht's (in Willett 1964:43) literarisation of theatre using of titles and screens. Brecht (in Willett 1964: 44) suggests that as the spectator reads the projections on the screen he adopts a critical attitude, which Brecht describes as "an attitude of smoking-and-watching (in Willett 1964: 44)".

Here are some examples of our Poor Theatre adaptation of this technique. At the beginning of the play a game of football in the township was interrupted by an explosion, the madman entered with a sign saying, "We are getting finished by bombs and guns in the township (photograph 35 p145; Appendix 6 clip 11)". Halfway through the play, when the three men presented their soliloquies, he was present and watched each of them imitating the audience watching them (photograph 36, p145)". The same device was used later during the cash in transit robbery when the guard was murdered. The sandwich board read "Do you see the impact of your crime? (Appendix 6 clip 12)". These signs were to some extent cryptic and like core-images demanded that the audiences interpret them in relation to the scene being played.

Whilst conflating the different western and African theatrical elements that I have identified, the play also engaged clearly recognizable forms of African popular performance (Appendix 6 clips 13 to 17):

- *Isicathamiya* (Accapella singing)
- *Izimbongo* (Praise poetry)

- *Izingoma neziqubulo* of the *amabutho* (War songs and chants)
- *Toyi-toyi* (A type of song and dance associated with protest)
- *Kwaito* (IsiZulu rap)

These African popular performance forms drew on residual orality and therefore made direct use of core-images.

The play started with the cast singing from the offstage area. As they sang, each row of men entered the stage area (See Appendix 6 Clip 18). This entrance established for the audience the connection between the on-and offstage areas. Here are the lyrics for the opening song:

Leader: We grew up together
 We were not equal
 People being not the same
 Living together
 Chorus: We grew up together
 We were not equal
 People being not the same
 Living together
 (Ntuli 2005:1)

The audience settled into silence, moved by the song. This opening set the tone for how they watched the play. I would like to suggest the following interpretation of the song in order to demonstrate how, for the audience, remembering in response to a particular core-image played a part in extrapolating meaning. My interpretation is based on a number of informal discussions I had with offenders and schoolteachers who watched the play. As the song was repeated the audience was challenged to find different levels of meaning in it. They remembered that as prisoners they came from different backgrounds but were reduced to the common identity of ‘criminal’; they remembered their affiliations and involvement in ANC and IFP violence, and even the segregation of apartheid.

The broad political context for the play was provided by a praise poem performed as part of the song (Appendix 6, clip 14). This has a parallel with the opening of the film version of *The Threepenny Opera* (Pabst 1931) in which the context for the story is set up during the opening scenes with a picture presentation teaching the qualities of a criminal. Our Poor Theatre production used the praise poem and its series of verbal core-images to

establish for the play the broad context of capitalism's colonization of Africa. This poem was written by a member of the cast who was an ex-combatant, multi-lingual and having a strong political education. He worked together with a monolingual isiZulu speaking man who had a great command of idiomatic isiZulu. This is an example of how knowledge and skill was combined in the various small group projects that created parts of the play.

4.15 Using academic reading material

As the early Image Theatre sessions developed, I thought of providing offenders with academic reading material related to the issues they were raising during the discussions. They had been exploring ideas around class conflict and crime and their experiences of the liberation struggle and crime, so I selected material to support these discussions and in early March I gave the cast a collection of readings.

Some of the members of the cast were able to read the material. I was told by some, with more limited English skills, that other offenders, back in the cells, read the material to them and explained it. In such cases, it provided opportunities for further exploration through discussion, outside of rehearsal times. The reading material also took on a symbolic significance: some members of the cast told me that the reading materials were kept by members who had limited literacy skills as a symbol of the knowledge they had acquired during the Image Theatre sessions. I was told they said things such as, "we can't read it but we know what is in there."

I supported the distribution of reading material with lectures. On March 16, I gave a lecture about Freire's notions of popular education. The lecture was based on the first chapter of *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (Freire 1996: 25-51), which I had given them to read. In my journal notes I give the following list as key concepts covered during the lecture:

- Defining the oppressed
- The process of becoming more human
- How the oppressed become the oppressor
- How the oppressor exists inside the oppressed
- False generosity
- The role dialogue plays as process
- Consciousness raising

- How only the oppressed can free themselves. (Hurst unpublished 2002:14)

It was wonderful to teach this material because the cast's identification with it was so immediate and strong (Hurst unpublished 2002:14). After this lecture they started to speak in the sessions about how the rehearsal process and the play raised consciousness. I was also able to challenge improvised material produced for the play by asking whether it represented false consciousness, the worldview of the ruling class, or the offenders' own reality.

Again on 30 March, I gave a lecture based on a section from Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth* entitled "Criminal impulses found in North Africans which have their origins in the National War of Liberation" (1990: 237-250). I selected this reading in response to discussions that linked current crime to the apartheid struggle. This had emerged as a major issue during the early Image Theatre work, and I felt it particularly useful for the cast to realize that links between liberation struggle, trauma and crime had occurred and been discussed elsewhere in Africa. In my journal notes I describe how I related the Fanon lecture to the previous Freire lecture:

Freire speaks of raising consciousness to overcome the reality and 'untruths' of oppression while Fanon speaks much more of throwing off the 'untruths' through action. (Hurst unpublished 2002:15)

The lectures were interactive and offenders generated the following list to describe how they feel in South Africa about defining themselves in negative terms. We headed the list 'Untruths' Inscribed into Oppressed People:

Lazy
Ignorant
Dull
Coconut
Criminal
Violent
Poor
Zulus like blood
Barbaric
Good at hard physical labour
(Hurst unpublished 2002:16).

During the discussions that occurred in the early part of the workshopping process comments by members of the cast revealed the extent to which they had internalized these kinds of negative values. I respond to this observation with the following comment in my journal notes:

It seems to me that a current form of Black Consciousness is badly needed today. The links with Black Consciousness of the past and American Black Power are not easily made or understood in South Africa today. I will make available to the offenders material from American prisons where offenders talk of grassroots action to repair oppressed societies. (Hurst unpublished 2002:16)

I then provided the cast with two sections from Biko's book *I Write What I Like* (1996): "Black Consciousness and the Quest for a True Humanity (2000: 87-98)," in which he explains Black Consciousness as a process of throwing off oppression and regaining human dignity. I also thought the self-help aspects of Black Consciousness expressed in this reading might be useful. I problematized my own position in the group by providing the cast with the reading "Black Souls in White Skins" (2000: 19-26), in which Biko discusses the difficulties of working with white liberals. In my journal notes (Hurst unpublished 2002:14) I comment that I thought it extraordinary that we can now circulate and discuss this kind of literature in a South African prison

I further provided the cast with two readings about the American criminal justice system; one a discussion of the American correctional system in relation to class interests, "Reflections on Crime and Class (Mead 2000:11-14)"; the other "The Industry of Fear (Abu-Jamal 2000:22-24)", which addresses the American criminal justice system in terms of the oppression of African Americans.

I had also given the cast the brief description of the criminal personality described by Samuel Yochelson (1993;1-54) from his introduction to *The Criminal Personality: Volume 1: A Profile for Change*. He provides a description of criminals as having fragile personalities in which self-will runs riot and promotes a programme for rehabilitation involving conscious daily choices made by the ex-offender. I used this reading to promote debate about the relationship between social conditions and personal decision-making with regard to crime.

4.16 Working in English and isiZulu

My use of isiZulu was and remains limited. The cast consisted of some people who could speak English and others whose use of English was limited. I could make social small talk and shop in isiZulu but I could not use or understand isiZulu in the complex discussions that took place in the rehearsal room. IsiZulu became the dominant language for the work; the play was performed in isiZulu and the rehearsal room discussions occurred in isiZulu. The use of isiZulu gave the cast a sense of ownership and control of the work.

I worked closely with Ntusi who would translate what I said into isiZulu and what the cast said into English. In public discussions all the members of the cast would speak isiZulu, including those who could speak English. This gave the rehearsal sessions a formal structure. I would usually begin the sessions with a briefing of some kind. The cast would then work in their groups on whatever task was being addressed in that session. We would close with a formal group meeting, often reflecting on the work produced. The process of translating back and forth was slow and took place during these formal sections. Formal translation would also occur during sessions when I was teaching a particular skill and in the sessions when I gave lectures about the reading material.

Whilst this strategic use of isiZulu enabled the cast to take greater control over the work it also had limitations as this comment from a member of the cast indicates:

Another important thing that you should consider is, the offenders who are familiar with English, receive your teachings first-hand or immediately get the point or understand you, easily compared to those offenders who are not familiar with English at all, who receive your teaching of information second-hand due to interpretation. The reason with interpretation is the interpreter high lights important details and excludes the little/minor details which clarify the entire teaching. (Offender Journal unpublished 2002 18:2)

With the repetition of tasks, offenders who may have not fully understood my teaching gained a practical command of certain skills and through the repetition of rehearsals I came to understand the scenes with less need for translation. I included group discussion in the lectures I gave about the reading material. The lecture sessions about the writing of Freire and

Fanon were given by me with simultaneous translation from Ntusi in a similar manner to multilingual church services. As I spoke, I drew diagrams. The walls of the church hall in which we worked were covered with paper and I would move around the room speaking and drawing. After the lecture the cast would get into discussion groups and discuss in isiZulu how they could understand the concepts presented.

When the cast engaged in group work during rehearsals, for example when discussing the Image Theatre work, improvising scenes, or during the meetings to establish the characters in the play, their discussions were in isiZulu and I would sit off to the side with Ntusi or Hlengwa translating for me. In this way I tracked what was going on but did not often intervene. This allowed the group to take control of these discussions and allowed the work to flow with out interruption. In my journal (Hurst unpublished 2002:9) I comment that there was no need for endless translation back and forth for my benefit because this would slow down and hold up the process. I also describe how carefully I watched and read the group members' body language. I saw my main role being the maintaining of the integrity of the working processes and making sure no one felt hurt, particularly during the initial Image Theatre work. I found that my limited use of isiZulu allowed me to hang back and not drive the sessions and let the use of isiZulu become a means of transferring to the cast the drive and focus of the sessions.

Chapter Five

Description of *Lisekhon' Ithemba*

5.1 A description of *Lisekhon' Ithemba*

As I enter a section in the Medium B Correction Centre on a day when *Lisekhon' Ithemba* is to be performed, the offenders who live there and the cast will be milling around in what appears to be a disorganised and informal gathering. The audience and actors are not separated into demarcated areas. They are not seated. Everyone appears to be standing around.

The cast starts to perform a Zulu *ngoma* dance (Photograph 37 p155; Appendix 6 clip 19). Once the singing and clapping begin, members of the audience start to organize themselves into a circle and join in the singing and clapping. Some members of the cast provide a central focus by leading the singing from the centre of the circle. Other members of the cast work the outer limits of the group, gathering the audience into a circle. Zulu *ngoma* songs and dances are familiar to the majority of the offender population. 'Zulu dance', as they called it, is a common recreational activity in the correction centre and a familiar part of Zulu ceremonial gatherings. The cast perform with high energy levels in order to draw the audience into the event. They use *Izingoma neziqubulo* [war songs] and *amahubo neziqubulo* [war chants]¹. This use of performance associated with the *ibhuto* [Zulu military regiments] binds the audience and spectators together through rhythm and energy into a single group. As the singing and dancing continue, the morale and energy of the group grows and individuals from the audience are pulled into the centre to dance. Some, acquainted with the form, show off their dance skills. Others, with less knowledge of rural culture, simply dance *toyi toyi* [a dance used during political protests]. This use of traditional song and dance seems to be an extremely efficient way of managing a large group of people and establishing a communal spirit.

Once the actors feel they have successfully established the group, one of the stronger facilitators steps into the centre, greets everyone and explains

¹ The distinction which is being made here is between a tuneful song and a rhythmic shout.

that the performance will address the topic of living with HIV/ AIDS in the Correction Centre. He introduces the audience to the use of Image Theatre by demonstrating how to make tableaux and explains that they will be expected to create their own tableaux in discussion circles after the performance

Then a short play, consisting of six scenes, is performed. The play depicts the daily routine of the correction centre. The scenes depicted are instantly recognizable to the audience and portray typical situations involving offenders who are ill and the difficulties they face interacting with other offenders and the correctional staff.

First, the audience sees offenders waking up, being counted and going to *phaka* [breakfast]. One is ill and remains in bed in the cell. At breakfast the offenders serving refuse to provide food for the offenders to take to the man who is ill and has remained in the cell. Now back in the section, a sick offender asks a warder for permission to go to the hospital and is refused. Another offender who is on good terms with the warder then uses his influence and successfully negotiates permission. At the hospital the doctor has not arrived and the staff are unhelpful. An offender arrives at the hospital carrying on his back a cellmate who is seriously ill. They too are turned away. He returns to the section with the sick cellmate; there the rest of the offenders show disgust for the sick man. At this point the play ends.

A cast member then provides a brief explanation of the modes of transmission of HIV infection. The cast, with one member acting as facilitator, presents a sequence of tableaux depicting key moments in each scene – for example the request for food for the sick man and the refusal – when behaviour has occurred which shows prejudice against the sick man. The facilitator then asks the audience to identify negative behaviour and to suggest possible alternative and pro-social behaviour. At the same time the audience is reminded of the use of Image Theatre. Singing and dancing start again and the large group is swiftly divided into smaller groups, all performing their own *izingoma neziquubulo* and *amahubo neziquubulo*, and building an identity in each group, differing from the others. As this is happening, the public performance space disappears and five separate discussion circles emerge.



Photograph 37. *Lisekhon' Ithemba*: Audience warming up using *ngoma* dance



Photograph 38. *Lisekhon' Ithemba*: The audience make Image Theatre of offenders rejecting a cellmate who is ill.



Photograph 39. *Lisekhon' Ithemba*: The audience make Image Theatre of offenders helping and welcoming a cellmate who is ill.



Photograph 40. *Lisekhon' Ithemba*: The audience make Image Theatre of offenders holding, lifting and helping a cellmate who is ill.

The members of the cast work as facilitators, helping each group to create its own Image Theatre, depicting prejudiced behaviour towards sick people (photograph 38 p155; Appendix 6 clip 20). These images are then transformed into examples of pro-social behaviour. Members of the small groups come forward one by one and create Image Theatre. Often the alternative pro-social images depict offenders touching, holding, carrying, and helping sick people (photograph 39 and 40 p156).

Listening to the groups while they work I hear discussion and sometimes laughter and have a sense that there is specific knowledge within the group of the incidents portrayed and the individuals whom the tableaux depict. The groups work at the creation of Image Theatre for about an hour. Then the singing and dancing start again and small-group members are drawn back to form a single large group, re-establishing the public performance space. Each discussion group is invited to present publicly a selection of the tableaux they have created. These are presented and explained. This time there is a formal tone to the explanations of the images, the talking and laughter that characterised the earlier, small-group discussions is absent, and the images are no longer caricatures of individuals, but generalised representation of behaviour.

After each group has presented its tableaux, a concluding song is performed. This song takes the form of the urban protest songs sung during the anti-apartheid struggle, only in this instance the song speaks about fighting against HIV/AIDS. The audience joins in enthusiastically in an emotional release to end the event.

5.2 The Cast

The cast of *Lisekhon' Ithemba* was comprised of a mix of offenders who had been part of the theatre group who had worked on *Isikhathi Sewashi* and offenders who were new and had expressed an interest in joining the theatre work. Mixing together old and new members allows for continuity in the ethos and methods of working. The cast was comprised of twelve performers, all of whom had been sentenced between 1997 and 2001. Their ages ranged

between 20 and 33. Six were between 22 and 24 years of age. Eleven were maximum-security prisoners in privilege group category A². Eleven were serving sentences of 15 years or more. Eight had received some secondary school education. The majority of these offenders were sentenced for offences involving robbery or armed robbery; other offences included rape, kidnapping and murder.

5.3. Postgraduate students make plays with offenders

In 2002 two postgraduate students, Mbongiseni Buthelezi and Musa Hlatshwayo, worked with offenders at the Medium B Correction Centre, in 2002, to create two plays (untitled), over a period of two weeks, which explored expressions of prejudice by correctional staff and offenders towards people who were suffering from HIV and AIDS-related illnesses.

These plays were presented in the Medium B Correction centre as a pilot project in order to test whether or not the plays would be useful as support for the changes in the organizational culture related to dealing with HIV/AIDS. The eventual decision was that they were useful for this purpose. After seeing the plays, management, as well as the offenders, through the AIDS Control Committee³, agreed that a version of the plays should be performed throughout the correction centre.

5.4. *Creating Lisekhon' Ithemba*

In 2003 Mbongiseni Buthelezi returned to the Medium B Correction Centre to rework the AIDS plays in response to a request from management. He worked with offenders who had been involved in the original plays for four rehearsal sessions lasting approximately two hours each and conducted over two weekends. The cast and Buthelezi as facilitator created a single play that drew on the material generated in the original project. The new play was called

² The behaviour of the prisoners is categorised into groups A, B and C. A designates offenders with a record of good behaviour.

³ The Medium B Correction Centre had set up an AIDS Control Committee to involve offenders in managing issues related to HIV/AIDS. This committee undertook peer education, AIDS support groups and nursing support.

Lisekhon' Ithemba and was performed throughout the Medium B Correction Centre during the months of June and July 2003 and followed the performances of *Isikhathi Sewashi* which had taken place a few weeks before. *Lisekhon' Ithemba* was performed to audiences of approximately 300 people in each of the twelve sections.

Lisekhon' Ithemba had been created over a shorter period than *Isikhathi Sewashi* and involved a shorter and simpler play-making process. The material for the original plays had been created in a manner similar to *Isikhathi Sewashi*. Image Theatre was used to identify and analyse particular examples of prejudiced behaviour towards the sick and to create a storyboard from which scenes for the plays were developed. This involved a warm-up session, followed by a short play that presented examples of prejudiced behaviour. Then a segment followed, in which Image Theatre was used to highlight the issues raised by the play and to teach the audience how to use Image Theatre. Next the audience was reorganized into a number of different discussion circles, and using Image Theatre, created their own images of expressions of prejudice and of alternative more pro-social behaviour. The event finished with the groups re-assembled into one audience, presenting examples of their work followed by a concluding celebratory song and dance that promoted the fight against prejudiced behaviour and condemned the bullying of offenders who were ill.

The offenders had decided to use Image Theatre as the medium for the group discussions because it had been effective in the devising of *Isikhathi Sewashi*, which was being rehearsed at the time. They also felt that because of its emphasis on physical action it seemed less threatening than a discussion, which might be accusatory, of individuals' behaviour. The idea of plays being performed in different sections was new and this was the first time the cast had created a play that was overtly critical of situations that occurred within the correction centre.

In his journals documenting the work on *Lisekhon' Ithemba* Buthelezi (2003b:1 and 2003c:1-2) makes two important observations. One, he was concerned to understand his role as facilitator within the group. He was determined that the performers would take ownership of the project and drive it. He posed problems for them to solve and only offered leadership when he

felt the pressure of time to produce final results. He writes: “I was again trying to do what I did last year, which was to try and stand back and let the guys solve all the problems that arose (Buthelezi 2003b:1).”

He also observes (Buthelezi 2003a:2) that while drawing together the material from the two earlier plays the offenders constructed a play in which correctional staff were more severely criticised than were offenders. In earlier versions of the play they had been careful to criticise equally the poor behaviour of offenders and correctional staff.

5.5 How the play worked

The play was comprised of a number of sequences, each with a particular function. The opening sequence used Zulu *izingoma neziqubulo* and *amahubo neziqubulo* to persuade the audience to participate in the event. The purpose of the play was explained to the audience, as was the active role that audience members would be expected to play in the discussion circles. Then they were introduced to the concept of Image Theatre. This was followed by the play itself, in which the prejudiced behaviour of correction staff and offenders was portrayed. This set the agenda for the work that followed in the discussion circles.

After the play had been performed, Zulu song and dance was used to form the discussion circles. Offenders in separate groups created their own images of prejudiced behaviour and alternative, pro-social behaviour. Zulu song and dance was used to consolidate the identity of each discussion circle, with the effect that the members of each circle felt that they were in their own private space. These group members often created pro-social scenes in which they could safely practice touching other offenders who ‘played’ AIDS sufferers.

After these activities were complete, the public space was recreated by means of Zulu song and dance, in order to debrief the group work and to close the performance.

5.6 Aesthetics Used

Lisikhon' Ithemba required the audience to engage actively in a problem-posing and problem-solving process. The cast, who were familiar with the theories and practice of Freire and Boal (see p148), consciously drew on Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970) for the theoretical base and on Boal's *Theatre of the Oppressed* (1979) for its methodology. The members of the audience were able to use the play to reflect on behaviour that added to the suffering of people who were ill and to explore and practice behaviour that involved touching and helping AIDS sufferers. The members of the cast added to this theatre aesthetic their own knowledge of Zulu oral performance, particularly the *izingoma neziqubulo* and *amahubo neziqubulo* of the *amabhuto*. After seeing this project in performance, Buthelezi and the cast came to a new understanding of the power and potential of Zulu song and dance for organising people during a public event. As a result of this, Zulu song and dance was used more consciously during *Lisekhon' Ithemba* and in subsequent projects at the Medium B Correction Centre.

I have already discussed (p136) the parallels between Boal's Image Theatre and Scheub's notion of core-images (1975:47) as they occur in Nguni folktales. After Buthelezi had created the earlier version of his play in 2002, we (Buthelezi and Hurst 2003:123-34) conducted an analysis of the aesthetics used, which allowed us to understand the similarity between Boal's theatrical methods for involving the audience and those offered by the *ngoma* dance.

Boal (2000:135,139) coins the term 'spect-actors' for members of the audience who become active participants in a performance. He explains how a 'spect-actor' 'sculpts' images, first which present a problem, then which offer a solution; the final image presents the transition from problem to solution. In the case of Forum Theatre the 'spect-actor' intervenes directly in the play by replacing a cast member and joining the actors to perform a scene in order to act out a solution. Boal's method (2000:173) uses a figure he calls 'the Joker' who leads the spectators through the performance, transforming them into spect-actors. One individual plays the joker and members of the audience come forward individually, each to play a character and test solutions.

In *Lisekhon' Ithemba* similar processes occurred. In this all-male environment it seemed appropriate to appeal to the audience's sense of Zulu

military culture by using *izingoma neziqubulo* and *amahubo neziqubulo* of the *amabhuto* to manage audience participation. In doing so the individual roles of ‘spect-actor’ and ‘joker’ were transformed into roles played by the entire cast (in the case of the joker) and entire audience (in the case of spect-actor).

Although the military structure of Zulu society began to disintegrate in the late nineteenth century, traces of these structures remain today and can be found in the *ngoma* dance groups of the workers’ hostels and in the religious dance gatherings of the Shembe Church. When the *izingoma neziqubulo* and *amahubo neziqubulo* of the *amabhuto* are performed they evoke these memories.

Eileen Jensen Krige (1974: 261) observes that the character and history of Zulu people are still shaped by memories of their military system. She claims that during the nineteenth century, Zulu society was organized like a large military camp. Boys would be formed into *amabutho* [regiments]. An *ibutho* [regiment], would consist of between eight hundred and a thousand men. It would be comprised of *iviyo* [platoons], comprised of forty or fifty boys of similar age and from the same region.

The *ibutho* was commanded by an *induna* [commander]. During times of peace the *amabutho* would perform dances that served as military drill and those members of an *ibutho* who excelled at dancing became *amagosa* [dance marshals].

The use of the *izingoma neziqubulo* and *amahubo neziqubulo* of the *amabhuto* during *Lisekhon’ Ithemba* provided an opportunity for the actor-facilitators in the cast to take on the role of the *amagosa* and for the members of the audience to assume the role of the *ibutho*. In this way the cast was able for the duration of the performance to create a group with a common purpose. As they joined in the singing and dancing the members of the audience, as members of the *ibutho*, consented to the leadership of the facilitators in the role of *amagosa*. During the period of the performance these structures appear to have taken precedence over other structures of power related to gang membership amongst the offenders. When the songs and dances were used again to create the discussion circles, the *ibutho* was divided into *iviyo*. The *iviyo* has connotations of an ‘in-group’ (men of the same age from the same region) and its members coalesced to provide a less public space where

audience members could explore their use of Image Theatre. These ‘private spaces’ allowed more people to speak and participate. The power dynamics related to who might or might not speak in public were present in the public space of the *ibutho* where the manner of speaking was more formal.

Once the cast had experienced the plays in performance they became even more aware of these dynamics. The response of the audience members, however, and the manner in which these aesthetics informed their engagement seemed to remain largely intuitive.

Chapter Six

Interviews With Members of the Audience: Engaging with the Plays

6.1 Presentation of Data

This chapter presents the comments from interviews with the offenders who made up the audience for *Isikhathi Sewashi* and *Lisekhon' Ithemba*. The quotations presented here are from the English translations of transcripts of the interviews. They are referenced using initials to identify the speaker, the transcript number, date, and page number. I have already addressed the methods used to gather and analyse this data (pp77-86). One key question driving this research concerns what particular factors emerged as significant, for the offenders as audience members who attended these plays (p8). The core-category that emerged from this data can be expressed as 'how we watch a play'. The different patterns in the processes the offenders use are detailed later (pp175-177). Before exploring the reactions of the offenders it is important to establish their expectations about theatre. These expectations and perceptions around the purpose of the plays inform their responses. Their perceptions about changes in the correctional centre, which they perceive to have occurred as a result of the performances of the plays, are dealt with later (see Chapter 8). I will present the data in this chapter in three major sections:

- The audience members' expectations of theatre;
- The purpose of performing the plays in the correctional centre: the audience's perspective;
- The processes that members of the audience used to engage with the plays.

There was much greater variety in the responses during discussions about *Isikhathi Sewashi*. This play was longer and more complex than *Lisekhon' Ithemba*. It had familiar characters and a clear story. It addressed broad and complex social issues related to crime.

Lisekhon' Ithemba did not present a play with characters and a storyline. It presented a sequence of specific situations dealing with illness, which the audience recognized. The audience's responses about *Lisekhon'*

Ithemba were similar in each transcript. They spoke about problems around taking food back to offenders who were ill in the cells; access to the hospital; favouritism amongst the correctional staff in dealing with the offenders' health problems; and bullying of sick offenders by the offenders back in the cells.

6.2 Audience members' preconceptions and expectations of theatre

Over half the respondents (54%) had never seen a play before seeing *Isikhathi Sewashi* and *Lisekhon' Ithemba*. They made comments such as, "I have not seen any plays outside except the TV ones (SZ in T8 2003:8)" and, "I never watched any play while outside. Plays are things I first saw while I'm here and only those that were in the section. (A in T10 2003:1)." Others (46%) said they had seen plays before being sentenced. Some of them had seen productions of famous anti-apartheid plays. The work of Gibson Kente and Mbongeni Ngema defined for them the notion of professional theatre. The titles they mentioned were, *How Long?*; *Woza Albert*; *Asinamali*; and *Sarafina*.

Here is an example of audience members' response to being asked what plays they had seen outside:

T: It was *Asinamali* [...] The *Asinamali* play was based much on politics and the one I saw in prison [*Isikhathi Sewashi*] was based in poverty and politics but much more on poverty that we experience these days. (T in T4 2003:1)

M: It was *How Long* written by Gibson Kente and *Woza Albert* by Mbogeni Ngema[...] It was based on politics, that is *How Long*, the political situation from the 60s, 70s and 80s. The *Woza Albert* was based on the political situation from the 80s up to the democratic era in South Africa. (M in T4 2003:1)

Other plays mentioned were school plays or community plays that engaged social problems or taught religious values, as opposed to the overtly struggle politics of the famous anti-apartheid plays. Here are some examples:

The play I've seen outside it was titled *Kanti Mhlaba Unje* [Are You the World Like This?]. So the thing that I've learned from that play was that if you are a person living in this world you must not look down upon other people because eventually if you happened to stumble and fall, the very same people, you will need them for help. (MD in T11 2003:1)

The name of the play was *Thokoza* [Happy/Celebrate]. I was involved in gospel. We formed it as a gospel group. (AN in T5 2003:2)

It is interesting to note that for some members of the audience seeing plays that addressed social issues included some that addressed criminal behaviour, as this conversation demonstrates:

SN: Yes, my brother, I have seen one play on the outside, in fact it was trying to show us the conditions under which we live. The conditions we are subjected to as humankind and problems that we encounter and also enlightening us about crime.

NN: I would say what my brother has just said, the play that I also saw enlightened us about crime and that it doesn't pay. But in fact the other play, which I saw was the kind of play that wasn't enlightening us or rehabilitating; it was an entertaining play. [...]

NMk: I have also seen a play and it was about child abuse. It was about child abuse and also woman abuse.

(SN in T5 2003:1-2)

The audience categorised plays as either entertaining or educational. They made this distinction even when the educational plays had entertained them.

Something good about the plays both inside and outside, they leave you with a joyous feeling. The outside stage plays are funny. So are the prison plays: they make you laugh a lot and they also make you change your behaviour pattern. The outside plays just leave you saying, "Hey, these people are funny". (MG in T12 2003:8)

Most of the audience placed plays into one of these categories, whether or not they felt they had been exposed to theatre before coming to the correctional centre. They all recognized that *Isikhathi Sewashi* and *Lisekhon' Ithemba* had an educational intention. Those who had seen plays before identified the educational value of the Medium B plays as a difference between them and the plays they had seen outside.

Yes, indeed I have watched some plays while I was outside but I never benefited from those plays [...] The difference is that the prison plays are very educational with regard to crime and its consequences. (MC in T8 2003:2)

I have seen some plays at school but they were only dealing with entertainment aspect. (ST in T2 2003:5)

There are plays I've seen outside; they related to HIV/AIDS issues, but most were about entertainment. There was no analysis of the things that took place outside. (SN in T2 2003:2)

The members of the audience who had been involved in plays also valued the educational aspect of theatre over those of entertainment.

The plays that I took part in and the plays of prison have the same effect on the audience and they have the aim of education [...] [for example one was] about domestic violence. [...] I also saw drama about the township life style, like the one I have just seen here in prison. It has a lot of township culture, for example, the character of Gazolo of *Isikhathi Sewashi*. Plays like that are the ones that give one wisdom and understanding. (ZH in T2 2003:5-6)

Audience members also brought to the plays an appreciation for Zulu performance aesthetics. One member of the audience made this comment, while discussing the songs used in the play:

Okay, let me go back to the Zulu department. As a black person, Zulu things, even you as a person who is used to cultural things, they are things that I praise most of the time. I escape from diverse issues and enter the Zulu world. So the way in which my brother S puts it [S had praised the music in the play], my mind tries to imagine home because at home we are accustomed to the Zulu culture. It is something that we use most of the time. So that is why most of the time I follow the Zulu culture. No matter what is done in the west, Zulu never goes out, especially the music. When there is traditional dancing, I like to praise something like that, even though I can't do the traditional dance since I grew up in the township, but it is something I praise all the time. I find it to be right. (SM in T1 2003:18)

Despite the value SM places on “Zulu things”, he acknowledges that he escapes from “diverse issues” in order to enter “the Zulu world”; he lives in an urban world that is more culturally complex with a mixture of western and African cultures and he admits that he cannot perform Zulu dances. Zulu performance aesthetics seem to have a strong value when linked to isiZulu language, music and social processes such as identity making. In contrast, western aesthetics dominated perceptions about production values and the perceived ‘quality’ of the play. Perceptions about the need for realist casting, sets, and props have their origins in the aesthetics of twentieth century western realist theatre, film and television. Comments ranged from, “[t]he plays outside had men and women, here the plays only have men (SS in T9 2003:3)”

to comments about the need for costumes and props. “They should get things which will be appropriate for the play like clothes, if someone is portraying a policeman then he should have a police uniform (NM2 in T5 2003:27),” and, “If the play must have a house [a set] we should see a house and if the table should be there it must be so (NM in T11 2003:22).”

The audience did not see Poor Theatre as an aesthetic choice but as confirmation of their own disadvantage. However, despite these criticisms the audience still valued the connections the plays made with their own sense of reality:

It's common that the plays outside are supplemented by musical instruments and costumes. Here it's not that much important to have all those kinds of things because we are poor and we don't have sufficient facilities. Despite that the plays have the same impact as outside side stage plays. The outside plays focus much more on entertainment where as inside the plays focus on things that concern the inmates. (DC in T12 2003:8)

In summary, the audience had an expectation that plays would be either entertaining or educational. They tended to value the educational potential in plays and categorized *Isikhathi Sewashi* and *Lisekhon' Ithemba* as educational. A mixed sense of western theatre aesthetics, related to production values, and African performance aesthetics, related to social processes influenced their responses.

6.3 Perceptions about the purpose of performing the plays

Members of the audience spoke about what they saw as the purpose of the plays at the Medium B Correction Centre. The plays reflected their sense of reality and presented situations and characters they recognized and could identify with. They found the plays useful and described them as educational because they provided a safe space for them to address specific problems in their lives. They understood that plays provided benefits for them:

- By providing information about HIV/AIDS and the consequences of crime
- By reflecting the offenders' sense of reality
- Because they could recognize situations and identify with characters

- Because the plays rehabilitated offenders and helped them conform with the correctional aims and objectives
- They provided a privileged space for speaking out and solving problems related to:
 - self-expression and communication;
 - issues of personal accountability;
 - raising complaints and criticisms of the correctional staff;
 - problems related to living with HIV/AIDS in the correction centre;
 - problems related to oppression by the numbers gangs;
 - problems related to political factionalism.

6.3.1 Plays provided information

The plays were not only perceived as educational because they addressed problems; they also provided information. The response below demonstrates the ways in which the respondents felt *Lisekhon' Ithemba* provided information about HIV/ AIDS:

The play in prison is extremely useful because in life there are hazardous things and we didn't know that those things could have been endangering our lives. Like the way we used to lead our lives, and things that we were utilising, sharing of razors and needles when doing tattoos; we didn't know that might lead to the infection of diseases, for example AIDS. But we are aware now due to the plays that we've been watching. (EK in T11 2003:3)

Outside it was just awareness campaigns, as you know about the HIV/AIDS problem. When I was outside I was not interested in such issues. I was only interested in having parties and committing crime in order to get fast cash; that is why I find myself in prison. Now I have been educated about HIV/AIDS as I was very ignorant about it. And bullying and discriminating amongst ourselves, especially those who are infected with the virus. I have learnt that we can talk to each other in a friendly and brotherly way. (DN in T2 2003:3)

This last example demonstrates that some audience members also found *Isikhathi Sewashi* provided information about how to avoid becoming involved in crime.

Isikhathi Sewashi is different from all the plays that I saw outside because I just was looking at them for entertainment and at the end there was nothing to gain. This *Isikhathi Sewashi* is all about what is happening in this day and can put people in danger and how to avoid it. (VM in T6 2003:3)

6.3.2 Plays reflected the offenders' sense of reality

One of the differences the members of the audience identified between the plays they had seen outside and *Isikhathi Sewashi* and *Lisekhon' Ithemba* was that these plays reflected their own life experiences.

The plays that are performed here in jail are dealing with all the circumstances that I came across in life and something that I've experienced in life. They talk of something that I know, positive and negative. It differs from the one that deals with something I don't know or it is a fictitious story. (TK in T6 2003:2)

Here one audience member compares *Asinamali* with *Isikhathi Sewashi*:

It [*Asinamali*] was based on the black man's political situation in South Africa. This one [*Isikhathi Sewashi*] from prison touches many categories. It is not about one person, and another thing, it has a special group of people that are targeted. (M in T4 2003:2)

That the plays reflected their reality was, for the audience, important. It emerged as important that the content of a play should reflect contextual and experiential issues related to specific audiences. Some respondents used this as a category to describe the difference between the plays in the Medium B Correction Centre and those outside, made for schools and rural audiences.

The prison plays talk of the events that happen in townships most of the time. That is where I see a small difference because all the plays that I ever watched outside, they talk of something happening in the farm areas. (M in T9 2003:2)

Yes, I have [seen plays on the outside] but they were very different from the prison drama because they were talking about life in school. The prison drama is different because it deals about prison life. (BM in T8 2003:6)

6.3.3 Recognizing situations and identifying with characters

Linked to the idea that it is important that a play reflect the lived experiences of audiences in specific communities is the idea that members of the audience should be able to identify with particular characters and situations presented

by the plays. This is expressed when the respondents speak of *Isikhathi Sewashi* using phrases such as, the play “dealt with the life of a person very deeply (KH in T8 2003:6)” or, it “contains a lot of things that you can understand and grab if you watch it and think (TX in T6 2003:1)”. Further, if to ‘think deeply’ has the potential to mean remember, recognizing and recalling one’s own experiences in response to the play becomes an important element in the manner in which the audience responds to the plays. An audience member who identifies with a character or recognizes a situation, because provoked to remember a similar personal experience, might recognize that moment in a play as ‘truthful’.

Isikhathi Sewashi dealt with the audiences’ common experiences before being sentenced, of growing up in KwaZulu-Natal and engaging in crime. Its time frame was longer and it dealt with more remote experiences. *Lisekhon’ Ithemba* dealt with immediate experiences, that were happening daily in the sections. One audience members said about *Lisekhon’ Ithemba*, “It educates inmates about life and circumstances we’re living under (MD in T11 2003:3)”. In addition to evoking remembered experiences, there is a link between the idea that the plays reflect common personal experiences and that they speak-out on behalf of the audience. This is expressed here when a member of the audience speaks about how *Lisekhon’ Ithemba* addresses living conditions in the correction centre.

I am very happy about this play we have been shown by our brothers [the cast members], so that perhaps members [correctional staff] will realise that because these people's complaints are not considered, they have decided to make a play. They have decided to make a play about what they were complaining about; maybe change will take place regarding the issues that we complained of. (NM in T5 2003:12-13)

6.3.4 Responses that collude with notions of rehabilitation and correctional aims and objectives

Some of the responses reveal tendencies towards compliance and submissive behaviour. These members of the audience thought the plays should address a conventional understanding of rehabilitation, education, and teach a moral lesson. These responses were congruent with the imperatives of the correctional system.

In short I would say, according to me, the drama in prison does make you accept the situation you are facing. At all times or ways the drama tries to explain or clarify, it tries to show us the kind of situation and the place we are in that we should accept it. (SN in T5 2003:2)

I think the aim is to rehabilitate the inmates in prison and to enlighten us about how come we ended up in prison. Something must be done about the reason why we are in prison because we must not be released and go back to our old dirty selves. (S in T4 2003:2)

The examples below demonstrate how by recognizing a situation portrayed in the play, some audience members extract a moral lesson. Their responses end with the formulation of the maxim that crime does not pay or that one should avoid bad influence:

There is something new that I have discovered [...] Crime does not pay, you might feel or think that all is alright during your crime spree but at the end you won't be a progressive person [a person whose life goes forward]. (MC in T8 2003:3)

In those plays I saw, I've gained a lot of education about how a person gets involved in wrong things and how one finds himself in trouble [...] you end up seeing other people styles, wanting to follow them. (B in T10 2003:1)

6.3.5 Theatre provides a privileged space for speaking out and solving problems

Some members of the audience felt the plays provided a privileged space inside the correction centre. The plays provided them with a degree of agency: they could speak out about problems and discuss solutions safely.

These respondents said the plays should rehabilitate or educate, but their responses did not express a wish to accept the status quo or try to identify moral maxims. They saw the plays as providing an opportunity to solve problems in their lives and living conditions in the correctional centre. Here are some responses that refer particularly to *Isikhathi Sewashi*:

Its purpose is to give a person the opportunity to use his mind; to talk about the things he feels inside, seen and unseen things happening here inside prison. They [the offenders] are coming from different places, which means their minds also differ; then they are unable to communicate and talk about one thing. (M in T8 2003:3)

It is obvious that we come here in prison telling ourselves that we are arrested. But we need to release ourselves. Don't let your body and mind to be arrested too. Let only the body, so that your mind will function fast and accordingly. (MC in T9 2003:4)

Outside before my arrest I was not close with these stage plays nor the people that act in plays, therefore I did not consider it as something important. I love things that teach people and things that will build the nation but I didn't have time for all that outside. Now I am an inmate so I watch it because there's nothing else to do. [...] Here in prison I found that this stage play acted by the inmates is the stage play that helps those who didn't listen but it leaves something in your head. If our brothers finish to perform on stage obviously something has been installed in our minds. It's better than performing without giving any message. My brothers, as we are here at Westville, we've been oppressed by the prison itself. There are certain things that might hurt me and you but you find that you are unable to reveal or talk about it because once you talk about it your group will be taken away and you will be transferred to another prison [...] It is important for us to stand up and do it [speak out] on our own because if we don't then nobody will do it for us and we need to assess ourselves so as to say how important it is to perform a stage play in prison. [...] Well, these stage plays have been good and we have to continue with it to keep on passing messages to others in particular those we think are untouchable – nobody is able to tell them anything. I think that is the only solution to solve our problems just to play the stage play and people learn out of it. (NT in T7 2003:20)

Here are some responses about *Lisikhona Ithema*, which emphasize solving problems related to living with HIV/AIDS in the correctional centre.

I would touch on the AIDS play. It projects that when you are an infected person with AIDS you're not a danger to others. He is a person who needs to be helped in many ways that you can come up with. It also can say how jail members treat inmates and if that can be considered especially by the management, there is a step that can be taken. (NM T11 2003:4)

On *Ithemba Lisikhona* I learned that an HIV-infected person is still a human being, sometimes HIV people do not like to disclose their status because of the stigma attached to HIV and AIDS. Some people hide their status from their cellmates. When they go to a hospital when they are sick they are not fairly treated. It is often said that there is no cure for HIV AIDS. It frustrates me to see these people are not cared for. What I know about this disease, you can't get it from eating with a person who is infected. If a sick person is at the terminal stage, I must comfort him and give him hope that he can still live longer. I can crack a joke about anything to him. I can also play with him just to keep his mind off the HIV issue. If I isolate him he may feel more sick, he may feel useless. He thinks he's about to die. Whereas if I take that person to the sun and play some games with him he may have a hope that he can still live longer despite the disease that he has. (1 in T2 2003:5)

The plays did not only provide a safe process for speaking-out and engaging with the correctional system, they also provided members of the audience with strategies for avoiding oppression by the numbers gangs.

As my brother said, playing stage plays it is a great job because we do not focus on other things [*“other thing” are tasks (often violent) that are part of gang culture*]. Most of our time we spent on the plays here in jail. Gangsterism is denied now people pay attention to the plays. And it is a great blessing. (XD in T6 2003:5)

A section in *Isikhathi Sewashi* reminded the audience about the faction fighting during the 1980s and 1990s between ANC and IFP. Remembering the violence led some members of the audience to express disillusionment with political faction fighting. They felt the play reinforced this as a lesson.

I agree we are having a lesson in things. I mean I was in these things of politics while outside. But after I'm imprisoned and people continued with them but I realize that really these things were problematic. I can see now that really these things that happening had no benefit. (D in T14 2003:1)

6.4 Engaging the play through an IsiZulu traditional storytelling aesthetic

Whilst discussing how important it is to identify with the characters and recognize situations one member of the audience provided this example of how he identified with the character Ayanda. He recounts some of the events from the play and adds his own conclusion and moral lesson, “if he had endured maybe he would have succeeded”. This response mirrors the conventions of traditional Zulu storytelling; present in his ‘story’ is the educational function (Scheub 1975:41) and the movement from chaos to social order (1975:114). The plays did not provide solutions but posed questions. This respondent follows Zulu tradition and provides the required conclusion to an unfinished tale, as he sees it. He complains about the problem-posing nature of the play.

If I take the characters which were portrayed there, especially Ayanda's character. Ayanda's family was alright and they had everything, but he chose to associate with the wrong people, namely, Gazolo and Nkululeko. Finally when he is in trouble, all by himself, he realizes this. If he endured and continued with school just like he was explaining before in *Isikhathi Sewashi* about the way he was living. He even identified himself with Eddie Murphy from *Coming to America* saying he lived that life. If he had endured maybe

he would have succeeded. During *Isikhathi Sewashi* we did not see the end when they are in prison or maybe after they were released, how they had changed, what they regretted, so that we in prison can walk in their foot steps, because these characters are people we relate to as prisoners. They must also get a lesson so that we know which path to take. (BX in T1 2003:12)

The subliminal influence of a residual isiZulu oral performance culture similarly influenced many of the responses in the interviews. The importance of identifying with characters and recognizing situations, together with the need, demonstrated here, for the offenders' own narratives about the plays to move towards finding order and a resolution was present in many of the responses, particularly in those about individuals' memories of the plays and the discussions back in the cells. In a general manner this example offers an insight into the process the offenders used to engage the plays as evidenced in their discussion of their engagement.

Below I will present a detailed analysis, with examples, of their process of engagement.

6.5 Discovering categories to describe the audiences' process of engagement

During the initial coding of responses from the audience about the plays I identified a number of recurring themes. These were best expressed as verbal nouns, which named different activities present in the responses. Here is the list of the activities I found:

- identifying;
- remembering;
- recognizing the socio-political and historical context
- reflecting on problems and solutions;
- extracting a moral lesson;
- imagining a future;
- and speaking out.

Some of these activities overlapped. For example, identifying with a character and his circumstances was similar to recognizing a situation. In such cases I coded responses on the dominant activity. For example, if the respondent engaged with a particular situation through the character's experience, I categorised the response as 'identifying'. If the respondent overtly engaged the

situation, I categorised the response as ‘recognizing the socio-political and historical context’. This category proved problematic, and I later refined it to ‘recognizing a situation’. ‘Remembering’ was harder to deal with, because it was a component of identifying and recognizing and therefore present as a general activity in the response. However, when a respondent provided a particular moment of personal narrative during a response I categorised this as ‘remembering’.

I had noticed that the responses tended to follow a general pattern, from problem to resolution, common in Zulu story telling (pp174-175). I had not yet identified any clear process with sequential steps in the patterns of the responses, but recognized that activities were combined in some way. A respondent might identify with a character or situation and remember events from his life and reflect on a problem and a solution. I was initially only working with a collection of themes and only remembering and the movement of problem to resolution emerged as common or unifying components. I began to wonder if it were possible to look for a more detailed pattern in the responses. There seemed to be three different, recurrent, starting points:

- Identifying with a character;
- Recognizing a situation;
- Narrating part of the play.

The process of recounting part of the play and adding a concluding moral lesson had occurred in many of the responses in the data (see example p174-175). I then reviewed the data, paying particular attention to the different ways in which the respondents finished their accounts. Some seemed to conclude by providing a solution in the form of a positive imagined future. Others seemed to conclude with the speaker reflecting on a problem, sometimes suggesting a solution. In other cases the resolution entailed recognising a social injustice, which suggested that the problem had been made public. The last variant concluded with the speaker generating a moral lesson. I was able to refine this to the following three common ways of ending:

- A moral lesson or maxim was stated
- A better way of living was imagined or stated as a solution
- A social injustice, if not solved, was made public.

Working back from these different conclusions I was able to see how some of the activities I had listed during the initial coding formed elements and sequential steps in a number of different patterns of response. Three basic patterns emerged, which I have labelled as categories:

- Identifying with a character;
- Recognizing a situation;
- Generating a moral lesson.

These categories explain the processes by which the audience engages with the plays. In the cells after the facilitated discussion during the performances, the audience continued to engage the material presented in the plays. Their personal memories of watching the play and accounts of collectively discussing the play back in the cells was often in one of these categories. I recoded these portions of the data, using the three categories and identified 149 examples in the comments made in relation to *Isikhathi Sewashi*. Some of the responses did not reflect the full sequence of activities, yet contained some of the elements, and could be explained as unfinished versions of one of the three basic processes.

I also coded the responses related to *Lisekhon' Ithemba*. Only two processes were evident: there were no responses that could be categorized as 'Identifying with a character'. The play had presented a series of situations and had not developed a character with a story. The recognition of these situations was immediate and comments about the problems or injustice dominated the responses. I was able to identify 32 examples of responses that I could categorize as 'Recognizing a situation' or 'Generating a moral lesson'.

6.6 Identifying with a character

The category 'Identifying with a character' occurs only in responses about *Isikhathi Sewashi*. It contains the following activities, which form its properties. They are:

- Identifying;
- Remembering;
- Reflecting on problems and/or solutions;
- Sometimes imagining a future.

The presence of properties such as reflection and generating solutions demonstrate that the members of the audience engaged with the plays in a manner that involved thinking critically about certain problems. In all the examples they reflect on personal accountability in relation to choices and the consequence of actions. I have placed comments, using italics, in the examples below in order to explain the presence of the properties in specific examples. I will use the first example to explain the category and properties. I will then present further examples that demonstrate the ways in which the members of the audiences identified with different characters in the play.

If I were to go into Nkululeko's shoes. [*Here the respondent has identified with the character Nkululeko*] Nkululeko was a human even though he had problems: things were dark but he would have seen the light if he had really thought about it. [*The tone of this section suggests that the respondent is remembering his own experiences. That he too is an ex-combatant is only suggested at the end of his speech when he says "in the end I will see the light because I am from military training and I have my rightful place in the government." With the words "if he had really thought about it" he begins to explore problems and solutions in terms of personal accountability involving choices of action and their consequences*] Not to say he didn't think, but if he thought things over and not too hasty, with him everything was hurried, you see, as well as finding friends he thought were right for him, but on the other side they were not right because in the end they put him in this situation [in prison]. [*The speaker's own identification with these events, set up in the opening, adds an emotional tone of regret and self pity. He moves forward to explore solutions which he imagines for Nkululeko and himself. His use of third person pronoun "he" changes to the first person pronoun "I".*] If I was him before he was employed by the SANDF [South African National Defence Force], maybe I would have found temporary employment or asked for assistance from the family if I have one. If I don't have one, maybe I would try temporary employment so that I can survive for the time being, [*Through a reimagined past, he offers temporary employment as a solution; patience and acceptance are implied qualities present in this solution.*] knowing that in the end I will see the light because I am from military training and I have my rightful place in the government. [*He has provided a positive resolution for a situation of conflict and chaos: he offers a solution that emphasises a 'correct' relationship between ex-combatants and the government. This solution envisaged an emerging working class and rural consciousness that later, in 2008, would inform the conflict for leadership within the ANC, involving factions supporting Jacob Zuma and others supporting Thabo Mbeki.*] (SN in T1 2003:10)

6.6.1 Identifying with a character: memories of *Isikhathi Sewashi*

In making the play we created three personal stories that we felt were typical of offenders' experiences. The example above demonstrates that some

members of audience identified with Nkululeko. Others identified with Gazolo or Ayanda.

Members of the audience were reluctant to declare themselves as ex-combatants during the interviews, and do not easily state whether or not their personal circumstances are similar to those of Nkululeko: although they may mix first and second person pronouns during their responses.

You see in the first play, *Isikhathi Sewashi*, Nkululeko, when he returned from exile and integrated in the SANDF, he was not content with the remuneration he earned. He had the material [weapons] to use in robbery. Nkululeko was not happy about the salary he earned and he had the potential to establish his gangsters so that he can have the money that will satisfy him[...] [*The respondent has identified with Nkululeko and recounts his journey through the play. When he starts to reflect and generate solutions he switches from the third person "he" to the second person "you". This suggests that he is remembering similar experiences from his own life. His reflection on the problem of criminal behaviour and solutions now have more general application, which could include himself. This is confirmed when in his conclusion he admits that the play changed his mind.*] Therefore, what I saw is even if you are not satisfied with what you get from your work you should persevere, especially when you know the jail life. If you have seen the disadvantages of jail, and the hardships, you cannot let go of whatever job you might get outside. Even if you have your weapons you wouldn't resort to crime because you have better knowledge of prison life. (*His solution is that the experience of prison is a deterrent and you should hold on to your job even if you find it unrewarding.*) I would say, my brother, that is the sensible thing I read out of the play and it changed my mind. (SN in T3 2003:6)

The properties of this category are not always articulated in the responses. They run under the text like a theatrical subtext, sometimes emerging as articulated phrases and sometimes emerging in speech out of sequence. Sometimes one senses them as a beat between phrases or sentences.

In the next example the respondent starts by identifying with the character of Gazolo and then reflects on his own actions and their consequences, comparing them with the man who hands back the gun in the final scene of the play. Through comparison with his own experience with that portrayed in the play he thinks of solutions regarding his own criminal behaviour. As so often occurs in these examples there is a tone of self-pity.

The part that springs to mind when the play is mentioned is that of the brothers gathering. Gazolo was there. He was selling the drugs on the street. Then appears the brother from exile with big guns to rob the cash in transit. I did the very same thing that was done by these brothers. [*The respondent*

identifies with the characters in the play, particularly Gazolo.] We would take the money and buy some drugs. We smoke first. Then we go to robbery carrying guns.. [He reflects on a solution by comparing his own choices with those of the man in the final scene.] If I was like that brother too [the one who handed the gun back in the final scene]. I would've thought. I know the prison. As it was, it was impossible for me because I had smoked the drugs and the blood was pulsating. My co-accused, maybe you know him, he's doing fifteen years without parole and I'm doing twelve years with parole. If that thought came over me like that brother, who remembered the magistrate sentencing him, remembering being called by prisoners from all sides, if I was him, I should've said, brothers, here is your gun, I can't go on with this. But because of smoking drugs, that thought never came. I went there committed the offence and got jailed. [He has identified drug addiction and peer pressure as key problems that contributed to his choices and because of the comparison he makes with the man who gave back the gun there is an implied solution.] SB in T15 2003:11)

Here is a second example of a respondent who identified with Gazolo. It provides an example of a member of the audience imagining a future based on better choices. Painful memories involving regret and self-pity are present.

I will talk broadly about *Isikhathi Sewashi*. You see this drama spoke with me directly. When I saw this play I felt that they are talking with me, not anyone else, the way things were happening. What interested me the most was Gazolo's experience[...]And I was also doing some of the things which were projected by the play. *(The respondent states clearly that he identified strongly with the character Gazolo. He begins to remember and reflect on his own and Gazolo's criminal behaviour)* But after watching the play I saw the danger I was busy inviting and Gazolo's character exhibited the place I was going to end up in. That was an intriguing part for me. *[He gives a long account of the play, which also involves him in remembering events from his own life, which the play mirrors for him.]* Gazolo was a student and he came from a poor family; even his father was unemployed and also his mother was just a housewife always depending on her husband for money. And Gazolo's family hails from the farm, therefore Gazolo was a farm-boy before they came to the town, and since he was from the farm his peers were teasing him and sometimes they will call him by derogatory names and he did not like that. All that was my experience because when I left Bergville, my rural area, to reside in Durban, I wasn't tolerant of some of the things I encountered. And I think that is the reason why I am here in prison. I was called stupid person and even Gazolo started to sell drugs and he even go beyond that and rob the money trying to prove himself. He did all that because he wanted to show his peers that he is also a clever guy; he can do anything. *[He now starts to generate solutions]* But if Gazolo had resisted those difficulties, and at least find someone who will give him advice, maybe to adhere to his education, he would have not been in a situation he subjected himself to. If you are poor, you are wearing torn shoes, the most important thing is education and try to control yourself when you see people driving expensive cars. Drama intrigued me a great deal and in a sense that when I go outside I would seek wise people who will add on my knowledge in order to ward off

these negative thoughts I have in my mind and try to lead a positive life. (ST in T3 2003:7)

Here are examples of comments in which the member of the audience identified with Ayanda. Beginning with the phrase “if I was him”, the respondent below identifies with Ayanda and starts to reflect critically on Ayanda’s choices and generates solutions. In this example the role of remembering is not explicit. It is unclear if the speaker came from a wealthy background or if he simply remembers that he too “mingled with naughty friends and [...] went to prison”.

My brother, if I go into Ayanda's shoes, Ayanda had a bigger choice because his family was rich. If I were him, I would ask my parents to assist me in furthering my study. Ask for some money to start my own business and make the money that I want. Which means Ayanda didn't use his mind effectively, because he mingled with naughty friends and he went to prison. His family is rich; they could have helped him. If I were him, I would ask my folks to provide me with something that could secure me a bright future [...] Anything he wanted from home he got. But the large sum of money he wanted, even though I do not know how much money he wanted, but most of the things he wanted, at home he got them. It was his fault and incompetence that made him go with friends and plan a robbery that landed him in prison. You get my point, brother? (MN in T1 2003:10)

In this second example the member of the audience identifies with Ayanda because his own background is similar. The act of remembering is implicit here. His solution emerges in the phrase, “[i]f I were a real person I wouldn't have committed crimes”. Contextual knowledge of the offenders’ English enables me to suggest that a “real person” means someone who is fully human, who has *ubuntu*¹. A criminal lacks *ubuntu* because he causes harm to other people and society. Someone who was more fully human, in the sense that *ubuntu* offers, would not be influenced negatively, and would choose to create better social relationships.

¹ *Ubuntu* means humanity. It has become a popular term for teamwork involving cohesion. Recently the Celtics Basketball team from Boston won the NBA using notions of team work inspired by a lecture given by Bishop Tutu on *Ubuntu*.

The character that I remember most is about the Model C² named Ayanda. He was a person who was not coming from a poor family. But he was pressured by his friend Gazolo to do robbery as a form of income. There was another character that gave the material, like weapons, Nkululeko, then they took Ayanda as their driver in their getaway car [...] I can identify myself with that character because I don't come from a very poor family. That is why I'm in prison. But if I was a real person I wouldn't have committed crimes. (DN in T2 2003:7)

The members of the audience did not only identify with the main characters, but also identified with subsidiary characters. In the example below a member of the audience identifies with Gazolo's sister Ntombi. The issue of the extent to which identification with a character involves a close match with the respondents' own experience is sensitive in this example because some young men have to offer sexual favours as 'prison wives' in order to survive. His conclusion relates to personal accountability, choices and consequences as well as 'correct' social relations. If he continues to be involved with criminal activities and the gang activities in the prison involving sex, it will cost him the support of his family.

I've also learned about that girl [Ntombi] who opted for prostitution due to bad conditions at home. And that led to the family break-up because the parents were angry about what she was doing. I had personalized it in a manner that, I know for certain that my parents do not like the fact that I'm in prison and if I continue recidivism they will disown me. (NJ in T3 2003:7)

Not all the audience members generated solutions that supported notions of 'correct' social relationships. In the example below the member of the audience is aware that his solution is anti-social. He proposes that crime is a reasonable solution to poverty and social inequality. Even with this conclusion, his response explores the over-arching theme present in all responses in this category, personal accountability relating to actions and their consequences. He identifies, remembers and reflects on solutions. His imagined future actions involve continued criminal behaviour, not articulated as words implied;

² Model C was the name given to formally privileged white schools that opened to integrate students of colour into the school population towards the end of apartheid in the late 1980s. "A model C" is slang and refers to a black person who has had access to a 'white' middle class education.

I noticed Gazolo because he comes from a rural area from a poor family and he went to exile for training to fight for South Africa. [*He conflates Gazolo and Nkululeko probably because his own experiences are similar to those of both the characters*] though he had a dream of getting a job one day so that he could change the life in his family because they were drinking black tea. Out of all the hopes that he had, none of them succeeded. When he came back from exile he finds himself living worse than before. He ends up selling drugs and robbing cars because his aim was to uplift the standard of living of his family. Because he got no money to fulfil all his needs there is no other way he could obtain it. The best way is to rob so that he could get money. (*He concludes that crime is the only reasonable solution to Gazolo's and his own poverty. He is aware that he has generated an antisocial conclusion. His final 'coda' acknowledges this but is neither an apology nor an excuse; the poverty at home is justification for robbery*). I'm saying this because I don't think he likes what he is doing but he had to do it. The situation at his home was very hard that is why he's robbing and ended up in prison. (NT in T7 2003:6)

Although this response belongs in the category 'Identifying with a character', his conclusion does not reinforce notions of 'correct social relations'. This type of response was unusual when audience members spoke of their own reaction to the play. It was, however, not unusual in their accounts of the group discussions about the play back in the cells.

6.6.2 Identifying with a character: accounts of discussions in the cells about *Isikhathi Sewashi*

The category 'Identifying with a character' also occurred in the accounts of the discussions in the cells after the performances. In the following example the offenders in the cell identified with Gazolo. Some supported crime; others did not:

In fact the things that we focused on was Gazolo and crime. [*They identify with Gazolo*] And that, *Isikhathi Sewashi*, was very important to us as an example, since we are prisoners. Because if I'm not mistaken most of us here are in for robberies, because we want money. [*They remember their own experiences. They proceed to debate the topic and possible solutions.*] Hence, we sat down with the guys in the cell and agreed that crime doesn't pay. But there were others who were opposing that. When I asked in what manner perhaps the crime is paying, they said if you are a criminal or robbing money you become rich in a minute. I told them that there is a police force that has been introduced called Scorpions and they ensure that whatever you have is deliberately checked and that how did you obtain all your assets. If now we decide to rob the money and purchase whatever expensive things we want, defiantly the Scorpions will forfeit everything if we fail to produce invoices of our properties and even our bank accounts will be freezed. In that sense what did we achieve from crime? The other guy said no, crime does pay

because you get money whenever you need it. And I said, here is Gazolo's example, he was busy robbing money and he did get it but still he wasn't satisfied. Even in the process one guy will die or sometimes all of them. And he will be compelled to form another gang. Even then he won't get the money that will satisfy him. How does a person get satisfied? In other words humans will never be satisfied and the only thing that will stop him is death. You will find sometimes a person getting a reasonable amount of money through crime but he will continue robbing and this shows that crime doesn't pay. It is a temporary thing. Therefore, if we get out of jail we should change the mindset, in fact we discussed a lot about crime and the reason ... that it doesn't pay. Though there were some of the guys who were disputing that, by stating that crime does pay. They will even make examples about their certain neighbours who drive BMWs and they have never been arrested but they are involved in crime. [*The speaker imagines his life if he stays involved with crime*]We tried to tell them that you cannot compare yourself with another person because that will put you under pressure and you do not even know his way of doing things which makes him the way he is or the level of life he is in. You might even die before reaching his level and you won't live your life to the full. (BS in T3 2003:14)

These debates about crime and its consequences appear to have been rich, as this section from another account also demonstrates. In this case some of the offenders came to the conclusion that selling drugs is more socially destructive than committing cash-in-transit robberies. This conclusion values social relationships and contradicts the legal system, which places a higher value on property than human relations. Sentences for committing cash-in-transit robberies are more severe than for peddling drugs. Some thought of selling drugs as employment, which made it more socially acceptable than theft.

So that is what we were discussing in a cell; others were on Gazolo's side, saying he was right for selling drugs, and I was on the other side disputing that. And I kept on emphasizing that, yes, he was right at the beginning but he spoiled his life by selling drugs. You see when he goes to the robbery, a few people die in the process, compared to how many lives he kills by selling drugs. And drug smokers can do anything when they want their stuff. So they can even kill you or be killed, just trying to satisfy themselves or even be arrested because of committing crime to obtain the money for drugs. Others were saying Gazolo was right because he was trying to make a living for himself; he was not stealing. (SN in T3 2003:10)

Below is an example of a discussion in the cells about Nkululeko. Two positions were taken. One valued personal and immediate satisfaction: Nkululeko should have left his work and resorted to robbery. The other was

concerned with 'correct' social relationships: Nkululeko should have persevered and hoped for change.

We talked about *Isikhathi Sewashi*. Because even when we were in the cell we were still debating about politics and the guy who was working as a soldier. Other guys were saying he was right for quitting his job if his remuneration was not satisfactory. And when I posed a question about what other alternative he had to obtain a better salary, I received an answer that he had no option if his employers were unable to give him a reasonable salary, therefore he had to quit. He was supposed to seek for his benefits. And to take guns in order for him to rob and get the money that will satisfy him, that is what we were discussing. From that I saw that I as well could have been tempted to follow his suit because I would know how to use guns and it will be easy to commit robberies. But when I really thought what was on my mind, I saw that perseverance is the mother of success even if you can't bear the conditions you are working under. And that can maybe lead to where your employer might consider perhaps to increase your salary, seeing how committed you are to your job. Other guys were saying that it happens sometimes that you can work for ten years without increase in your work, but I foresaw that we were misleading each other and that they are trying to change my mind, and I was trying to avert negative things but they were trying to drag me back. (SS in T3 2003:12)

The last example describes a more personal discussion between cellmates about Ayanda. A member of the audience describes his intense emotional reaction to having identified strongly with the character of Ayanda and his need to discuss this with another person.

In fact the day we were watching this play, when we were locked up in the cells I called a person who I discuss things with him. I didn't discuss with the whole cellmates. And I told him about this play. That this play had touched me, and these performers have no idea I was in prison. But the way they performed it was as if they knew that it had happened to me the way they projected it. Why me? Because when I watch, I was also educated and at home given everything but I did something like one of the characters, and I chose a friend. (*He reflects about how he became involved in crime*) I didn't notice what kind of friend I'm choosing and I didn't have a clue as to how to choose a friend or the type of friend. My friend took me and enticed me to commit crimes that were beyond my capacity. That is why I'm in prison. Therefore when I explained to my cellmate he also said that he had learned out of the play. [*His friend identified with Nkululeko*] Because he was also taken to overseas countries to train using guns. When he returned from training he was brought here in South Africa and he did not have a job [...] What I'm trying to say, other guys or perhaps governments should be critical of training people to use guns and after that refuse or don't give them jobs. Because he's well trained and he knows that if he can do A, B, or C by the gun, he can obtain what he desires. Unfortunately we did that but we were arrested. In other words the play intrigued me but on the other hand it opened encrusted wounds for me. Because they've played precisely what happened to

me as if I had told my brothers that you should play this way and that way, whereas I didn't say anything. I think it was very good and enjoyable to me and they should do the same to others and continue to educate. (NN in T5 2003:8)

6.7 Recognizing a situation

This category involves recognizing a situation rather than a character. Often the situations presented are of a social and political nature and the solutions are beyond the scope of individual action. At this point the process appears to stop, except for an implicit sense that the play has made the grievance or injustice public and has spoken on behalf of the respondent. Sometimes the member of the audience is able to recognize the socio-political and historical context of his own life through the events or situations portrayed in the play.

‘Recognizing a situation’ as a category has the following properties:

- recognizing the situation;
- remembering;
- reflecting on the situation;
- speaking out.

Here is an example of a typical ‘Recognizing a Situation’ process.

It's a play that projects the things that we used to talk about especially us blacks and about our lifestyle outside. It shows how we get into crime, and finding yourself doing unexpected things because of our need to live. *(Here the respondent has recognized a socio-political situation, the link between poverty and criminal behaviour. The play has presented this situation to him. He seems to be remembering his own experiences. He reflects on the situation)* We also find out that we as blacks in jail, it doesn't mean that we are here just because we are cruel or because we are the worst criminals, it's about how we live. We are poor. Even if you need something you cannot afford it. You can go to school but your parents got no money to further you with your subjects, so you can't get jobs. *(He extends his reflection to include the plight of ex-combatants. This situation was also represented in the play)* As my brother said before, that there are people who went for training in exile, fighting for this country; they are unable to get jobs to support their families and themselves. That is why they end up engaging themselves with criminal activities and they end up in jail. *(He has been remembering poverty and apartheid disadvantage, and the plight of ex-combatants. He provides a conclusion that states a grievance. The post-apartheid ANC Government has failed his expectations; that it would solve black working class and rural poverty. He says that today the correctional centres are over crowded and the majority of offenders are black people who live in poverty. His conclusion demonstrates that, for him, the play articulated this grievance.)* But the cause of all that it is our government of South Africa who cause overcrowding in

prisons. That is why the majority in prison are blacks. It [the play] talks about our lives as prisoners. (NT in T7 2003:3)

6.7.1 Recognizing situations: memories of *Isikhathi Sewashi*

The link between poverty and criminal behaviour informs most of the comments made in regard to *Isikhathi Sewashi*. The particular nature of the situations presented by each play determined whether there existed the potential for the audience to reflect on socio-political and historical issues or not. The comments about *Isikhathi Sewashi* engage the following situations:

- Poverty;
- Apartheid oppression;
- The plight of ex-combatants;
- ANC and IFP violence;
- The predicament of women.

Here are some members of the audiences' comments about these situations
The first example engaged the issue of poverty:

That is why you find people are in prison, not because of their liking but because of their circumstances. When I watched how the play was acted, then I found that crime is not something that is formed by a person, it is not something he starts himself, it is something that comes up. Sure, my brother do you see? Then I realized that a serious issue was being discussed. Because the people who fill up the prison are not responsible for their being here; it is because of poverty. (SM in T1 2003:4)

This example engaged the effect of apartheid:

Especially during the apartheid era there are a number of things which have destroyed our lives which were done by the racists. Most of us dropped out of school because our parents passed away during political riots. Even those who were still schooling, they were facing a lot of obstacles, like being compelled to learn Afrikaans at school. On the other hand our parents were used as the slaves, some were killed. We grew up with our minds full of confusion. My point of view about the play is that it was quite fascinating and I wish it could be taken out to the society because I have a feeling that the teenagers deserve to watch it. (SM in T13 2003:4)

A member of the audience reflects on current social divisions that have their roots in apartheid:

What I remember most about the play is the divisions between the parents and children, the division between parents' ideology. The merging of different organizations. Also, the leaving of the country by children who were trying to rescue and save the country. That means that we had families troubled by the loss of their children to the struggle. These family divisions definitely have gone as far as the government. We find that now there are people who have become feared to the extent that people decide to leave their homes. These divisions have been spread to the extent of political organizations. One black person is separated from the other black person. The black person was separated from the white person. That led to poverty. So in my mind such divisions will never end if the white and black persons are still divided ideologically and racially. Also, our organizations are still divided racially, ethnically, and ideologically. That means there will never be any unity or elimination of division. Our generations have been divided by the leaders. The results of that division is the manifestation of further divisions, divisions of economy, the divisions in health and health services. (He now links these divisions to *issues of poverty and crime. A situation also represented in the play.*) As a result we have crime because those who feel the situation being unfair they'll find their own way of correcting that so as to survive and have a living. (TH in T15 2003:9)

Here is an example of a response that demonstrates how the offenders recognized the plight of ex-combatants. These responses tap personal and painful reflections. These members of the audience do not mention the character Nkululeko, only the situation. In this examples the connection with the play is indicated in the phrase, "I did witness" and "that is how I did see it". In many of the examples, as here, the reference to the play is embedded in brief phrases or articles such as "it". In this example the audience member has used the personal pronoun "he" to personify the government and in doing so probably conflates the notion of the government with President Mbeki.

Though my knowledge is limited due to my lack of education, however, I did witness the pain like that of those who used to fight for the country's liberation. When the government took over with the problem, being the illiteracy of the cadres – you were only talented on how to use the gun – he concentrated on the educated elites. While I support the government's move to deal with the educated people first, because they're the ones with knowledge. He took a very long time to look at the other side. That led us to crime: as you can see the rise in crime is the results that most people are uneducated but they also need to live. The white man was better even though it was oppressive but he tried to accommodate everyone. Even the uneducated people were given those particular jobs with small salaries. But it wasn't bad because people could avoid crime because children were eating, you can then be respected at home. We grew up into these young men now. But the government does not look on the other side where there are uneducated people. Crime will continue rising if the government fails to look at the other side. That is how I see it with my limited knowledge. (MA in T15 2003:7)

The members of the audience not only recognized situations related to apartheid and ex-combatants, they also recognized and reflected on issues of political violence.

You see, politics is bad, these two organizations ANC and IFP are the reason for us to be crowded like this is prison, especially blacks, because we don't find jobs. So what I saw is that a majority of prisoners are blacks, yes there are other races but we are the most dominating and we are being oppressed because we are conditioned. They consider us as mindless people, the most idiots. Hence, drama is very good because it educates and it would be wise if outside people can witness this and discover what prisoners are actually doing. No one wants to be here, and some of us have children, others their wives and others for goodness sake are innocent. Why? Because this government we voted for here in South Africa. Drama is very good and should continue. (BS in T2003:9)

The next set of examples demonstrate how some of the respondents recognized particular situations that involved particular characters. The first example demonstrates how a member of the audience used 'Recognizing a Situation' type process to make sense of the situation involving Ntombi:

It [The play] is constructive with lessons about the situation we are living under. My brothers have explained about the conditions we live under as people. Just the same as my brother who, the girl, the one that was acting in the play, Ntombi. She is from a poor family, they got no money, they got nothing. They can't afford to get things like food, only to find out that she ends up selling her body in order to get something that can uplift the house. So that we can live a better life like all other people. As my brother explained, suppose you wish to further your education but because the father is not working and the mother is not working too, sometimes you got no parents, you got only your sister, then you end up doing crime. Like the scene of Gazolo, he is involved in crime as a result of leaving home. His background force him to sell drugs, he committed himself in drugs because he thinks it's a better way. (NK in T7 2003:4)

Next is an example of a response that belongs in the category 'Recognizing a Situation' that recognizes in the events of the character Ma Vilikazi's life difficult situations real women faced as domestic workers.

Thoughts and feelings that came over me while watching the play were tears and shocked about the things that our brothers who performed the play made us see. They performed the things that used to happen in our lives while growing up taking us back to that pain. I've got a grandmother who used to work in Amanzimoti a place dominated by the Boers. My grandmother then

was working for the whites. She complained about being abused at work without giving us details. I was really hurt when I saw the man performing the part of the granny complaining wailing saying, sex, my children, the whites came to sexually abuse us. That's when I felt really bad because I thought my grandmother also experience something similar. (SB in T15 2003:8)

6.7.2 Recognizing situations: accounts of discussions in the cells about

Isikhathi Sewashi

Included in these examples are the comments by the members of the audience about the discussion in the cells after the performances of *Isikhathi Sewashi*. The properties of the category “Recognizing a Situation” are not always as overt in these comments as in the personal recollections of the play. The respondents focus on the discussions. The comments demonstrate that the situations raised by the play were debated at length and in some depth. The collective engagement by men in the cells increased their level of critical reflection. Often through debate a deeper understanding was developed of the socio-political and historical factors that had affected their lives. And the plays provided an opportunity for them to speak out about injustice.

The first example deals specifically with the link between poverty and criminal behaviour. This comment also reiterates the disillusionment with the government present in the earlier examples (pp188). This member of the audience refers to the poor as cursed. In his conclusion he lists a wide range of social ills:

Well, we concentrated a great deal on crime and on the way we need to find to work with the government. [*He recognizes the situation: crime and poverty.*] We need to remove crime, and crime mostly comes from the government failing to find a way to help the people. [*He starts to explore solutions.*] Which way can we find to assist the government? Also what suggestions can we put forward if we are blaming the government for people who do crime, killing each other, and doing all sorts of problems. [*He combines his own experiences with those discussed*] So now in my opinion I realize that the things happening in this country today stems from four things. In this world you are either bless or cursed. So then what are those things? [*Here a injustice has been made public*] What we found, from the curse comes the lost generation ... that rapes, shoots people, robs and that is poor with nothing. Okay the drug comes from the curse. Secondly what comes from the curse is fighting that will finish us all. There is so much damage and no healing. The third thing is the manifestation of poverty through hunger. The fourth one is disease. (TH in T15 2003:13)

The next example comes from the offenders' discussions of the effects of apartheid and racism on their lives.

I remember the conversation I had with someone about the whites. We were asking each other about the position we can put the whites in our hearts, after all the events, all the bad things, as things are today. How we need to treat the whites? Where do we put him in our lives? We couldn't find a place for him[...] We viewed him as a dangerous person. The things they did. As I am this old I should have reached higher heights, as well. After the way we were suffering and the whites not willing to give us money. I'm still struggling up to this day. At one stage I was paid five bob for a month's work. 50 cents in a month. What could you have done with 50 cents? Then after some time it was raised to R1.50. There is no good I can say about the white man, even if we were facing each other. I can't find a place for him in my life. That means I was so traumatized in my mind. (MA in T15 2003:16)

The comment below provides an example of discussion of the plight of ex-combatants.

When we discussed in the cell, the guys were saying, you see that we fought for freedom in the past. But at the end, the very same freedom we fought for has put us in jail. I then interrupted and expressed my opinion. According to my view we fought for freedom but afterwards we fail to preserve and wait for the benefits or fruits of liberation. Instead we were quick to reap the fruits of it in a way that was impatient, we turned against what we fought for, by committing crime against the same government, that is why we are here in jail in large numbers. (EK in T11 2003:7)

Next is an example of an account of a discussion about political violence between the ANC and IPF.

There was a big debate. What happened is that there was only one opinion agreed upon at the end. Having done or seen all the crimes, involved in organization, the issue was, we are now in prison. While outside we were somebodies in our organizations, some having some money to an extent and some hustling their way. The problem is that we are here, we view crime as not paying [...] some who we saw benefiting from it are just lucky. Our concern was as we are woken, counted, fed and get locked till time of release, you are not having any idea there is nothing you did which can make you have a certificate of some kind or having something you can start on when you get outside. (E in T1 2003:6)

6.7.3 Recognizing situations: memories of *Lisekhon' Ithemba*

The comments about *Lisekhon' Ithemba* follow closely the situations presented in that play, which are about:

- Gaining access to the hospital and treatment;

- Bringing food back from the kitchen for offenders who are too ill to come to the kitchen;
- Favouritism by staff in attending to inmates' health needs;
- Prejudice and bullying of sick offenders back in the cells.

The situations portrayed did not provide an opportunity for the offenders to engage with broader socio-political and historical issues. The play dealt with current events involving conditions related to living with HIV/AIDS in the correction centre and had more of a functional nature related to these issues. The content of the comments in this section of the data are similar and I have only presented one example of each response.

The first example deals with access to medical care in the hospital. The member of the audience describes the situation as it is presented in the play; it is clear that he recognizes it from his own experience; and his conclusion indicates that he is pleased that the problem has been made public.

As I saw in this play, I saw there was a person who was carried like this, ill. And had to be taken to the hospital. And why he was not taken to the hospital, because he was still walking, so I discovered that this was happening to me when I wanted to go to the hospital, and they will tell me that I will go some other time. If I again approach him (the guard) he won't give me attention. When you are now seriously sick and see that you can't eat then he will say let's go to the hospital. And hospital staff will also, on my arrival, say why am I not dying, and that is very painful to me as an inmate and sick at the same time, instead of helping me. Hence, I was extremely happy that my brothers (the cast members) are showing things which are touching inmates. So that we will discuss together such things to resolve this before it gets worse because it is wrong for an inmate to be taken for granted because he is in prison. We are all human beings and we should discuss things so that this will be resolved. (MM inT5 2003:12-13)

Not being allowed to taking food back to offenders who have remained behind in the cell because they were too ill to come to the kitchen was upsetting for many respondents. Here is one example of a response from a member of the audience who recognized and spoke about the play raising this problem. The elements of the category 'Recognizing a Situation' are present and run under the text, although the order in which the respondent articulates them in his response does not follow a smooth sequence. Here is the example:

Another thing is that here in jail most of the cooks in the kitchen think of themselves as bigger than other inmates just because they work in the kitchen. Whereas we are the same and we all survive the sentence the same. There is also a scene to display where one is dishing for someone in the cell and cook saying he mustn't, so he think he is big because he is in the kitchen and he gets everything. (NM in T5 2003:12-13)

The next example deals with the topic of favouritism by the staff; this is a separate problem but related to access to health care. The concluding maxim promotes the idea of 'correct' social relations, a suffering offender, if treated with out prejudice, remains "a person among people."

What I can say is that first of all what we saw there was reality because if you observe warders, they got their friends in the sections. You will find that when I go there, I am new in prison, even if I long been here but having nothing. When I go there to ask the warder to escort me to the social worker to sort some of my things, I'll be asked things like, what you want from the social worker or let's say you want to go to hospital, you will be told that today there is no hospital. Then comes you, because you are friends with the warder, you know you can walk all over the prison and maybe you're carrying money around. When you go to the warder you'll be so happy you will greet each other. "How is things." "Grand, sharp." "What do you want?" "I just want to go to hospital." You must go collect the other inmate's tickets who want to go to hospital or just take you alone down there. Yours is quick while mine is slow, even non-existent. They'll say I've got many things, you're a gangster and all that stuff. What I'd like to see happen here in prison is that we are treated just the same so we can succeed. We need to treat each other equally with those who are sick with HIV AIDS. There is no cure for the disease but you as a person can make it by treating the sick person well, showering him with love, he will be so happy and be better. He sees that he is not an outcast and instead he is still a person among people. That is what I can say about the HIV/AIDS play. (B in T14 2003:9)

One situation that offered the offenders and opportunity to reflect on and change was the manner in which they treated other sick offenders in the cells who were ill. The next example addresses this.

I saw a picture where a sick patient was carried by another inmate like him. And he was taken to the hospital. And I personally didn't like to come near a person who was HIV positive before, even to talk to him because of the myth I had that the virus will simply jump from him and affect me. But when I learn how HIV is transmitted I then realised that it is something that one does not acquire in that manner. For example touch, sharing of toothpaste or spoon, the dangerous thing is blood. I discovered that in *Lisekhon' Ithemba* when my brother was explaining the modes of transmission. He was also saying that it doesn't mean that when a person is HIV positive we can't shake hands with him and he is exhibiting that by carrying an HIV sick person and doesn't mean he is also sick with the disease. Therefore I learnt that it is

unpleasant to distance oneself from an HIV-positive person but he is someone who needs comfort, support and hope. (JN in T3 2003:18)

6.7.4 Recognizing situations: accounts of discussions in the cells about *Lisekhon' Ithemba*

The following two examples of accounts of discussions back in the cells after the performance of *Lisekhon' Ithemba* demonstrate that through group discussion the offenders came to a deeper understanding of issues and explored solutions to their problems. *Lisekhon' Ithemba* set specific parameters around HIV/AIDS and the discussions around living conditions were contained and limited to food, access to the hospital, and bullying.

We had a lot of debate about after you left. We debated because there is someone who teaches about this thing, MJ, because we even asked from him about the symptoms of AIDS, you see. We even debated that this too is there any need for us in prison to be learning about AIDS because we are prisoners and we are all boys meaning there is no way of getting infected by it. It was like some believe that you can only get it by sleeping with a female. Some believed that okay. Because MJ he teaches about it telling them that you can get AIDS even if you were sleeping with a boy so we had a debate of that nature. We decided that he needed to continue teaching us. He had to get a person with knowledge bigger than he has. (A in T10 2003:8)

What we talked about, is that sickness often comes through an unhappy, abused heart. It is important then to ensure that the person's environment is conducive for the living of inmates. The first place that needs to be sorted is the hospital. The doctor must always be there at the hospital because there are times when he is needed and he's not there. To avoid that there mustn't be a single doctor. Secondly the dining hall, usually though warders have the numbers of people in the section as well as the amount of food for them. They'll send the list and the correct amount of food will be brought in. Then you will find that the cook dishes half the ration and he saves the rest for his customers. So for you to eat to a full stomach you need to take out money and buy. Then the next step should be education, the issue of the school. Inmates need to be given chances with school so they can get education and come out skilled people. If we are to sit like this we won't be equipped with any ideas or skills upon release. (B in T14 2003:15)

6.8 Generating a moral lesson

The responses in this category have the following properties:

- Recounting an event from the play;
- Making a concluding statement that presents a moral, maxim or socially established position usually conservative in nature.

The concluding statements seem to be an attempt to finish the story with a verbal core-cliché (Scheub 1975:3-4) that encapsulates a lesson. The elements in this category are few and they are limited in terms of an active engagement with the material. Emotionally charged elements such as past experiences and active elements such as reflecting on problems and/or solutions as well as imagining a future are absent. All three categories tend to build consensus around socially positive ideas and values. Responses in this category, however, are more overtly related to the values of containment and compliance.

I remember the characters Ntombi and Gazolo. They never paid attention to the advice of their parents. Ntombi's brother never listened to his mother and father when they cautioned him about crime. He ended up in jail. Another thing that I remember the most was Gazolo doing crime and selling drugs. But in the end when he got arrested and he was tortured, (*The respondent simply narrates parts of the play that he recalls. He then concludes with the maxim "crime does not pay". This is the core-cliché that for him encapsulates the play. The response is conservative in nature because it reinforces a well-established social norm. Also implicit in this response is that children should obey their parents. This response suggests a type of rote learning. He provides a retelling of the play and adds a well-established conclusion that meets social expectations.*) after his release he withdrew because he learned that crime does not pay. (PM in T8 2003:9)

6.8.1 **Generating a moral lesson: memories of *Isikhathi Sewashi***

The responses that engage with issues about crime and poverty produce simple answers with little reflection and analysis. No solutions were attempted. In the example below, the respondent simply states 'crime results from illiteracy and poverty'.

What I can say on *Isikhathi Sewashi* is that there is the part where haphazard crime occurs. Where you do crime while it was really your intention. Why? Because of hunger or seeing that I need that, unnecessarily, but knowing that it is not yours. What is causing that is the situation of illiteracy and poverty? That's what I can say. (E in T1 2003:3)

In the example below the respondent draws from Gazolo's story a moral lesson, which was not provided by the play and seems to possess the properties of compliance: Gazolo should know his place within the social structure and behave appropriately. The maxim generated here is, "He forgot where he comes from, from poverty." Here is the statement:

Let me start with Gazolo. Gazolo forgot where he comes from. He went from the rural areas to the township to get the education. He forgot that he was supposed to go back home and be a good example, be a person with a bright future. He forgot where he comes from, from poverty. (DM in T1 2003:13)

In this response about Ayanda the member of the audience offers the maxim 'one should finish school first'.

I focused mostly on the education situation. Whereby a character had friends who are coming to school with cars and he had a desire to possess a car therefore he told his father to buy one. His father told him that he will get a car when he finishes school, and he opted to commit crime in order to have the money to buy a car. That's what I learned. We should not try to find things which are beyond our means, and this person wished for something that was far beyond his power. Being affluent at his home did not mean that he should be impatient, he should finish school first (NL in T11 2003:5)

Here is an example where the character Ntombi is used to demonstrate the maxim, "Young kids need to listen more to their parents."

Then there is the part of the young girl and it is getting out of hand disrespecting her parents. Young kids need to listen more to their parents because they are far more informed and experience than them. (MA in T15 2003:9)

It is followed here by an example of a response that concludes with a sentence which promotes the idea that young girl should be domesticated.

What I remember is when MaVilikazi is experiencing problems from her daughter. It is reported to the father that the daughter is doing wrong actions now she leaves and comes home very late and she is not even helping her mother with the housework. (A in T4 2003:3)

The last example involves the respondent's remembering the man who hands back his gun and walks away from the gang. The maxim is about resisting peer pressure, "you shouldn't be easily convinced by your friends."

To me it was the lesson of some kind. Because if a person gets out of prison he should know how to behave with other people. And it is not right that you should bully or entice others to do wrong things, because we have seen a character there who was from jail, again subjecting himself into wrong things. And he should know better about prison because he has been there.

Now *Isikhathi Sewashi* had taught me all that. That if you've been to prison you shouldn't be easily convinced by your friends to do negative activities in the community. (MN2 in T5 2003:6)

6.8.2 **Generating a moral lesson: accounts of discussions about *Isikhathi***

***Sewashi* back in the cells**

Here are two examples of responses that generate a moral lesson that occurred in responses to questions about the discussions in the cells after the performance. In the first example the respondent is describing the discussions of political violence; the solution being that you must not trust jingoistic political rhetoric, “you must be captain of your own ship.”

Another thing that I realized is the clash between cultures. There are also those who use the propaganda of culture to fulfill their aims. It's when I realize that you must be the captain of your own ship, no one must drive for you. (M in T4 2003: 4)

The last example I will present in this section has the inevitable maxim “crime doesn't pay” as its conclusion.

We questioned each other about where the crime pays or not . Because there are people committing crimes and they succeed on it. There also those committing crimes and they don't get away with it. Content was about and whether you do a crime or not but do you succeed. We discussed about that after the play and the solution was that crime doesn't pay. (Mn in T9 2003:6)

6.8.3 **Generating a moral lesson: memories of *Lisekhon' Ithemba***

The individuals' responses, based on their memories of *Lisekhon' Ithemba* often engaged socially positive messages of a predictable nature. Here is one obvious example in which the respondent repeats the ‘use a condom message’:

What intrigued me the most is that you can have sex with an infected person as long as you are using a condom, and I was happy to hear that. (SM in T3 2003:2)

In the next example the respondent builds his response around the religious maxim “love that person as you love yourself”. Here is the response:

I will begin by appreciating the play the way it was performed. It was said that you must not isolate a person who is HIV positive. Love that person as

you love yourself, that person is still your friend, your brother, your sister, your dad, your mum. Respect that person as you used to do. (T in T4 2003:7)

The last example has the respondent trying to build a core-cliché from the title of the play. The maxim he presents is that for people who might be terminally ill “there is hope”.

The play my brother showed us the problems we have and something we are facing, you see. It tries, what can I say, it tries to make us seek for the remedy as its title says of this play, *Lisikhon’ Ithemba*, there is hope. Therefore it gives us hope that the problem is that we are facing can be solved. (SN in T5 2003:15)

6.8.4 Generating a moral lesson: accounts of discussions in the cells about

Lisikhon’ Ithemba

The maxim ‘*use a condom*’ also continued to occur during these responses. Here is one example:

I would say I felt okay because the information about how HIV is transmitted to ease my anxiety and how can I prevent it. To the extent that I took a decision that now I know how this can be acquired therefore I can protect myself. (JN in T3 2003:23)

As is indicated in this response, despite the new confidence brought by knowledge of HIV/AIDS and the ways it is and is not transmitted, there was anxiety about living in over-crowded conditions with sick people and information and new strategies around living together had needed to be established.

In the next chapter I will present some of the data about how the performers engaged with the experience of making and performing the plays. Their discussions largely involve the use they made of the play-making skills and behaviour they learnt while making the plays.

Chapter 7

Interviews with Performers: Using Theatre to Negotiate Social Relations

7.1 Establishing a core-category: 'Using theatre to negotiate social relations'

I conducted interviews with the performers about their involvement in the theatre at the correction centre. The interviews took place during March 2004, three months after the performances of *Isikhathi Sewashi* to school children had finished. The majority of the performers had been involved in the work since 2001, and spoke of their experiences working on *Isikhathi Sewashi* and *Lisekhon' Ithemba*. Sometimes they spoke about the theatre work in a general manner and referred to their experience of working on the *Theatre for a Developing Nation* projects. They also spoke about plays they had made subsequently, using skills learnt making and performing *Isikhathi Sewashi* and *Lisekhon' Ithemba*. Sometimes they spoke about how the new behaviour and ways of thinking learnt while working on the plays and how these had benefited them.

Their comments reflect concern with the function of the plays, the ways in which plays impact on their own lives and on the environment of the correctional centre. They revealed that the theatre had provided them with a degree of power over themselves, involving thinking and feeling differently, as well as imagining their lives in new ways. Sometimes this resulted in their behaving differently and engaging in new kinds of activities, which made an impact on their environment: sick people, for example, were more readily helped. They also used theatre to effect minor change in the correctional system and in some cases to negotiate how their families and the general public perceived them. Any degree of agency is significant for offenders, since the carceral system exerts substantial control over the individual and limits opportunities for individual choice and action.

Relations of power and issues around agency emerged as a unifying theme throughout the performers' discussions. A range of specific relationships, involving the self, other offenders, correctional staff, family, the public, the correctional system, and society are negotiated. I have therefore

described the emerging core-category as simply ‘negotiating social relations’. Core-categories are explained in Chapter 3 (p67).

The categories listed below, along with examples of comments from the interviews, provide a more detailed explanation of ‘negotiating social relations’ as a core-category. I have described the coding process earlier (pp82-85). This was the final list of categories that emerged:

- Thinking more broadly
- Solving problems
- Escaping for a moment
- Speaking out
- Establishing a sense of self

These categories are the areas in which the performers exercised agency. I used noun phrases to describe the categories, which, I hope capture the active sense of agency involved in each category.

7.2 Thinking More Broadly

Some performers said working on the plays made them think more broadly. Informally and in other research (Hurst 2001 and Hurst et al 2002), members of the cast had often spoken about how the plays altered their thought patterns in this way. Mphemba¹ said, “ [B]efore we were putting our minds in a small tin. You see now we can think even more broadly (Mphemba March 2004).” Ntombela said, “The drama changed my mind so my mind is not stubborn now. My mind, all the time I think more new things (Ntombela March 2004)”. Comments such as this suggested to me the category title. Nguse’s comment below explains the category more fully. The theatre work challenged some of his assumptions and allowed him to engage actively the way he saw himself in the world, so that he could negotiate certain social relations in new ways:

It broadened my thinking capacity in thinking in terms of looking at various issues, about social issues, personal issues, and the environment I am in and the people around me. Therefore I've learnt much about how to deal with those kind of issues and to look at life in general in a more broader manner. Drama has brought all those things to me therefore I think I have more understanding about what life is. I had previously defence mechanisms and

¹ These are not the offenders’ real names (see p3). All the names have been changed. The use of names here functions to differentiate speakers and to support a sense of the offenders’ voices.

prejudice but now I do believe that through drama I do understand other people's cultures, other people's backgrounds and all that stuff. So it has broadened me. Before I used to blame, for instance I'm in prison right now, I did robbery but when we talk with the guys I'd say guys we're here in prison because of apartheid system. But at the end of the day I learned that I too have the responsibility for committing crime. That is why I said drama has taught me to ward off defence mechanism.

Interviewer: How did the drama do that?

By engaging into discussions with the guys and exploring issues in a very deep understanding. (Nguse April 2004)

The collective play making process involved discussions where the members of the cast not only explored new ideas and gained information but learnt and practiced new behaviour patterns. They had to listen, to respect each other's opinions, to be tolerant, and feel empathy.

I never do drama or something like that before. I learned to listen to another person; I'm not used to that. And I think it was good. I learned a lot. I learnt to respect other people. Like where I'm coming from, we don't do that. We don't have time for respect. We don't have time to respect another person. Because we're doing our thing [hijacking]. If we do a thing, we don't care about anyone. That's what I learned to respect. (Mphofu March 2004)

I think drama is making us better people than we were before. Because it is making us realise things that we were doing. All the feelings that we haven't thought of so we now feel. Like for instance the victims. So since we are the criminals we were committing crime to other people who were victims. So the drama puts us in a position where we can feel what those people were feeling as the victims. (Mtambo April 2004)

During the play-making process I had challenged the cast to discuss their criminal behaviour in terms of personal accountability and not only apartheid disadvantage (p128). Nzuzi makes direct reference to my challenge. His exploration of personal accountability gave him a broader understanding of himself in relation to the world.

I grew up doing crime from a very young age. I thought that was as a result of my environment. You go to my neighbourhood, the big guy in the neighbourhood is a criminal; he drives the flashy cars. Everything that a young person would want, he has. One of the things I learnt through drama is that you can't blame crime on your environment. It's actually an individual thing. You as an individual make the decision.

Interviewer: How did you learn that through drama?

Because that was one of the things you stressed during play.

Interviewer: Most of Isikhathi Sewashi is about the environment you guys came from.

Yes but then, I can't remember exactly what was the question you used to raise here, but we all used to run away from the fact that it's an individual thing, you know. We always used to take it as a collective issue. Then one day you said, no, you people are always saying this and yet it is that.

Interviewer: When we created those monologues.

Yes, yes, so then I realised it's true: you can't actually blame your environment. It was a question of choice [...] I had opportunities that people in my neighbourhood never had. But I opted for crime. I think that was a choice I made. And I see myself as a very bad judge of character. That is one of the reasons I got into crime. Because I always had my friends from school, I went to school here in Kloof, Thomas Moore College [an expensive private school], I always had my friends there, and I had my friends from township from Claremont. So I could choose which friends work better for me. And my friends from the townships who wanted to do crime. And the other ones wanted to go to school and everything. But I chose the crime. (Nzuza April 2004)

Thinking and feeling differently led the performers to perceiving new possibilities for themselves, which they explored through new actions.

Interviewer: You've talked about communication and feeling, but behind it I am almost hearing you talk and think about values. Have you changed your values or things you believe in?

Yes, a lot. I even started doing, here in prison there is an AIDS Control Committee, I took their TOT [training of trainers] course and just to do other things which I think will be successful for me to know more about life.

Interviewer: Because of the drama? Before the drama?

Before I didn't even worry to go to school. I didn't worry about anything I was just thinking for myself and I didn't want to hear anything from other people. So now I am worried about life. I want to get more about life. So I've achieved a lot. I did that TOT and I passed. Now I'm embarking myself in this section and working under that opportunistic infections. I volunteered to give those people tablets and am monitoring them. Because of the drama, so I managed now to care for other people. (Dlangalala March 2004)

7.3 Solving problems

The performers said that the skills they had developed while making the plays were useful for solving problems. They used these skills learnt in the drama sessions to make their own plays back in the sections and found that they had learnt to manage conflict. I will provide comments from the performers that related to the following list of situations:

- Making plays or short sketches to provoke discussion about particular problems;
- Coping with HIV/AIDS;
- Reducing ANC versus IFP faction fighting;

- Reducing gang activities;
- Using communication skills learnt during the drama sessions to manage inter-personal conflict.

7.3.1 Making plays or short sketches to provoke discussion about particular problems

Isikhathi Sewashi and *Lisekhon' Ithemba* provided a model for the performers as to how theatre could be used to provoke discussions and solve problems.

Siyaya explained this:

I wasn't playing drama outside. I start to play drama in jail. I saw how to solve a problem now. I saw how to change a person's life. I saw how to take a person or people who is sick or have a problem about his life or things like that, and maybe solve his family problems outside. But not to tell him what he did but play on stage, you see onstage what is happening. (Siyaya March 2004)

After the performances of *Isikhathi Sewashi* and *Lisekhon' Ithemba* some members of the cast took the initiative to make plays of their own in the sections. These plays addressed problems in the correctional centre.

Many people have reacted after watching those plays [*Isikhathi Sewashi* and *Lisekhon' Ithemba*]. When I walk in the ramp² I'm approached by many people, saying, "Come and see; we are doing something there. We're doing drama". So people are more interested in solving their problems through drama. They realised that drama is the best tool to be used in order to solve their problems. (Mpanza April 2004)

Mpanza had been a strong team leader and teacher during the *Theatre for a Developing Nation* projects. He explains how the performers he had worked with came to him to initiate a second project of their own. This play responded to the need for an orientation play, a play that taught new offenders about the correctional system.

² "The ramp" is a spiral incline that links the different levels and wings of the Medium B Correctional Centre. The offenders pass each other here as they move about the centre or as they move in large groups to and from meals and other activities.

This play came up with the TFD [*Theatre for a Developing Nation* project] members after they achieved and got their certificates [they received certificates for completing the TFD project]. They came to us in E6 [a cell in the isolation section³]. They said to us, "Gentlemen, we don't want to sit because you helped us a lot. We achieved the certificate and you taught us the skills. So now we want to do something again". They said to us they wanted to do the same play. We say to them, "Okay, we don't disagree about that but you can think, there are many problems around us, and also think about the audience that we can play to [...] They went back and talked and came up with another thing. And we started by a discussion. And they wanted to discuss about the parole system and social integration. (Mpanza April 2004)

Ntombela created a play about HIV/AIDS for his section, B4. He noted how the plays helped to solve problems by providing information and opportunities for discussion:

The message is the prisoners they mustn't use the things such as razors and tattoos and they mustn't do this sex with each other because also you can get infected with AIDS. When they are going outside we also teach them they must watch, they mustn't say because they are coming from jail, they must be after womans, because it's there they are going to get the disease. (Ntombela March 2004)

Sometimes the performers made short sketches, impromptu plays, to address particular problems as they occurred in the cells:

If the prisoners are corrupting each other in the cells, we know how to tell them or how to portray things, like fighting, with drama in the section. Like when they are fighting over the TV, the TV money⁴. Some of them want to pay, some of them don't want to pay. Because in the cell we're not equal: some of them, they get the visit, some of them don't get the visit⁵. So those who get a visit pay for themselves and do not pay for others. So then we portray dramas like, if you don't have money you have to ask money from the next person. If he doesn't give you the money you have to clean for him so that at the end of the month he will pay for you. So we portray things like that.

Interviewer: So you do plays in the cell?

Not in the cell, in the section.

Interviewer: Away from drama sessions, about these problems?

Yes.

Interviewer: What, every day, once a month, what?

³ The reasons for offenders living in the isolation section vary. Sometimes it is to provide protection, removing them from difficult situations in the dormitory cells and sometimes it is to provide more privacy for those who are studying. The punitive connotations popularly associated with isolation, as solitary confinement and punishment, are not relevant here.

⁴ The offenders can rent one television, which they all share, in the cells. They all must contribute to the rental. Paying for televisions and viewing selections are contentious.

⁵ Visitors can sometimes deposit money into the offender's account for his use.

Once after two months, you know.

Interviewer: Are they long plays or short plays?

Short plays. They raise a problem.

Interviewer: Who made the play about the TV?

Us. Me and Bhekithemba. We just show the problem, we don't discuss it. But when we [the offenders] are standing and talking, we share ideas. And they get something. (Chiya March 2004)

I have categorized under 'solving problems' the performers' comments about making plays that emphasize their use for this purpose. When the performers speak of making plays to raise problems they are also speaking out about the problems themselves. 'Speaking-out' is a category I will address later (pp213-221).

7.3.2 Coping with HIV/AIDS

The performers spoke about how, after the performances of *Lisekhon' Ithemba*, some of the problems relating to managing HIV/AIDS in the sections were effectively addressed. They spoke about the subsequent changes in attitudes and behaviour of the offenders. This produced important changes in the daily life in the sections. For example, it became easier for people to declare their HIV status and more help was offered to sick people:

Lisekhon' Ithemba portrayed AIDS within the prison structure. Yet so many inmates weren't aware. Yes, watching TV and listening to radio; okay, fine: HIV/AIDS is alive and kicking. But one didn't give it much thought that it was actually happening next to him. That the person sleeping under his bed was infected with HIV/AIDS. But because he is coughing and his lack of appetite, eating TB treatment medicine, one thinks it is TB, forgetting that TB is an opportunistic disease. So here comes this *Lisekhon' Ithemba*, and *Lisekhon' Ithemba* brings all that up. That's when you start opening us much wider. This person is sick with TB but maybe it's not TB but HIV/AIDS. And after that play many inmates disclose their status.

Interviewer: Without risk?

Yes, without risk. In my cell alone I'm living with maybe close to seven people who are HIV positive in the cell and they're absolutely comfortable.

Interviewer: They only declared after the play?

Yes, because the play taught us that we should care for one another. Caring for one another does not mean that we should stab each other with fighting. (Hlengwa March 2004)

I was so surprised one of the days when I went to hospital and I found a man who was very ill. He was sleeping on the bench. He was escorted by another one man, another prisoner. And I asked the person, "How are you?" He said, "Fine." I said, "Is this your brother?" He said, "No, he's another guy who stays in the section". "Who is his name?" He said, "I've forgotten his name." "You

forgot his name: you mean you don't know him?" He doesn't know him; he only knows his surname. I ask him, "Are you involved in the ACC [AIDS Control Committee] project in prison; are you one of the members of the ACC.?" He said, "No. I'm just sitting in the section. I'm just helping people." I said, "Oh, there's a person like that, you're just helping." [...] I took this that maybe it is the impact of the plays. It was after the AIDS play. (Mpanza April 2004)

Zulu attributes an operational change related to food as occurring as a result of the performances of *Lisekhon' Ithemba*. The offenders' sphere of influence tended to be confined to their own feelings, thoughts, imaginings and behaviour. This had a limited impact on their environment in terms of power relations involving the correctional system and the numbers gang. The next two respondents suggest that the play helped them negotiate improved living conditions: they were receiving better food and better treatment from the correctional staff. These examples suggest that the plays were able to spark changes, though small, in the structure of the correctional system.

Before, in that drama, we did stigmatisation, where we find an inmate ignoring another inmate when he's sick. We spoke about that. I can see, I've experienced that in my section, they've already changed, they're no longer doing that.

Interviewer: They change their behaviour as prisoners but can they change the structure of how the prison works?

They have done. After this drama there are more prisoners who wanted the samp [crushed maize]; you can get samp from the kitchen. Before we were only eating *phutu* [stiff porridge made from maize]. One way now there's samp.

Interviewer: Is that because they are HIV positive?

It's because of the prisoners' concern. They raised it with the head of the prison and they have to change it. And they started making interviews section by section asking how many prisoners want that and how many want *phutu*. For instance I can show you this ticket⁶.

Interviewer: And that came out of the play?

I think it was one of its impacts because it made us more confident to talk. (Madondo March 2004)

Other members, they saw the play; those members that never watched the play have not changed. They are still working the way we don't want.

Interviewer: So the ones who saw the play became more helpful. In what way?

Yes, other members, they trying to do what we talk about. About people who need rations from the kitchen; they know now if you're sick you must sleep in the cell not go in the kitchen, someone *phaga* for you [gets your food]. If

⁶ The ticket indicates that the offender has chosen to eat *samp* rather than *phutu*.

you're sick they supposed to take you to hospital because they know you're sick. It's not same like before. (Siyaya March 2004)

7.3.3 Reducing ANC and IFP faction fighting

Part of *Isikhathi Sewashi* addressed political faction fighting. The performers felt that after the play there was an easing of tension between members of different political factions in the correctional centre.

I'm here's for the political violence. I'm arrested for the political violence. I'm staying with people who is in my party [*He is an IFP member*] and the ANC, people who was fight together outside. Now when they were watching *Isikhathi Sewashi*, that day, they was sit together. Now they saw, "Oh, this thing I did outside was wrong." Now they change their mind. They sit together; they talk; they watching TV together. No one, now, they are saying IFP, I can't talk with a member of ANC.

Interviewer: Did they use to?

Yes. (Siyaya March 2004)

7.3.4 Reducing gang activities

I have already explained how the gangs and the correctional system exert power over the offenders (see p22). Below are comments specifically about how the interaction during the discussions with the audience helped offenders to break the numbers gang rules about communication between members of different gangs.

It is true that you get an alliance operating between the 26s and 28s. Through *Isikhathi Sewashi* bringing chairs and performing, it actually forced the inmates to sit with each other and talk.

Interviewer: Was that a big deal?

Well, it was a big deal. I'll tell you how: performing in section – something like that has never ever happened. *Isikhathi Sewashi* was the first. The first play which was performed in the entire Medium B. So something like that has never happened; it was the very first. And bringing inmates close to each other like that meant a lot because previously once inside the cell or even outside exercise, if I was 26, I wouldn't be able to talk to a 28. If I spoke to someone who was 28 I would be asked, what do you have in common with someone who is 28. But through *Isikhathi Sewashi* no one could ask that question because what was being discussed touched everybody.

(Hlengwa March 2004)

Mtambo also spoke about how cast members who were also gang members used the fiction of characters established during rehearsal to open communication to speak to members of the opposing gang.

So now what those people are doing is this [being members of the numbers gangs] they forget that they belong to a certain group of gangsters in prison when they talk to people. When you meet some people they call you with the name that you are acting with in the drama. So in that way you wear a smile for those people. Then you start discussing with them. So you take away that idea of this is a 28 and I'm a 26, I can't talk to that person so you negotiate through the drama. So automatically you negotiate with the person who is your enemy because 26 and 28 are enemies according to our understanding. So you forget that the idea that that person has a different idea and you've got a different idea. You talk through drama. Once you talk, it is easy to talk again next time. (Mtambo April 2004)

Increased communication between gang members also lead to some gang members offering help to members of opposing gangs.

All right, gangs was trying to calm down. But there are still 28, they each know I'm a 28, and 26 they know I'm a 26. Now when we played drama here inside the gangs are seeing, "Oh, now something's changed." We're not talking about gangs or what. Well one day the 28s are sick. Maybe the man who gave this man help is a 26 guy. He gave them help that thing was not happen before. (Siyaya March 2004)

7.3.5 Using communication skills learnt during the drama sessions to manage inter-personal conflict

The performers spoke about how they used skills learnt whilst working on the plays to solve inter-personal conflict back in the cells. Sometimes they described this as, "reading their [other offender] bodies. Read what they're talking (Mdunge April 2004)." Mphofu provides an example of how his improved ability to read other people's behaviour was useful in managing the potential for conflict:

And when you're inside the cell you see, " Oh, this one he's thinking of something." And you can go to him and say, brother don't even try.

Interviewer: Because you can read him?

Of course.

Interviewer: Give me an example.

Like when two inmates are fighting and the one just shuts up and sits down and thinks. You see now this one he's thinking of doing something wrong now. And you can go to him and say, "Hey brother, just forget about this. You know we're in prison. We can't do nothing to him. But if you do something to him. They're going to demote you. They are going to take your A group [privileged group for good behaviour]. (Mphofu March 2004)

The problem of conflict about collecting the money for the television rental emerged again (see p206). Nzuzza used the facilitation skills he had learnt to manage the potential for conflict in this situation.

Like for example in my room [cell], you know we pay rent for TV and everything. So I'm in charge of collecting the money and all that. So when we have a problem with people who don't want to pay for the TV I have to go to them, one on one, and say, "Hey, you know, pay for TV", this and that. And when I ask them on a one-on-one basis way, we end up having problems: maybe we get into an argument and start fighting. So now I don't do that any more. Instead of talking to the person one on one. I just switched the TV off and tell everyone okay this is the situation: it's month end we have to pay for TV. And there are those people who don't want to pay for that TV you see and so we solve it collectively.

Interviewer: Oh, so you use the facilitation skills.

Yes, I just facilitate the whole process like if you want to comment, okay, if you want to comment.

Interviewer: Do they look to you for this leadership or problem-solving role because you were involved in drama?

To them it's not because I was in drama. It's because of the skills I have, through drama, which I know that I got through drama. (Nzuzza April 2004)

7.4 Escaping for a Moment

The category 'Escaping for a moment' was suggested to me by the following comment by Bhungane. He spoke about the plays as recreation and as a kind of escape.

I can say the drama is very recreational.

Interviewer: What do you mean by recreational?

To me, how can I put it? [long pause] Just to escape, like, the reality of what is happening here in prison. It just takes your mind away from those things [...] I think for most of the guys it is important because somehow you need to take your mind away from most of the things that are happening. Like for instance, take the visit, when you get people from outside. You go down there. For that thirty minutes you feel like – enough (laughs). The drama also gave that space. (Bhungane April 2004)

He expressed the idea that there are different kinds of spaces, physical and psychological, inside the correctional centre that allowed him to feel and behave differently. This appears to be a mental strategy for resisting and surviving the effects of the carceral system. The sense of 'escape' though is temporary. He initially called it 'recreational'. For this reason I have added 'for a moment' to 'escaping' in the name of this category.

Other performers made similar comments about the benefits of getting away from the cells and the section. The term 'escape' however was seldom used. The comments addressed the following benefits:

- Physical and material benefits;
- Emotional and psychological benefits.

The overall benefits seem to have involved a release from the tension and pressures of living in a correctional centre.

7.4.1 Physical and material benefits

Some respondents admitted that the initial attraction of involvement in theatre work was that it provided opportunities for leaving the cells and the possibility of meeting members of the public. Here are two examples of such responses:

[Getting out of the section] I won't lie. Initially that's why most people go in to drama. Because when you ask, does anyone want to do drama? The first question they ask is what's in it for me. And the best way to bring the person in is to tell him that you won't be in the section the whole day. That's enough. Now if you tell him he might meet girls then definitely he's going in [he laughs]. (Nzuza April 2004)

As we are inmates, we are crying all the time that the state is oppressing us down. Some times you go to the parole. There in the parole they ask you what you doing inside. You must show them, "Hey, I'm doing drama and that and that and that." That thing is going to give you a credit to see the door early. In your marks they put something there. (Mthembu May 2004)

7.4.2 Emotional and psychological benefits

Although the comments above focused on getting out of the section, other performers spoke about the psychological impact of this. Meeting members of the public who attended certain performances allowed the members of the cast to make immediate and real contact with the outside world.

Interviewer: This talking with people from outside sounds like it's important to you?

Siyaya: Yes, it's important because you see, here we are only talking inside language. Because if you see outside people even your mind changes. You ask them how do they survive in society. How the life is moving outside. Because here we talking about inside, prison life, we are not talking about outside things. If we're talking about outside things were talking about past, maybe: '95 '96. Past, when you was outside. You only know that thing: '96

'97. You don't know nothing about what is happening outside. (Siyaya March 2004)

Meeting other offenders from other sections in the correction centre was as important as meeting members of the public. The friendship and sense of camaraderie provided an emotional support system.

Interviewer: If we stopped doing the drama what would you miss?

Friendship. Because even the time we formed *Isikhathi Sewashi* actually we were coming from different sections and even outside we are from different places. We don't know each other. We don't know what we are here [sentenced] for. But now I know now, like Mr Dingwe [the correctional officer who organizes the cultural work] is looking for Josias [a cast member], I know Josias is gymning. He's in the sports ground and also I know where he stays in C something. But if *Isikhathi Sewashi* wasn't there I shouldn't know all these people. It's making that friendship. (Mdunge April 2004)

The creative work also provided a sense of escape.

Because once I do drama, once I am involved to play another character, so something inside myself, I don't know – it's like I'm born again when I do things like that. When I play another character I feel free and flying [...] I found a very interesting thing that drama makes me look, as even my sentence in prison, I don't feel any problem. (Mpanza April 2004)

Here is an account by Mpanza about how he drew another offender, who was struggling to cope with his sentence, into the theatre work and how it helped. This account demonstrates how powerful coming away from the sections and finding a support system was for some performers.

There was a man where I stay in E6, isolation, he tried last year to kill himself using razors in the cell. [...] I was thinking of helping him. But I didn't know what to do. And when he comes back I can see this guy, when the members finding him with a razor or anything they just take these things out. [...] So everyone is suspecting that he's going to do it again. Want to kill himself again. And I realise when we did the drama of TFD [*Theatre for a Developing Nation*] that was started by you. Where last year I taught as a tutor. I realised that, let me bring the guy. So I went to him and I wanted to search what ability he has to do, because I didn't know. And I tried to search. I use different mechanisms. And I found that the man's got a talent. And even his background I found many things from him. So I realised, okay, the way I can help this guy is to make him active, is to make him to realise his talent, and make him to solve the problem by himself by putting him in the drama. Therefore I dragged him into drama because the drama was already started by that time. But I managed to drag him into drama. I said to him come and

watch; don't join but watch because I might need you some time. And he watched so many things and when I teach skills and so forth I bring him in slowly like that. And he end up involved in the drama. Therefore I was monitoring the success. Whether he was interested or not. I find that the guy is so interested and now he's another person. And no one realises that he's in the level of solving his problem now. So the guy was involved in the drama up until the end, in the last session where the students came in. And I was monitoring him as well. And he was so happy, he's changed from a situation where he was. He was changed and even the feelings that he was having by that time. He also come to me and talk positive things. (Mpanza April 2004)

Getting out of the section, for many offenders also meant getting away from the control of the numbers gangs. For example, younger offenders are sometimes coerced into the role of 'prison wives'⁷. In the drama sessions the performers were able to leave aside their various roles in the gang structures. They allowed offenders to escape this pressure and to renegotiate, to some extent, their involvement with the gangs. Below, Madondo discusses how gangsters, including prison wives were able to escape for a moment.

Some of the guys involved in this [the drama] are the ones involved in gangsterism, prison wife and all that. They got a way of escaping. Now they cannot go back and do the same thing while they were preaching other things (AIDS awareness messages] outside during the plays. (Madondo March 2004)

Attending rehearsals also provided some protection and support for non-gang members.

And on a personal basis it [drama] keeps me busy which keeps me away from all the negativity that goes on in a section.

Interviewer: What do you mean, the negativity that goes on?

Gangsterism and all those negative people. It's constructive too. I have learnt a lot of things through drama.

Interviewer: For example?

Well, let's say I just learnt more about myself through drama because when I came here in prison. Okay, I always thought prison life, you know, the public perception of prison life. You coming to prison – gangsterism. That's the best way to survive in prison, through gangsterism. And drama taught me otherwise. Showed me you can survive without gangsterism. Fortunately I went into drama before I could actually engage in all these things. [...]

Interviewer: Let's go back on that. It's too quick. You said that drama gives you an alternative to gangsterism. But you don't explain how.

Okay, let me put it this way. To be a gangster here in prison you have to be among the gangsters. You know, you have to spend time with them so that

⁷ Prison wife is the term used by offenders to describe men who participate in homosexual activity in the correctional centre as passive partners.

you talk and somehow they entice you to become one of them. But now if I wake up in the morning and I know, okay, Chris is coming at 10 o'clock. Go to gym. Take a shower. 10 o'clock I am out of the section. I am busy with my drama and everything so that doesn't give me time to actually hang around those people who are involved in these things. (Nzuza April 2004)

7.5 Speaking-out

First, the plays spoke-out on the offenders' behalf because they expressed their sense of reality. Nzuza explains this:

Isikhathi Sewashi talked about a normal prisoner, like myself. What I did outside and how I ended up in prison. It's sort of like talk to every prisoner here as an individual [...] it talks to a person on a one-on-one basis so it does affect every prisoner as far as I know. (Nzuza April 2004)

7.5.1 Plays provide a safe place in which to speak out

Plays also provided a safe space in which to raise problems. Chiya compared speaking out about problems through plays with other means of communication available to him in the correction centre:

Drama is a safe way of raising problems. Before, the problems were raised by writing down, then we give them to outside people. Who then give it to a commission. That was a dangerous one. The other ways that are dangerous the prisoners when he wants to solve his problem, like a gangster. He took a knife and stab other prisoners when they call him they say, "What is your problem?" "Why did you stab him?" Then he tries to explain his problem. Drama is safe because we portray problems then we sit down and discuss the problem. Then we come with a solution. Like the AIDS problem is discussed in *Lisekhon' Ithemba*. Like when they didn't want to take us to the hospital. Because after the play the people talk, informally they talk. It allows people to talk. (Chiya March 2004)

Interviewer: Why not have a straight meeting with the management?

I don't think they would listen to us if we have a meeting with them [...] through drama you can say much and by doing this drama which deals with these issues we think we'll enlighten a lot of inmates as well as the management [...] We think drama is a powerful tool. Drama, I think it's flexible to address issues. Because since drama has been introduced in prison it has done a tremendous job in terms of conscientizing people, both inmates and management, about issues that affect us. Therefore we think if we are using drama too in these issues it could have an impact on both us and the management. I do think it's safe. Because when you, for instance, if you form a committee and tackle those issues through a committee then it is easy for the management sometimes to destabilise that. We think through drama if you play something, to them whether they view it as negative or positive or an attack, although it's not an attack, but voicing our concern. I think drama it's a good way. I don't know how to put it. (Nguse April 2004)

Nzuza spoke about how a play could address sensitive issues and open them safely for public discussion.

Interviewer: Have you made any plays in the prison?

Right now we're working on one. It's basically dealing with gangsterism and prison. The way of life here in prison.

Interviewer: How did that play come about as an idea?

The main issue we bring up in the play is the topic of sex in prison. Which is a taboo subject here in prison, you just don't talk about it, you see. And it's also a problem because there are people who are in that situation out of ignorance. So we thought maybe if we could talk about it then people will be aware of what they getting themselves into. (Nzuza April 2004)

7.5.2 Confidence to communicate effectively

As well as providing the offenders with an effective mechanism for speaking out, working on the plays gave many of the cast members increased self confidence to communicate effectively.

Drama has given me the power to stand for myself. It has broadened my mental capacity. In terms of when I do encounter something, I am now able to express myself. Because previously I was a reserved person but now I'm able to speak out for what I believe in without being fearful or thinking about what people might say about it. (Nguse April 2004)

In the following extract Chiya speaks of how his improved communication skills helped him deal more effectively with his emotions and feelings of frustration.

Outside, I was a terrible boy. Since I grew up. I was shooting people, stabbing people. I'm here for a murder, the Greek murder. [...] Do you remember 1999 when you taught skills here in the church hall? All those things there help me a lot. Now I'm better than how I was outside. Because I never think about doing that again. Doing violent things. Shooting people and stabbing people. If I have a problem, I know how to solve my problem now. Because the drama gave me the skills to talk openly [...] If I get hurt I don't have to take it physically [become violent]. (Chiya March 2004)

7.5.3 Using theatre to challenge authority

I have included the performers' use of theatre to challenge the established structures of power and authority in the correction centre as one of the properties of 'Speaking-out'. In their discussions the performers took the objective of making plays beyond solving problems.

Interviewer: Do the prisoners use the drama to resist the prison?

They do.

Interviewer: How do they do that? Because they don't tell me. You are the first person to say directly to me, "Yes, they do."

No, we do, we do use drama to resist the prison.(Laughs.) There are many things here, some that are not going as they are supposed to be going. So by making a play that addresses the problem which prevails at that time, that's when we are resisting the prison.

Interviewer: That resisting, does that mean solving the problem or just making it very public

It means raising the problem.

Interviewer: That's valuable in itself, even if you don't solve it? Why?

Because if you raise a problem then everybody knows that you are actually aware that there is a problem. Then they decide whether it is a problem or not.

Interviewer: Say you raise a problem and nothing changes, it's still okay? In other words does just the fact of shouting about it in public make you feel better?

I guess solving it would make me feel much better but the fact that I've raised it does change. (Nzuza April 2004)

In the example above, making a problem public is linked to challenging authority in the correction centre. The discussions about the plays that the performers made on their own are grouped under the categories 'Solving problems' or 'Speaking out'. All the plays address problems and seek to find solutions. However, the discussions in this section tended to focus on how speaking out about problems was, in the offenders' opinions, initiated as a challenge to correctional authority.

In the following example Bhungane discusses a minor riot that occurred in C4, a section in the Westville Medium B Correction Centre. It arose from challenges the offenders made to the management about living conditions. Five offenders from the theatre group were key instigators. Discussion of the riot provided a useful counterpoint in discussions about how the theatre worked as a communication mechanism within the correctional system. I do not intend here to discuss the riot or evaluate the complaints raised by the offenders, nor do I intend to evaluate the accuracy of the offenders' accounts or complaints.

Bhungane comments that he would like to use theatre to raise the same challenge about living condition raised during the riot. He feels theatre might provide a safe forum. In this segment of the discussion Bhungane discusses the ways in which the confidence, conceptual thinking, and organizational

skills learnt in the play-making sessions contributed to the offenders' decision to challenge the management.

Interviewer: If you wanted to do a play in prison, what would you do a play about?

The incident in C4 (laughs).

Interviewer: Why would you want to do that as a play?

Although it's very controversial I think a few of the prisoners might learn something from that play.

Interviewer: Like what?

Like, say the system that we use to get our message through to management. From the beginning it was a correct way of doing it. But along the way we somehow went out of way.

Interviewer: You were in that cell?

Yes, I was there [...] so we learned a lot from that experience in C4.

Interviewer: Do you think the drama had anything to do with making that event a problem?

To some extent I can say, ja. Because the awareness that you get, like the writings of Steve Biko and all. So you start to question things, you see, ja.

Interviewer: What were you complaining about?

Almost everything that is happening, the hospital, the shop, the way things are handled at record office, food, almost everything.

Interviewer: You were complaining about prison conditions?

Bhungane: Yes, the conditions.[...]

Interviewer: Tell me more about the role the drama played in that?

We felt that if we talk to professors from the University of Natal about race issues and stuff, why can't we talk about the conditions we're faced with here in the prison, because at the end of the day we are the ones who are suffering. So we had to bring about the issue. [...]

Interviewer: So how important was it that there were five drama people in that cell? Were the drama people mostly the brains in C4 or was it other people?

I can say mostly it was the drama people [...]Maybe we were more assertive in C4. We didn't want to let go until the problem was solved. Like in C2, they were the first people to come up with the issue of the conditions in prison. And what happened to those people? They were taken to other prisons. And that was the end of it.

Interviewer: So rather than raise them directly, you think it better to do a play about the problems?

Yes, that's what I was saying like if we can do a play pertaining to the incident in C4.

Interviewer: Do you think it would be safe?

Ja, I think. [Laughs] I'm not sure. [...]

Interviewer: You haven't gone and made a play as revenge?

No, but that's what I was thinking about (laughs)[...]

Interviewer: There's a whole lot of options available and it's interesting that you've chosen drama.

Yes, but the drama is the safest way. Because if you look at the AIDS project [Lisekhon' Ithemba], that was like hitting straight at the members. But at the end of the day they did agree and say, ja, these things are happening. (Bhungane April 2004)

I conducted an interview with Hlengwa, one of the members of the drama group who had been identified as a ringleader in the C4 riot. He was transferred to Ncome Correctional Facility, a rural prison in KwaZulu-Natal. Below he provides a detailed account of the relationship between theatre work and the challenge made by C4 to the management.

Interviewer: What connection does [the riot in C4] have with drama?

Well, as I said knowledge is power. And once you have that power you wouldn't let anyone like abuse you in any way. Knowing that you are full of knowledge and that you have many ways, many means, to show that person [a correctional official] – that he can't take advantage of you anyhow. And by you showing him, that's when he finally sees that this is no ordinary inmate. This is no ordinary inmate because once you get entangled with this sort of inmate you find yourself skating on thin ice, I'd say.

Interviewer: What kind of knowledge?

As we've covered from black consciousness from – what is this guy, the American Mumia Abu-Jamal⁸.

Interviewer: He says you should organize.

Yes, yes. It's the material from those kind of people. As you read on and on, like you find that, no man, negative things are happening and yet we can try and put things in proportion.

Interviewer: Did the fact that we did those plays in the prison give the participants more courage to organize?

[...] Talking on my behalf, not on behalf of the inmates at Westville C4, the drama on its own showed me ways of taking care of myself. And by taking care of myself as an inmate in a place where there are so many negative forces going on around you, to repel them in so many ways is like the skills that I've learnt. And from the material that I've read, like I said knowledge is power [...] [...] Well, in my case, well, it did. [...]

Interviewer: So if you give inmates that kind of skill, how should we manage it so you don't get hurt?

Well I put it this way, you know, there are many ways, like for example, drama is one way because it was all through drama. So it can be through drama, performing and playing about topics and discussing topics, knocking them around that will enable an inmate individually to make choices on his own [...] It forces me to continue learning in order to get myself out of the situation. [...]

Interviewer: Which is this problem of not having power?

Exactly. You know, giving us material to read Black Consciousness, all different kinds of theatre and you tell us you've come from abroad and inmates from Britain are doing this and that. All that piles up. But again I repeat it all depends on the individual, if he chooses to pile up. Like in my case it did pile up and I let it until that stage. And yet I must admit that I

⁸ Mumia Abu-Jamal is a journalist and author who received awards and honours for reporting on police misconduct, abuse of authority, racial discrimination, education and housing in Philadelphia. He is a founding member of the Black Panther Party in Philadelphia. In 1981 he was convicted of first-degree murder and given the death penalty for the alleged shooting and killing of a white police officer. He had no prior criminal record (Abu-Jamal 2000:22). While making *Isikathi Sewashi* the performers read material about Black Consciousness by Abu-Jamal and Steve Biko.

found it hard to erase and say okay never mind all this drama business because I know it's not going to get me anywhere and of course Chris once told us that it's difficult outside if you're going to work in the theatre. But now I find it hard just to erase everything and say okay I don't know nothing. And yet I do. I'd be lying to myself [...] If you introduce a topic let's say Black Consciousness again or here Steve Biko and he tells people that is how things should be done, not this way. Then people like to experiment and see if Steve Biko is telling the truth and if it works then we'll carry on.

Interviewer: For you did it work or not work?

Well, it worked (laughs). It did work, it worked, it worked, it worked. I mean here am I in Ncome Prison. I found where the barriers were but not on my own but with the help of my fellow inmates. (Hlengwa June 2003)

Hlengwa was invited by the head of Ncome Correctional Facility to organize a theatre project. It was to be based on the workshop theatre conducted at the Medium B Correction Centre. This was not what Hlengwa did: instead he created a play that raised the offenders' grievances about conditions at Ncome Correctional Facility. The *Theatre for a Developing Nation* projects built skills amongst the offenders by making plays that addressed social problems of a more general nature. Only in 2002 did we address prison conditions and then in the very limited area of living with HIV/AIDS. In his account it is clear that he intended to continue the challenge about conditions that had sparked the riot in C4. Because he did so, the play became drawn into the power struggles that dominate life in a correctional centre. Interestingly, after the performance of his play the management did address certain issues raised. What was only an idea for Bhungane (p216), Hlengwa acted on. His account concludes with his description of a second play he was making after having returned to the Medium B Correctional Centre. The new play takes on the numbers gangs. Here is the account of the play he made at Ncome Correction Facility:

Interviewer: You made a play at Ncome and now you're putting on another play. Talk to me about the play at Ncome. Why did you do it?

Mainly, I was driven by anger and the loss. The loss that actually landed me in Ncome from Westville Prison. And the only way was that maybe I could get back at the members of DSC, the Department of Correctional Services, was to form a play, but not just any play. I actually done a lot of thinking on that because it was no point in me getting violent; I mean physically violent; it would prove futile but to get them where it hurts most, their jobs. By capitalising on their mistakes and letting them know that I'm aware. Not that the rest of the inmates were not aware but I would make them more aware of their mistakes and the way the prison is supposed to function in a proper way. [...] I was given the go-ahead by the head of the prison who didn't know what I was coming up with but he actually asked for a project after he saw

you guys interviewing me in Ncome. That was his mistake, then, giving me a project and I would capitalise on their mistakes in Ncome. [...]

Interviewer: Now describe the play.

The very first scene if I remember carefully had to do with the food. Every time they gave us food we experienced running stomachs. And I used that in the opening scene [...]. In the first scene we take the food and an hour later go to the hospital complaining of running tummies. And what we experienced in the hospital was the brutal way we were turned back. We zoomed into the members chasing the inmates away with running stomachs and just giving them painkillers. And that was my first scene. And it was very powerful because it changed a lot of faces and especially the medical staff workers [...] I had a mixed audience, inmates and members. I'm talking about plus or minus 50 members and 200 inmates. And the reason there was such a crowd was that nobody had ever seen prison theatre in Ncome before and this was all new to them. They wanted to know what is it all about. And to make it more, the Head of Prison actually invited all his superior members to come and witness this project which comes from Westville Prison.

Interviewer: And he did not know it was going to be critical?

He did not know the content. He wanted to see my work and maybe we work hand-in-hand in the future. And in my second scene I brought up where the members didn't see eye to eye. Where they disregard the Head of the Prison. Of age, he's young, he's younger than the rest of the members who are seniors compared to him and they undermine his authority. I brought that up and it was straight in their face. [...]

And another scene is where they take education so lightly, I'm talking about the members. In Ncome Prison the only type of education which dominates is ABET [Adult Basic Education and Training]. And the members themselves, a lot of them are illiterate. I don't know how they got those jobs but when they see inmates studying levels 1 to 4 they feel inferior and they do not want to assist inmates. When an inmate comes and says please Baba [father] open up the gates I'm late for school; I need to attend school and the response he gets from the member is that, "Hey, I'm not here to send you to school. You had many opportunities to go to school outside and now you want to go to school here in prison. No, I'm not going to open for you; I'd rather play cards, crazy ace, than open for you." That was all so strong. It exactly gave them a sense of this is what we are holding back and yet it's so important for the inmates.

But the most crucial scene I'd say was when I made a scene of the welfare, of the social workers. This inmate comes into the social worker's office and asked for a way forward in terms of getting grants for his children outside and he needs to use the phone. "Can I please make this phone call to my previous job and tell them I'm in prison and I can no longer pay for the furniture and I need my income which I've been saving to go to my family." And the response he gets is that you're a smoker aren't you? And the inmate replies, "Yes, I'm a smoker." "What do you do if you don't have cigarettes?" And the inmate replies, "I sell my bread, my ration to get a smoke." And the social worker says well do the same. Sell your food and buy a phone card. I can't help you this phone is for me and I use this phone on credit and if I'm out of credits I can't use the phone." That was so sad because here this guys was fighting for his family and a social worker refuses him.

All the scenes were so real. And all of the members related to each and every scene in the play. And the amazing part was that the members were more upset the more they watched the more upset they got. On the inmates side the more they watched, the more they praised the play and clapped. These are our problems and all our problems at once have been

heard. And the one was with the milk. Where there was no milk. There's a drought going on in the upper western Natal so they had to shift all the cattle and send them to, I don't know where. While they're doing so then we ran out of milk so we had porridge without milk and tea without milk. And it was a problem where TB victims needed that pasteurised milk every day as their diet. So the scene goes like this, you get many prisons in towns where they do not depend on cattle for milk yet they provide milk each and every day. Here you depend on cattle. So the cattles are no more here now. So what are you going to do now, we want milk right now. That was also straight in the face but it was all in a play...

Interviewer: Did you use audience discussion?

Yes, I did use audience discussion. During the scene we'd stopped the play and I used a *sangoma* [traditional healer] with *vumani bo*⁹ and *ishoba*¹⁰. Where the *sangoma* was responsible for breaking the scene up where he sees that this can make a good discussion. Prior to that during training and rehearsal we worked out this is where you should stop the play and let it run for this line and this is where you should stop the play and pose questions. The *sangoma* goes, "*vumani bo*" [Do you agree?]. And everyone stops and freezes. And the audience goes, "*siya vuma*" [we agree], "*hatina*" [the sound of sneezing] "*makosi*.", [the ancestors] The *sangoma* was free to go on stage or mingle with the audience. So you go and point anyone out with the *ishoba*, "What do you make of this scene? What you think this actually means?"

Interviewer: Members as well as inmates?

Yes, he would mingle between the members and us and ask what you think of this scene. And the member would answer this is a good scene and we are trying to deal with the problem. And then you get the boos from the inmates. The boos representing that they've had this problem for quite a long time and yet they [the correctional staff] do not tackle it in a good way. We got lots of responses from the inmates' side because they wanted to cough things out relating to the play. So that's how I use discussion a lot. You found now and again almost an argument by debate. Almost an argument and debate arose between an inmate and a member [...] We got good conversations out of the play. And the play ran for about an hour, 45 minutes to an hour.

Interviewer: And what were the changes you achieved?

Well after, changes were seen. Maybe two days after the play was performed. In the kitchen of course we got our milk. They ordered powdered milk, I don't know from where. And during the same day posters were set up on notice boards that inmates who were having problems with social grants should see the social workers who would do their utmost to assist provided that their children are from one year up to nine years old ... And with education, going to school, everything was managed in a proper way. A member was appointed who was responsible for taking the students to school, up and down, to classes, and taking them for lunch and all of that. So there were major changes, which I saw.

Interviewer: Was there any revenge on you?

I'd say there was a revenge. When I tried to greet the members or socialise with the members, in particularly the Head of the Prison, "*Sanibonani Baba Mfeka*" [hello, Mr Mfeka] he would put his face saying, You, I don't want anything to do with you. His facial expression said much. And another way was since I came from Westville Prison with this record. I was an instigator, which resulted in a minor riot about prison conditions. So I arrived at Ncome

⁹ *Vumani bo* translates as, do you agree? And is part of a traditional call and response used between traditional healers and their clients. The response is, *siya vuma*, we agree.

¹⁰ An *ishoba* is a traditional flywhisk made from an animal's tale.

with this situation on my back. After the play I was under observation: “Guard this inmate and if he is out of line report him to us”...

Interviewer: Did your drama stop?

It did not stop. I continued on drama. I had a plus of my own. I was given a venue which I could use and I had the key on me. If they did not want me to continue they would have confiscated that key and they did not. They gave me permission to continue to use it.

Interviewer: What's your next drama?

My next drama is as we're doing right now on sexual behaviour in the prison and gangsterism in prison. (Hlengwa March 2004)

On his return to Westville, Hlengwa made and performed a play that criticized the numbers gangs. He performed it to university students participating in the *Theatre for a Developing Nation* during 2004 and therefore had the opportunity to speak-out about these things to the general public.

7.6 Establishing a sense of self

The correctional system and the numbers gangs took away from offenders their status and the sense of self that had defined them in the world outside. Inside the correctional centre and within the gang structures they had to renegotiate a new status for themselves. They were now stigmatized by the general public as offenders. It was important to them to reverse this and feel they could be seen as fully human. The play had helped them reduce their involvement in the gangs, and in some cases had repaired damaged relations with family members and renegotiated their stereotyping by the public. Some performers also acquired increased social status in the eyes of the correctional staff and their cellmates. I have listed their comments about establishing a sense of self under these sub-headings:

- Contradicting the criminal stereotype
- Rejecting gang membership
- Building positive relationships

7.6.1 Contradicting the criminal stereotype

The performers wanted to counter the stereotyping of criminals by the general public and media. Siyaya H had said, “If I am here I cannot like the people from outside to see me as an animal, a lion or something. I just want them to see me as an offender (H Siyaya April 2004).”

Dlangalala spoke about the theatre skills he learnt and how interacting with the students on terms of mutual respect made him feel better about himself. This helped him to manage his anger and general behaviour.

The drama did a lot to me, because before I was so harsh [rude] even to my family. Even to my girlfriend. All people around me. I was too harsh to them. But what I thought was, it's because of that place that I am in at this present moment. To come inside the jail – because I didn't think one day I would be in prison. It frustrated me. [...] I embarked myself in the drama. But what helped me a lot was coming of the children from the university. To show them that although we are in prison there's not a lot of difference between us and the outside people. We are still human beings the way they take us.

Interviewer: How did it soften you, stop you being such a rude person?

In fact to play the drama I didn't have more knowledge about it so as you came here in prison and you taught us other tactics and those tactics it is not only physical tactics but even emotionally. Those tactics, it works for me. (Dlangalala March 2004)

7.8.2 Rejecting the gang membership

I have already presented comments in the section entitled 'Escaping for a moment' (p209) about how the theatre worked, helped the performers to escape from the pressures of the numbers gangs.

The accounts of how offenders used the theatre work to detach themselves from the gangs also indicates the way in which the theatre project slowly became useful for building the Forum (see pp22-24). Many of the offenders who were attracted to this group had been sentenced after 1994 and their post-apartheid consciousness and increased feelings of vulnerability due to illness made them into a new kind of offender, more reluctant to embrace the culture of the numbers gangs, which were formed during colonial expansion and apartheid.

In this section the comments demonstrate how the offenders used the opportunities for change provided by the plays to assert an alternative identity to that of gang member. H Siyaya spoke about how offenders in Medium B Correctional Centre wished to reject the numbers gang system, and explains that the play provided an opportunity for offenders to change some of the behaviour imposed by the gangs.

It is very difficult if you're member of the 26 going to talk to the 28 getting in the room [cell]. But when there's something that makes you both involved you can talk easily to each other, that is where you can communicate. But

after *Isikhathi Sewashi* you know what happened? A 26 was like a *mntu kababa* [a child of our father]. You know what *mntu kababa* is? A *mntu kababa* is like a person who is not picking any number, a neutral person. So everybody was like, I'm equal to this 26, equal to this 28. After that there is no more gangsterism. We used to, you can't go to the left-hand side of the cell because it belongs to 28s. You can't go to the right-hand side because it belongs to the 26s. But now after *Isikhathi Sewashi* we go to any passage.

Interviewer: I find it extraordinary that a play could make that much change.
No, you know what, I can't tell you that the play made that much change, but the play contributed to the change. You know what? Prisoners there in Medium B, they were already tired of this gangsterism. But they wanted something which could make them change the situation. (H Siyaya April 2004)

Gwala spoke about how he left the numbers gang. He said the discussions after the *Isikhathi Sewashi* allowed offenders to speak about their feelings and helped them to step out of the gang culture and speak with each other.

Drama helps me in everything in the prison. Because the drama, last time I was in gangsterism. Now I am changing.

Interviewer: Which gang? Can you tell me? You don't have to.

26 gang. Now I'm changing because I'm now no more picking up number in gangsters, going close to gangsters.

Interviewer: People tell me you never leave, once you've got a number you never leave.

Yes, they say that, but now the prison is changing. Now because they've got the committee¹¹ even in the room there are committee members. Everything if they happening in the room they tell the committee members even in the shower; anything in a cell.

Interviewer: Explain to me I don't understand why drama would make people want to reduce gangsterism. How does drama make people want to do that?

Everybody likes that drama, *Isikhathi Sewashi*, because that drama that time they facilitating, that time there was anyone to talk and they talk inside the things to know what about their feelings.

Interviewer: You're talking about the discussions after the play?

Yes, everyone talked and the thing is they are helping everybody in the prison because last time [in the past] they got a violence – there was too much violence in prison. Now there's not too much violence in the prison. That thing [the play] was making the people to know, don't make trouble in prison. Don't do like this, don't do this, you must think for yourself. Even to go outside, if you want to go outside you must be thinking for yourself ...

Interviewer: Before the play where they [the 28s and 26s] socialising?

They can't because they're not to it making easy. The play they making it easy to talk.

Interviewer: So the discussion circles for Isikhathi Sewashi and Lisekhon' Ithemba, you're saying after that the gangs could talk.

Yes, yes.

¹¹ The Correctional Services introduced committees in the cells. This was to help reduce the influence of the gangs.

Interviewer: And before they're not?
They're not, they're not. It's new, yes. It's new, I'm telling you.
(Gwala March 204)

7.8.3 Breaking the stereotype

The offenders were concerned about resisting being stereotyped as offenders (p223). The plays provided them with opportunities to resist this stereotyping. The certificates, which the performers received from the university after completing a theatre project, were useful for their records and parole applications. They also gave the performers a sense of achievement and helped promote their self-esteem. Gwala explains why the certificates were important for him:

My mother is the teacher but last time I never listen my mother. My mother she tolding me leaving the crime. I never leaving the crime. Now very, very, very happy. Even that time they given her the certificate. Hey, they said Mbongeni is changing now. Even you via-ing [going] outside, maybe you can work. I never work last time.

Interviewer: Which certificates did you show them?

The certificate for *Isikhathi Sewashi* and for the Drama 2001. [...] Now my mother said, "Hey," ... "now you're doing something even you via-ing [going] outside you. Now you're changing – you can't go back to the crime now." (Gwala March 2004)

Nguse, wanting to escape the stereotyping, imagined building better relations with the community at large. After his release, when he was back in his community, he worked on development projects:

Drama has played a tremendous role because the way I view reality now is different from before. Because before I did drama I was sometimes, although I was involved in positive activities, if sometimes the guys would discuss crime I would find myself in there discussing crime and that to me brought something to me that I might to carry on when I go outside. But since I've done drama, especially *Isikhathi Sewashi* and see the effect that crime does to the society, to individuals, to the family I've realised that crime is not good. Because if I killed someone now there are people who will suffer the community will suffer. If I rob someone now there are people who will suffer too. (Nguse April 2004)

Mphemba's relationships with his girlfriends and his children had collapsed. He found in the performances to the school children an opportunity to recover to a degree his sense of failure and disappointment.

For me talking to people on the outside is very important because I've got children of that age but I can't meet with them because my girlfriends don't want to come with my children here. Although, outside I wasn't having a good relationship with them. So we were having a relationship breakup. So I can't afford to get my children. So if I'm going to those young ones from the school, it's where I'm exercising all I was supposed to do on my children at home. So I can't just keep all what I've got on my heart and on my mind. I must give it to the people who can still use it. I think it can give them help. (Mphemba March 2004)

Mtambo described how performing the plays has increased his status amongst the offenders.

The drama made me to look like I'm a celebrity to the other inmates inside here. Because I can do something which they cannot do. And the interviews I've been running – so they take me differently now, compared to the other inmates. Some of them take me as their role model or as someone who is doing positive things in prison. So they give me that kind of respect now of which they wouldn't be giving me if I wasn't involved with drama. (Mtambo April 2004)

Mphofu described how the correctional staff working in the section let him enter and leave the section without difficulty. He was known to them because of his involvement in the plays.

When you always are going out, the guards get to know you. Oh, there's Khaya, he is always coming. He's doing drama. Let him in. If you want to go anywhere. You can say, "Oh, baba, please." "Oh, hey, it's Khaya let him go." (Mphofu March 2004)

I shall for the moment leave aside debates about drama as activism and as a consciousness raising force which will be taken up in Chapter 9 and in the conclusion. Here I wish to focus on the fact that the performers used opportunities provided by the plays to negotiate a number of social relationships. These were related to their own self-image and stereotyping by the public, and also to renegotiating their sense of themselves at a more personal level with their families, offenders, and correctional staff. This also involved managing interpersonal conflict and providing help for offenders who were ill. At a level of more systems they were able to achieve some improvements in their living conditions, involving food and services provided by the correction centre. They were also able to increase communication amongst offenders across the boundaries established by the numbers gangs.

The plays provided them with a 'voice' within the correctional system; this and their negotiation of systemic change involved an engagement with the power relations generated by the numbers gangs and the carceral. The next chapter addresses changes that the audience attribute to the performance of these plays.

Chapter Eight

Audiences' perceptions of the changes which they attribute to performing the plays

8.1 The audience: agency and change

In chapter 7 I demonstrated how performers exercised a degree of agency within the correctional system by making plays and using new behaviour learnt in the play-making sessions. They also used the plays to build consensus amongst the audience around particular issues. Some members of the audience, realizing that plays provided them with a 'voice' inside the correctional centre, started to make their own plays in the sections (p233 and p237). The audiences' discussion and reflection was limited to the issues raised in each play. Any changes in their behaviour that made an impact on life in the sections was in response to an agenda set by performers using the plays. The changes of which members of the audience spoke fell into two categories:

- Personal changes;
- Changes in the section.

The offenders' sphere of influence in the correction centre is limited. It extends to themselves, how they think, feel, and imagine, and the manner in which they engaged others through their behaviour. For example, they describe how they became more tolerant and helped other offenders who were ill (pp228-229). In the comments below about changes in the section the respondent addresses this issue of the offenders' limited sphere of influence (p228). He says that only the offenders' behaviour changed; he saw no changes in the behaviour of the correctional staff nor in the correctional system. Other respondents do describe some change in the behaviour of the correctional staff (p234). This respondent uses the phrase, "he is human through me and vice versa:" this refers to notions of *ubuntu*¹ that now inform the offenders' behaviour in the sections:

¹ *Ubuntu* can be defined as humanity. I have addressed this earlier (p181)

There is no change in the prison and members, but between inmates there is care for each other. Yes, humanity has come back or has been invoked. Invoked that he is a human through me and vice versa. (SN in T5 2003:19)

8.2 Personal changes

Changes in the offenders' behaviour resulted from the way they watched the plays. These processes are described in chapter 6 (pp177-298). Two of the processes, 'identifying with a character' (pp177-186) and 'recognizing a situation' (pp186-195), involved reflection and thinking about solutions. The process I have named 'generating a moral lesson' (pp195-198), lacks the active engagement of the other two types of responses. However, it does demonstrate how the plays worked on the audience to build consensus around notions of 'correct' values related to social relations. In fact all three processes contain a movement towards resolution involving notions of 'correct' social relations (p176). The comments by members of the audience who describe changes in their personal behaviour that they attribute to the performances of *Lisekhon' Ithemba* demonstrate how their new behaviour, which was more tolerant, compassionate, and helpful to others, reflects notions of 'correct' social relations:

The change that occurred in me is that if I am staying with someone in my cell, irrespective of knowing or not knowing him, if he asks me for something saying I must do that for him, like if he was eating and asked me to sweep the remnants on the floor for him I can sweep for that person because maybe he doesn't have energy to do that. Moreover we also need to stay in a hygienic environment because the diseases such as TB are synonymous with dirtiness. Besides that I need to be helpful, the best I can, because I'll get sick and need help too from the other persons in my cell. The play raised my consciousness that we need to be respectful to each other. Respect one another because if we don't respect each other we will end up fighting and maybe I'll be thrown into isolation, like a person who was sick. Then suffer alone in isolation without any help, why? Because I fail to respect people I am staying in the cell with. (C in T14 2003:20)

I would say from the second play [*Lisekhon' Ithemba*], speaking for myself it had changed me. In the past there was a guy in a cell who was sick and coughing, and considering his condition, because he was bedridden and powerless, if you ask for help like needing water it was difficult for me to use my cup and pour water for him. Reason being his condition, the way he was coughing, I didn't want what he was suffering from, and I was ignorant. But after this play and knowing that this disease cannot danger my life for example by sharing cups and bathing together, I can help him in many ways as long as I'm safe. (EK in T11 2003:15)

The Image Theatre that the audience engaged in provided offenders with an opportunity to practice that it was safe to touch people who were ill. This however was combined with information about HIV/AIDS infection. The subsequent discussions and reflection amongst the offenders helped to spread information and lead to safer personal decisions about high-risk behaviour:

I was someone who used like tattoos now I don't touch them, don't do them because I was told about pins, you see. Because there are those who use them and when I took the same pins and use them then I will be infected. (C in T10 2003:13)

The comments about personal change related to *Isikhathi Sewashi* also demonstrate an engagement with notions of 'correct' social relations. They too result from ways of watching the play that involved reflecting, thinking about solutions, and imagining a future. I have arranged the following comments about personal changes that the audience members attribute to the performances of *Isikhathi Sewashi* in such a way that one can see the progression from thinking and feeling, to decision making, to manifesting new behaviour. In this manner the offenders' experience of watching the play transferred, as behaviour and as actions, into their daily lives. When members of the audience spoke of changes that they experienced they often spoke of having a change of heart:

In my heart I have seen that I must change so that I can avoid coming to jail. Especially *Isikhathi Sewashi* has taught me a lot. (DN in T2 2003:19)

They describe internal processes. The performances seem to have provided them with an opportunity to revisit and make sense of their experiences related to the apartheid struggle, political violence and criminal behaviour without the forces and pressures that had surrounded them at the time. One offender described *Isikhathi Sewashi* as having provided a way of counselling:

The play really turned the hearts of the brothers because it shows those old scenes depicting how the black people were treated, so the play was a way of counselling many of my brothers, I cannot really explain what was in their minds or what they felt, I can see there was a big interest in the play because when I look to that side they'll be talking about the play, then on the other side they'll be talking about the play. That means it really hits a particular nerve even though it is hard to get what the individuals were thinking or

feeling inside about the situation brought by the play. Even as we settled inside after lock up in the afternoon we were talking about the play. (TX in T16 2003:18)

What I can say is that there is changes that happened inside me that were caused by the play. Like they were so many things that we discussed in the play that used to take place in my life while growing up. (TX in T16 2003:18)

Isikhathi Sewashi did help me very much. It reminded me of how my life was spoiled, where should I start correcting. As I am the person who's prepared to go out and have a better future. Where should I correct in order to be better? What mistakes should I correct that were caused by apartheid? (TK in T6 2003:23)

I have demonstrated how the members of the audiences who engaged the play using the processes 'identifying with a character' (p177-186) and 'recognizing a situation'(p186-195) thought about solutions. Some members of the audience described the solutions they arrived at as personal changes:

Yes, there are big changes that I've seen in the people as well as in me. *Isikhathi Sewashi*, it takes you to the old ages to things that were happening in your life, now and before. If you watch *Isikhathi Sewashi* clearly from the beginning to the end you were able to recall that as I'm here, where do I come from. And you know your goals. If I come out what do I wish to do? That is all I would like us to focus on as a new generation, to be able to identify our dreams. (TX in T6 2003:4)

Isikhathi Sewashi has a lesson because many people are able to plan about the future, and that crime does not pay. What steps should we take if we come out of prisons, or like me too, I've learned a lot. I am prepared to come out of prison and open my business and cooperate with the community. The community knows me as a criminal. I'll try to commit myself to the community by working or doing good things for them, including warning the children that crime does not pay. (SL in T7 2003:28)

A fundamental step in the movement of reflection to action is the act of making a personal decision; this was often about an offender's involvement in crime:

And the main problem is that in the play *Isikhathi Sewashi* the criminals are succeeding and some of them don't succeed [...] and therefore does crime pay or does it not pay. That is where I meet a problem because there are those who succeed in crime and also there are those who don't succeed. That is where I was left behind in a sense that which one do I put in my mind. But the play was very good we got a lesson. It's a duty for everyone to decide which lesson do you take. (SS in T9 2003:19)

I will start with myself because all the images I've seen are teaching me and warning me about all the bad things I was doing before. The play is redirecting me from the past, which has led me to be here in prison. If you rob you must expect two things only that is dying or being in prison. When you're in prison you are no different from the dead person because you are very limited in many things even the things you are capable of handling. Somebody must do those things on your behalf. So my first change is that I must stop doing crime. My friends had influenced me so it means I must leave those friends so I can lead the life I want. (JH in T8 2003:18)

Sometimes the decisions about future action involved using their experience of crime as a resource and becoming involved in anti-crime campaigns:

Well, I was inspired, because when I look, looking even on the outside world, I could see that there are places which I can go to from churches to schools, aiming at those youth over ten and under twenty years. I can do something, explain things and unveil some talents when it comes to things like these dramas. Now I know that I can take kids and make them do a lot of things that can improve their future. Drama mimics reality and if it deals with such issues it could really enlightened people. (XX in T14 2003:20)

The change is alarming way back when someone older was telling me something like don't do this or that, I wouldn't listen to him. I would think that because he is a *skawoti* [prison slang for someone who has given up crime] or because he failed he had no right to tell me something. Look at me now, I'm the one who wants to give similar advice to the young and fragile. I wish to tell all those vulnerable kids which path to take and how you must walk on it just so you can have the right future and not end up like me. When you get here, it's only then that you'll realize how you must approach or mustn't approach life. (F in T14 2003:21)

The change that I experienced was that I mustn't relax, I must stand up and do something. (Sa in T15 2003:16)

The phrase, "I must stand up and do something," used above, is significant because it involves a decision to take action. The comments presented so far demonstrate changes in thinking and feeling, and changes in how offenders imagined their future. These also demonstrate decisions the offenders made about changes they wanted to make. The next comments demonstrate changes that involve new behaviour that offenders used in the sections. Members of the audience describe changes in the sections that involve increased activity, going to church, attending school, and increased educational and recreation activities in the sections (pp236-237). These particular activities represent

action taken by offenders that involve a withdrawal from the authority of the gangs.

The numbers gangs express their resistance to correctional authority by prohibiting their members from becoming involved in religious, education, or recreational activities organized in the correction centre. Increased activities of this nature therefore indicate a reduction in the level of gang activity. When the offenders speak of giving up crime this is synonymous with giving up gang membership or reducing their involvement in gang activities. A few of the respondents discussed how after seeing *Isikhathi Sewashi*, and thinking about the issues it raised, they chose to renegotiate their involvement in the gangs:

There are changes in my section that I recognize, for me and for the other inmates; not in the prison wardens. The change in me is that I was smoking dagga [cannabis] [*If he had access to cannabis it is likely he was a member of the 26 gang. Non-smoking is an indication of a non-gang cell.*] but through awareness in stage plays and comments that these things damage our lives I decided to quit smoking. I'm living a different life now. For other inmates there is no discrimination as my brother explained [between gang members] we are human beings; we are the same, like me, we wear the same uniform, everything we do, we do together with co-operation. (NK in T7 2003:27)

Yes, there is some change as we're talking now I've left everything. Here in prison I was a gangster, but I left it all. Even today I'm still trying to teach myself to survive on my own in all that I do in life. If I had to rely on someone, I'll believe in the Lord Jesus. [*The gangs accept that being 'saved' or becoming religious is an acceptable reason to withdraw from gang activity*] (MA in T15 2003:13)

I have changed because I was a thug when I came to prison [...] I mean, to be reckless and imitating a thing that happens in science [fiction] movies and applying them to your life. I mean, to do things that are difficult to do, but you will do your best to make them happen. When I came into the section in 2000, I formed my gang on top of the existing gangsters [the numbers gangs]. Our aim and objective was to make life miserable for all prisoners. But after the first drama [*Lisekhon' Ithemba*] which dealt about the treatment of each other, things started to change in my mind. But the change was not that strong. Then we continue with violence, to spill the blood [knifing people]. We were changed externally again. There was another drama about changing ourselves [*Isikhathi Sewashi*]. Again the people [the performers] told us about the treatment, and entertainment and drama, that show us the result of bad behaviour and abusing people. And the drama about HIV/AIDS, they told us how to treat them and the issue about wardens. All these things. Gangsterism continued. Even this brother, my cellmate, can attest to that. I tried to assault another prisoner and I was charged but at the charge office a light came on me to change. I remember that there are inmates who are trying

to help us. What I am trying to say all that what you have done have changed us in our hearts. (SN in T2 2003:15)

As well as renegotiating their relationship with the gangs, members of the audience spoke about other tangible changes. One of these was that they started to make and perform their own plays in the sections. This gave them a ‘voice’, this respondent calls it teaching, outside of the gangs’ control of communication amongst offenders:

There was change to some of the guys who are close to me. Because we saw the plays we used to do things whether it is wrong or right we didn't care because we were doing escapism. When the play *Isikhathi Sewashi* was shown we changed our minds because I even considered to make another play since these guys have set the trend. So that I will be able to teach other fellow brothers [offenders]. I think they will see it after some time because I didn't do it on my own but I took the *Isikhathi Sewashi* idea and I gained interest. I must teach others because there is a lot of opportunities to teach here in prison. (Nn in T5 in 2003:19)

Lisekhon' Ithemba and the other play *Isikhathi Sewashi* too taught us to such an extent that there are other plays now in prison following these plays. All that happened because there are guys who gave us hope back. (M in T4 2003:8)

The members of the audience also describe how their choices about their behaviours changed. For example, they were more tolerant:

In *Isikhathi Sewashi* more especially political-wise, I learnt to understand the next person politically. I realized that we do not have the same minds, others think differently but I must tolerate that. I must fix what is wrong. (S in T4 2003:8)

I will talk for myself, I am also a political prisoner, you see, me and this brother [NM] we are always together. But we belong to different political organizations. But here in prison we are always together because we now have a better understanding, that what we were fighting for was useless. (SM in T11 2003:14)

If I remember this happened on the first days of my arrival in prison. In the morning I had a problem with the previous speaker [SZ]. But when the drama came we all went outside, mind, we were no longer speaking to one another. We watch the drama and when we came back we started to talk debating about what we have just seen. Then I saw the drama as a uniting factor. So I can say that drama has played a pivotal role in uniting people across the spectrum. I saw changes in me and I saw change in my brother SZ. (ZH in T2 2003:17)

8.1.2 Changes in the section

When the members of the audience spoke of changes that related specifically to performances of *Lisekhon' Ithemba* they spoke about increased help and care for the sick:

I would say there is change that I am seeing according to my perception because some of the brothers are now sympathetic towards sick guys and are helping them. Even the doctor might not be available but these inmates to help or take care of other inmates their own way, helping him here and there. I think the play has made a number of people become sympathetic or sensitive, so there is a great change according to me. (XN in T5 2003:21)

We are able to utilise palliative care to other people who are sick, therefore there has been a change because something like this has never materialised. (NM in T5 2003:20)

I can see a slight change from brothers who were staying in TB cells. Because now I discover that there are inmates who are asking and volunteering to help the doctor. Whether he is a doctor or a member I don't know, I think years. I can see now that by the last play there is tolerance. That is different. Since these plays had been played, according to me we are respecting each other as humans. (NN in T5 2003:20)

Especially from the guys who used to get food for visits or inmates who had gone to see their visits. These guys used to be cruel when you dish for someone who is in the visit, they will tell you who is that. They don't know that person and he will dish for himself. But if he sees that is his friend he would just take the dish and dish. Now after this play I think they were touched by the scene where that was projected because that is wrong [...] That is the change I have seen, they don't ask questions now if you tell him that there is someone who is in the visit who stay in such cell and number they just take the utensil and dish. (SS in T3 2003:26)

There are now members [correctional staff] who have changed, who were previously very rude towards inmates. They are no longer the same since this play, *Lisekhon' Ithemba*, has been played. They have changed. (AN in T5 2003:20)

The majority of the comments about changes in the section describe increased attendance at school, church, and increased educational and recreational activities in the sections and reduced gang activity. These changes seem to be a response to the challenges presented to the audience in *Isikhathi Sewashi* about their criminal behaviour and in *Lisekhon' Ithemba* about caring for the sick. The discussions, both formal and informal, that the plays provoked provided an opportunity for offenders to reject gang authority and

speak across the informal boundaries established by the numbers gang. Some offenders addressed this directly:

In the section forty percent are united about this [reducing gang activity]. I must say from cell to cell there are people who are behind all this campaign. But there are those negative about it. But now they are knowledgeable about such campaigns. We are now an example to them. Things have just got better. In recent days the Head of the Prison was here. He recommended our section, due to the fact that there is no spillage of blood [knifings] any more like it was before. I put that credit to you all [*he means the performers. A cast member was conducting the interview*] who have come to assist us. Even the whole prison, because we know that you go to all the sections. (SN in T2 2003:19)

I can say when I came here in prison the situation was hard in such a way that things like gangsterism separated us. There are 26s and 28s and there are those who are neutral. There was no cooperation amongst us as inmates. In our minds there was that bad concept of discrimination, that if you belong to a certain gang you couldn't work together with a different gang member. So what I've noticed is that at this stage things are more normal. Getting to change, because of the plays we are able to work together now without looking at our gangster group. It doesn't matter if you pick up number or not, we treat each other like humans. If you remember clearly in prison if you do not pick up a number you are a *Noyoni* [literally a bird - a stupid thing]. Yes, the plays played a big role. Before as a person in prison, perhaps you are a 28, if you do not pick up the number you were unable to do things with me; we were separated by the numbers. 26s and 28s were unable to stay together. But at this stage we are able to work together during the plays. [*He is referring to the involvement of the audiences in the Image Theatre and discussions that were part of the performances*] I can play with a 26, I can play with a 28, I can play with the person who is neutral. We use everyone's ideas there is no discrimination. Everything we do it together so that we can identify the problems and overcome those problems. There is no calling others with names. The stage play played a big role in reconciliation according to my view. (NT in T7 2003:26)

Yes, there is change and the truth about it is I'm quite impressed at the accommodativeness. If you look at your drama performance it involves every kind of person, irrespective of whether this one is a 26 or a 28, it brought everyone who's everything together. What does that do? It gives them a large perspective to work on for the rest of the day. With different ideas from various groupings and individuals, there is an assurance that the resultant work is great. There is a lot of practice, talks, and exercising going on in the section as a result of this. A new look to things is introduced which brings change in individual inmates. The change goes as far as our youth here. They don't get the chance to fight and argue because they want to join the drama and do something with their lives. I commend the effort. (E in T14 2003:23)

There are some changes I've seen. For example, the first ever HIV/AIDS day was organized after your play was in the section. There is some change even on gangsterism and gangsters in their activities: they are now expected to

respect non-gangsters and people of lower ranking on the gangster hierarchy, no assaults, abuse or any form of violence. We can report instance of violence to the warders freely now without being labelled spies. I guess this all transpires from your plays. (B in T14 2003:22)

Here a member of the audience describes increased attendance at the different churches:

I would say there has been a small change in the section. Because of the performances there has been a little change that I've witnessed. Because after that I saw a number of inmates taking bibles and joining the church. A majority of them are Shembe goers [*Shembe is a well established independent African Church*]. And I was amazed because before when they shout church on Saturday, only one person will go. But now the number has grown and I think the reason is these plays that have been performed here, they have left the message. Others have taken this step because they have seen that what the guys had played is important. (JN in T3 2003:25)

Along with the increased attendance at church there was increased attendance at school and other educational opportunities in the sections such as adult literacy classes:

I used to hear prisoners saying they don't want crime anymore. Some of them like to go to school now. You can see that his life has changed in such a way that the *Isikhathi Sewashi* is helping them, they end up to the stage that we call them *ukukawota* [prison-slang for quiet people]. (NM in T6 2003:26)

Crime is now being left behind and it doesn't pass anymore. You see we talk a lot about crime in the section. Debating by ourselves about crime up until the lights go off. Crime is not right. Most of the inmates are now favouring that. And when you look at it, most of the inmates are doing lengthy sentences, you see that my brother. And they wonder upon their release if they will go back to crime, you see that. Which shows that crime is coming to the end because most of them are blaming crime. Most of them are studying now, which shows that they want to come out of prison with educational knowledge. (D in T10 2003:17)

Then I come to the prisoners, there are lots of my brothers in the section; I see them going to school now. They're trying to distance themselves from useless stories like discussing house breaking, and we were stealing like this. Most of the time they are considering the things they do; even after school they deal with their books. (NM in T6 2003:27)

Some members of the audience spoke about increased levels of educational and recreational activities initiated by offenders in the sections:

Before I watched the play there wasn't a great deal of activity in my section. Very few were at school, no HIV/AIDS awareness, it was just bad. But ever since you came to perform your play for us, we now have HIV/AIDS education going on, a higher number of people infiltrating the school, through ABET, business studies, or technical, people are involved in sports and handcraft. I think they felt quite left behind when they watched the play and its depth, so they want to do something with their lives, something as progressive as the drama you play. (A in T14 2003:21)

I'll agree with him: [C] everyone seems to know what they'll do as they wake up in the mornings. There's a lot of activity, there is singing, exercising, and schooling. Nobody now thinks about provoking another inmate. Everyone seems to be doing something. Even the warders are trying their best to treat us well and according to the respect and discipline we're showing. So all and all there's a lot of change, maybe because of the plays or maybe just a rare coincidence. (D in T14 2003:22)

Usually there was only one sport code but now there are many recreational activities like gum boot dance, *isicathamiya*. We want to broaden our horizon not just focus on one thing only. This shows that you are still human in prison [...]. We don't receive reports about fighting. It means your campaigns have worked to a certain degree. This has taught us to care for each other. (ST in T2 2003:18)

In my section there are things that have changed because before there was only one sport, soccer, but now there is a Zulu dance. We also had a chance to participate in a drama. They teach us about dramas, something that has never happened before, it's new, and the people come out with a stage plays. Then people in my section see that this thing is needed. That is what happened there: are lots of things that came out. A lot of people are free to do what they feel to do in my section. (SS in T9 2003:16)

In this chapter I have demonstrated how the plays functioned for the audience, rather than the actors, to effect change. These changes involved behaviour related to personal interaction, the predominant attitude being a revival of the values of *ubuntu* (tolerance) which had been eroded by overcrowded conditions. They also renegotiated social relations linked to the power and dominance of the numbers gangs.

In the next chapter I will draw together the analysis of the data, some of which has been presented in Chapters 7 and 8, from which the core-category 'negotiating social relations' emerged and combine it with the core-category, 'how we watch a play,' involving the three processes identified in Chapter 6. I will demonstrate how by integrating these findings I am able to present a substantive theory that explains how the offenders, performers and audience, engage with this type of collective play-making process.

Chapter Nine

Findings: Presenting a Substantive Theory

9.1 Negotiating social relations

The correctional system in South Africa, although reformed from its role during apartheid (p15-16), still embodies the characteristics of panopticism, relations of power, and resilience common to the carceral system and described by Foucault (1995:271 – 273). Underneath the official system and mirroring its oppression and violence is the numbers gang system (p22). My analysis revealed that the offenders, both performers and members of the audience, make use of their experience of watching and making plays to negotiate a variety of social relations, some of which involve personal interaction and others which engage power dynamics related to the correctional system and the gangs. The impulse to negotiate this range of social relations is a reaction on the part of the offenders to their position within the carceral system.

The plays engaged notions of Theatre for Development, which draws on a Freirian tradition and has the intention of facilitating change (pp44-48). What then was the changes the plays produced? From the interviews with the performers, the core-category ‘negotiating social relations’ emerged along with the following list of properties (p200):

- Thinking more broadly;
- Solving problems;
- Escaping for a moment;
- Speaking out;
- Establishing a sense of self.

These categories represent broad areas of action in which the performers engaged to negotiate a range of social relations.

The plays provided the performers with a ‘voice’ in the correctional system. This has implications around exercising agency and effecting change. In the case of *Lisekhon’ Ithemba*, they were able to raise problems related to living conditions in the correction centre, as far as they related to issues around offenders living with HIV/AIDS. In the case of *Isikhathi Sewashi* they were able to present a case about their common experiences of growing up under apartheid, living in poverty, and their criminal behaviour.

The importance of having a voice and exercising a degree of agency was established in the collective play-making process used to make both plays. This collaborative process allowed the plays to reflect the offenders' collective reality, which was important both to the cast members (p213) and the audience (pp170). It also achieved the kinds of hybridity of western and isiZulu performance aesthetics described in Chapter 4 (pp132-147) and Chapter 5 (pp161- 163) and in turn influenced the manner in which the audience engaged the plays.

The performers used the playmaking skills they had learned while working on *Isikhathi Sewashi* and *Lisekhon' Ithemba* to make their own plays. This enabled them to continue to raise and discuss problems related to living conditions in the correction centre. They describe how plays provided a safe means of challenging the authority and power of the correctional system and the numbers gangs (pp213-214). Further, they used the opportunities which performing gave them and the skills learnt in play-making sessions to manage a range of personal interactions involving family members (p224), the general public (pp221-222), other offenders (p225), and correctional staff (p225). They negotiated the stereotyping of offenders (pp221-222), managed conflict (pp204-205 and 208-209), made personal decisions to care for the sick (pp205-206), and withdraw from the gangs (pp207-208 and 222-224).

The performers' ability to effect systemic changes in the correctional system were limited and were achieved through social dynamics. In the case of *Lisekhon' Ithemba*, some of the correctional staff altered the manner in which they treated offenders after seeing the play and this resulted in improved access to food and health care (p206-207). The quality of food improved, samp became available, because offenders developed the confidence to address this issue with management (p206). In the case of Hlengwa's play at Ncome Correctional Facility, according to his account, changes occurred because the offenders had embarrassed the correctional staff (p218-221).

Some members of the audience saw the opportunity that theatre offered: inspired by *Isikhathi Sewashi* and *Lisekhon' Ithemba* and they went on to make their own plays (p233). The audiences' discussions about the changes which they attributed to the performances of *Isikhathi Sewashi* and

Lisekhon' Ithemba support the core-category 'negotiating social relations' (226-238). The performers, however, through the choice of topics that the plays addressed, defined the extent of the audience's engagement. The members of the audience did not introduce into their discussions topics other than those raised by the plays.

The members of the audience described change occurring at personal levels in terms of how they thought, felt and imagined and in terms of their behaviour (pp227-233). I argue below that this is significant for people who are incarcerated (p245). They also effected change within their own community inside the correction centre. There is now more help for those who are ill (pp227-228 and pp233-234). They communicate across the division between gangs (pp234-236) and political factions (p233) and the result is reduced involvement in gang activities (pp234-237). More people attend church, go to school, and become involved in educational and recreational activities in the sections (pp234-237).

The offenders' responses appear to be overwhelmingly positive. Only one of the members of the audience (A in T10 2003:14) and a member of the cast (Mdunge April 2004) felt there had been no changes in the behaviour of offenders or correctional staff towards people who were ill. Clearly, the advantages and disadvantages of criminal behaviour were debated strongly amongst the offenders (pp183-184 and 190). For them, there appear to be only two options for living in a capitalist system; either to become better educated in order to secure better employment or to become a criminal. Only one member of the audience, however, claimed the latter position for himself during the interviews (NT in T7. See my p183).

The almost entirely positive nature of the responses could be explained as politeness or the offenders' conformity to responses they thought were expected from them. Their responses are, however, filled with detail, which makes such a reductionist explanation problematic. Offenders volunteered to be interviewed and it seems more likely that those who came forward found theatre a new and useful means of communicating in the correction centre and provided positive feedback in order to secure its use. This does not, however, invalidate the information. That they found it useful emerges clearly in my

analysis. At the time the plays were performed, the non-gang faction was only beginning to emerge and organize. One audience member speaks about this:

In the section forty percent are united about this [reducing gang activity]. I must say from cell to cell there are people who are behind all this campaign. But there are those negative about it. But now they are knowledgeable about such campaigns. SN in T2 2003:19

Clearly not all the offenders supported the growth of a non-gang faction. The numbers gangs had not yet internalized what it meant to have a new channel of communication operating in the correction centre. The gangs have traditionally kept a tight control on communication. Hlengwa describes how the gang system prohibits communication between members of different gangs. He says, “previously once inside the cell or even outside exercising, if I was 26, I wouldn’t be able to talk to a 28. (March 2004).” Chiya explains how the gangs use violence to negotiate with the correctional authorities. He says, “Prisoners when he wants to solve his problem, like a gangster. He took a knife and stab other prisoners when they call him they say, “What is your problem?” “Why did you stab him?” Then he tries to explain his problem (Chiya March 2004).” Steinberg (2004:3-5) confirms this sort of behaviour by the gangs, describing similar strategies involving gang violence and communication used by offenders to address prison conditions during apartheid. At the time when this research was conducted, the non-gang faction had not yet emerged as the Forum gang and the numbers gangs had not yet reacted to a communication channel largely controlled by members of the Forum.

The responses by the performers and members of the audience demonstrate the conscious use of theatre to express resistance to the power of the correctional system (p215 and p216-218) and of the gangs (p214 and p221) and resemble Foucault’s (1990: 93) description of power dynamics that are unequal, local, and unstable. Making and performing plays in the correction centre only occurs with the permission of the management. The ability for people to gather safely in large numbers for performances is controlled by the gangs who determine the level of violence in the correction centre.

9.2 How we watch a play

Understanding how the audience engaged the plays is important for understanding how the experience of watching the plays is linked to their usefulness for negotiating social relations. The core-category ‘how we watch a play’ emerged from the interviews with the members of the audience. It is supported by three sub-categories titled (179):

- Identifying with a character
- Recognizing a situation
- Generating a moral lesson

These are processes that members of the audience used to make sense of the plays. Each has a list of properties that describe the activities present in each type of response. The process I have named ‘Generating a moral lesson’ (pp194-195) tends not to be a product of deep reflection, active problem solving, or imagining of possible solutions. It reflects responses that conform to notions of ‘banking education’ (Freire 1996:55-56) involving what Freire (1996:33) terms domesticating oppression.

The other two categories, ‘identifying with a character’ (pp177-178) and ‘recognizing a situation’ (p186), involve a more active engagement. ‘Identifying with a character’ has the following properties:

- identifying;
- remembering;
- reflecting on problems and/or solutions;
- sometimes imagining a future.

‘Recognizing a situation’ has the following properties:

- recognizing the situation;
- remembering;
- reflecting on the situation;
- speaking out.

The active elements involving reflection and problem solving in these processes suggest that components of Freire’s Pedagogy of the Oppressed are present, particularly the praxis of struggle (1996:33) and *conscientização* (1996:64). The offenders, for example, reflect critically on their own experiences. Freire (1996:35) describes this as essential for action. Activities

such as reflection on problems and solutions, imagining a future, and speaking out all indicate the offenders' initial active transformative engagement with their own sense of reality. Freire describes how problem-posing education "strives for the *emergence* of consciousness and [the learner's] *critical intervention* in reality (1996:62)¹." The plays made use of formal processes to manage the audiences' discussions of issues raised by the plays; in the cells after the performances the offenders continued these discussions (pp183-186; 190-191; 194). Both dialectical thought and dialogical interaction are fundamental to processes that use Freire's pedagogy (1996:35).

The theatre of Brecht and of Boal are congruent and easily combined with the Freirian objectives of Theatre for Development; Brecht (in Willet 1964: 57) and Boal (1979:xix –xxi) embrace the notion that theatre should inspire action and initiate change of a social, political and systemic nature. Freire states that, "the pedagogy of the oppressed is the pedagogy of people engaged in the fight for their own liberation (1996:35)." He defines this:

In problem-posing education, people develop their power to perceive critically *the way they exist* in the world *with which* and *in which* they find themselves; they come to see the world not as a static reality, but as a reality in process, in transformation [...] Problem-posing education affirms men and women as beings in the process of becoming – as unfinished, uncompleted beings in and with a likewise unfinished reality [...] Problem-posing education – which accepts neither a "well-behaved" present nor a predetermined future – roots itself in the dynamic present and becomes revolutionary. (Freire 1996:64-65)

The offenders' engagement with action may fall short of the systemic and revolutionary changes imagined in Brecht and Boal's theatre, or in the potential for change expressed by Freire as "revolutionary". He says in his discussion about transforming reality that "people develop their power to perceive critically *the way they exist* in the world *with which* and *in which* they find themselves (1996:64)." In the case of the offenders held within the carceral system this is particularly important. They were able to explore and give expression to their sense of reality, and through actions that involved

¹ The italics are Freire's.

making plays and choices about personal behaviour they were able to negotiate social relations.

From the offenders' perspective, actions such as thinking, feeling and imagining have greater significance than for the general public because their potential for action is so limited. Hlengwa explains this:

It takes not every prisoner to let his imagination or his mind run wild because there's a saying that goes, I can be incarcerated but my brain stays functioning twenty-four hours a day. Right? You can never lock up my brain so that's where the problem arises because I'm doing time and I can spend five years thinking because life in prison is all about thinking. Because there's nothing you can win without having thought of it first. So the brain functions to its maximum peak in prison because before falling off asleep you think of what you are going to do tomorrow and when you wake up you do exactly what you thought the previous night. (Hlengwa March 2004)

An important part of the offenders' world involves thinking and imagining. Hlengwa's conclusion, "when you wake up you do exactly what you thought the previous night," demonstrates how powerful for him behaviour is as a means to actively engage his world. He also speaks of "winning" and this suggests he is speaking about struggle against the system. We need to appreciate the limitations on the offenders' potential for action that could be described as revolutionary. Freire speaks about people's potential for achieving a transformative effect on their reality: "[in] the world *with which* and *in which* they find themselves (1996:64)". I would argue that the offenders' engagement with their reality was significant, even under the conditions of incarceration; and even when the negotiation of social relations was limited to inter-personal behaviour affecting only the social climate in the correction centre, and represent only a limited and unstable engagement with the power dynamics of the gangs and the correctional system.

Although I have argued how some of the audiences' responses to the play demonstrate Freire's notions of praxis of struggle (1996:33) and *conscientização* (1996:64), their engagement with the play appears to be influenced primarily by isiZulu residual oral tradition. I have earlier provided an example to demonstrate this (pp174-175). The offenders expect plays to reflect their own reality (p170) and to function as informal education (p165-168). Their responses conform to this and show that they expect a performance to demand interpretation. Gunner (2000:231) has noted that

isiZulu-speaking audiences have similar expectations about isiZulu radio drama, which are derived from older forms of isiZulu performance. All three types of responses, 'identifying with a character', 'recognizing a situation', and 'generating a moral lesson' demonstrate in a general manner a response to these expectations.

The responses also demonstrate a movement from conflict to resolution which is also found in isiZulu storytelling (Scheub 1975:114) and isiZulu radio drama (Gunner 2000:225 and Copland 198:160). In the responses I have categorised under 'Generating a moral lesson,' the offenders generate moral maxims which function much in the manner of core-clichés (Scheub 1975:47). Scheub (1975:19) explains that performers acquire these kinds of skills as members of the audience in a manner similar to the way in which one learns to speak. He points out that members of the audience are also potential performers (58-61) and this may explain why it seemed obvious to the offenders who comprised the audience to make their own plays.

The offenders' use of the plays to negotiate social relations may also have its roots in isiZulu oral performance. Kamlongera (n.d.:26) discusses how theatre rooted in an African tradition functions to "reconcile man and his environment." Similarly, Soyinka (1976:51) describes how theatre that expresses an African worldview acknowledges the relationship between man, society and the universe. Scheub (1975:173) describes how traditional stories promote "proper and productive social relationships", which he also describes as correct kinship relations. I have already explained how the offenders' responses not only moved towards a sense of resolution but arrived at conclusions congruent with notions of 'correct' human relations (pp178;182;185;and 193.).

Soyinka (1976:42) and Scheub (1975:173) describe a kind of catharsis as central to the manner in which performance achieves its social function. The following components are all elements in catharsis: identification with characters, recognition of situations, and memories of similar personal experiences. These are properties in the responses that I have categorized as 'identifying with a character' and 'recognizing a situation'. These responses also demonstrated a critical engagement leading to action (p243-245). Identification with characters and situations sparked the processes of reflection

and problem solving. Schueb (1975:58) describes the spectator's critical and imaginative engagement as important functions for the isiZulu speaking audience. He also describes how the emotional immersion of the audience in the performance is important for its didactic and artistic success. He continues, "education takes place – not as a rational experience, but as an emotional, sentient involvement (1975:173).

The theatre in the Medium B Correction Centre combined catharsis of the kind Schueb describes with a critical engagement by the audience. Brecht (in Willet 1964: 57;78;79;87;181; 248 and Benjamin 1998:38) and Boal (2000:x and 27-32; and Bogad 2000:46) define their work as primarily anti-Aristotelian, because they reject processes involving emotional identification with a hero and catharsis, which they describe as oppressive. Milling and Ley (2001:148-152) are critical of Boal's interpretations of Aristotle and therefore find his arguments about catharsis flawed. Brecht's (in Willet 1964:181) ideas of catharsis are linked to notions of purging or cleansing from fear and pity for the purpose of pleasure, that involve spiritual cleansing and notions of fate (57). Brecht and Boal's notions of catharsis stand opposed to their objectives around achieving the audiences' critical engagement with the material in plays in a manner that leads to action.

House (1958:103) rejects the concept of Aristotelian catharsis as purging in favour of restoring equilibrium. He (111) also describes it as 'educative' and 'curative' not purging but involving not only fear and pity "but a whole group of disturbing emotions (203)." Emotions of regret and self-pity were clearly present in the offenders' responses. House's concept of Aristotelian catharsis is closer to the purpose of catharsis used by Soyinka (1976:42) and Scheub (1975:173). The restoration of equilibrium could include restoring 'correct' human relations. The term 'restoring equilibrium' in a curative sense is useful for describing the how the offenders appear to revisit and re-evaluate past experiences while responding to the plays. Attempts at restoring equilibrium are also present in their negotiation of interpersonal relations and in their negotiations involving power.

Schueb (1975:173), however, uses "purging" to describe how the "ntsomi tradition purges the audience of anti-social views and attitudes antithetical to Xhosa tradition." This understanding of the term has

connotations of oppression, and is evident in the offenders' responses I gave categorised as 'Generating a moral lesson'. What is important is that these findings demonstrate that catharsis plays an important role in the offenders' critical engagement with the plays and particularly in responses that also demonstrate much of Freire's notions of praxis and *conscientização*. The plays used Theatre for Development techniques that engage with Freire's objectives around popular education. They also used theatre techniques that draw on the work of Brecht and Boal. Zulu aesthetics were also strongly present in the work and the audiences' 'way of watching a play', strongly influenced by isiZulu performance tradition, was able to absorb the Freirian process of praxis and *conscientização* which do not disappear but become part of the offenders' responses.

Scheub (1975:173) and Soyinka (1976:42) in their descriptions of catharsis acknowledge a unifying intention. The plays at the correction centre built consensus amongst the offenders around notions of 'correct' human relations and promoted values related to *ubuntu*. For many of the offenders this was not an expression of compliance and conformity. The promotion of values related to *ubuntu* were compatible with their resistance to the carceral system and to the oppression by the numbers gangs. Jameson (2000:71-72) describes how Aristotelian catharsis unites a disparate audience and opposes this with the way Brecht attempts to unite one section of the audience in class struggle against another section. In the case of the plays in the correction centre, they built united action amongst the offenders to reject gang authority. Although not class struggle, this seems closer to Jameson's description of how Brecht's theatre operates. Armstrong (2006:181) also describes how Boal's work constructs group perspective and instills a sense of obligation amongst the audience.

In terms of this case study debates around the binarisms related to Aristotelian and non-Aristotelian processes become less useful. The Zulu performance traditions are able to absorb foreign theatre processes related praxis and *conscientização* as well as consensus building, and without necessarily diminishing their potential for expressing resistance, combines them with processes involving catharsis.

Fig 3: Theatre as a process for negotiating social relations

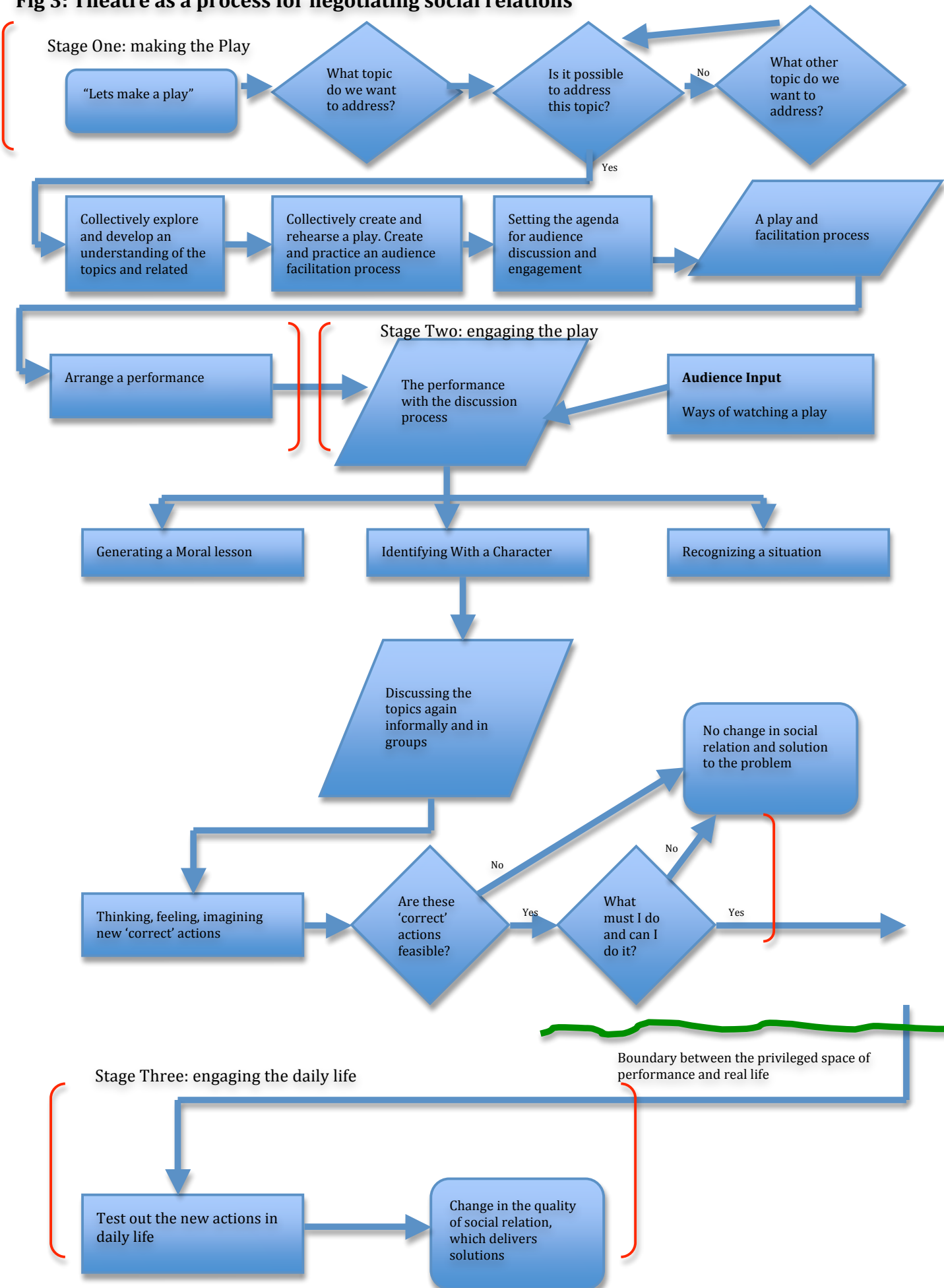
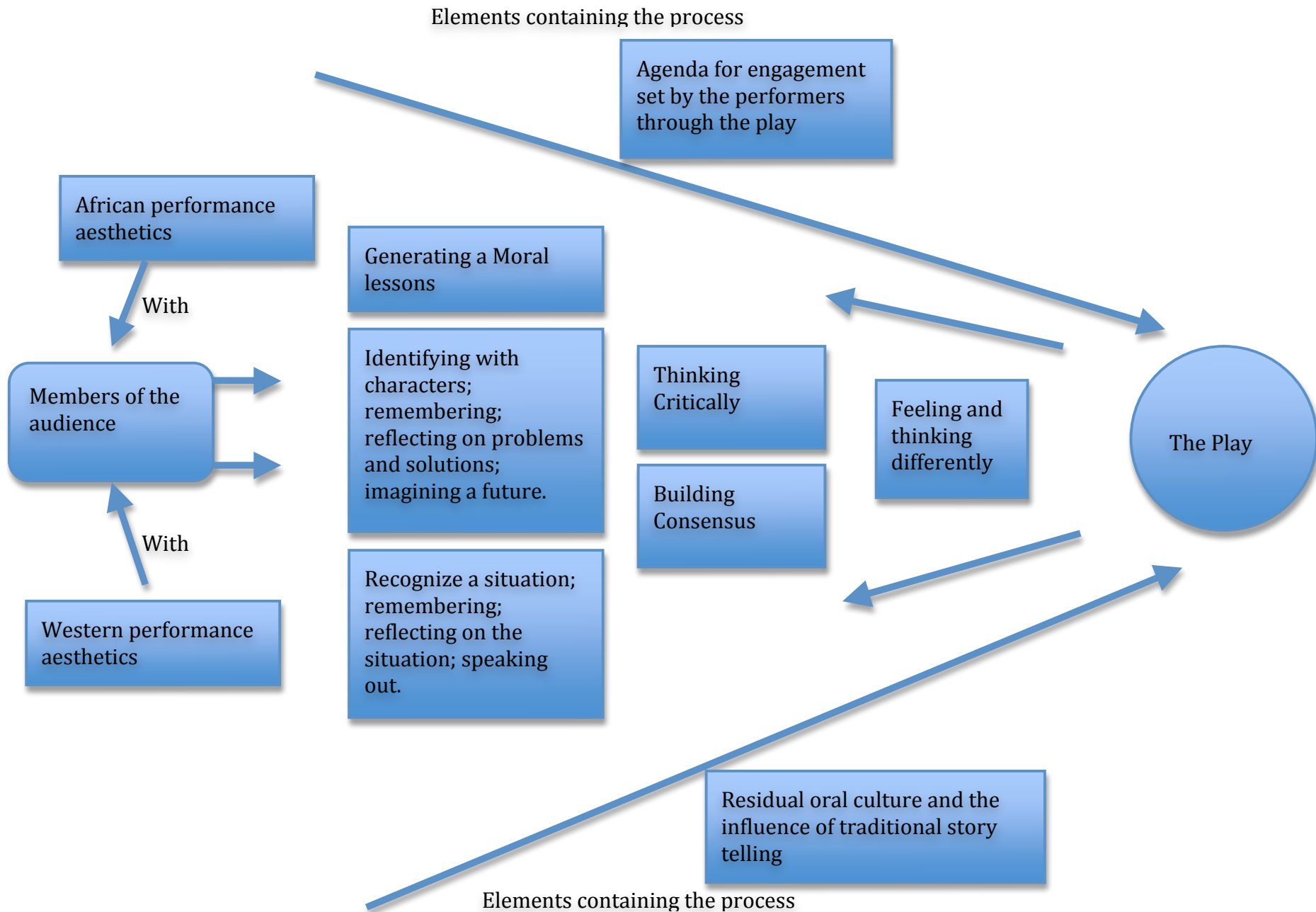


Fig 4: Audience's Engagement with the Play



9.3 Presenting a substantive theory

I have generated from the data a substantive theory about how the offenders used collective play-making to negotiate social relations in the Correctional Centre. This theory is grounded in the data drawn from offenders' responses. I have described the process in the schematic diagram, Fig 3 (p249). The data was collected from separate groups, composed of performers or audience members and analysed in these categories. I have integrated the findings generated from these two sources of data. In the diagram (fig 4 p250) I have provided a more detailed and schematic description of how the audience engage the plays.

9.3.1 Stage One: making the play

The process begins with an idea for a play. The flow chart has the statement **“let's make a play”**. At this point the performers test out ideas about what the play might address until one idea is settled upon. I have described this decision making process as involving the following questions: **What topic do we want to address?** This is followed by an evaluation: **is it possible to address this topic?** If they feel the topic cannot be addressed successfully, another topic is tested. **What other topic do we want to address?** Finally a subject is found to explore and create a play around.

Mpanza (p 204) described how a group of offenders he had previously worked with came to him to ask to create another play and how he coached them to identify possible topics for the play by thinking about problems they wished to address in the Medium B Correction Centre. Individually or collectively, performers begin to think about and imaginatively test particular topics. This involves consideration of the power relations within the correctional centre, and what might or might not be allowed. Bhungane (p216) expressed a wish to make a play about recent unrest in the Medium B Correctional Centre and debated whether it was the kind of topic that the authorities would allow the offenders to address publicly as a play. Ntusi (June 2003) spoke about how the important role theatre held in the correction centre as a space for public debate needed to be protected. He therefore suggested that topics had to be chosen carefully. Hlengwa (pp218-221), on the other

hand argued for a more direct challenge to correctional authority and gang authority through the plays he made.

After selecting a topic the group **collectively explored and developed an understanding of the topics and related issues.** The journey through the playmaking process revealed an important difference in the way the performers engage the topics as compared to the way the audience engage them. The interviews with performers demonstrated that they had found that the playmaking process broadened their thinking (pp200-202).

The exploratory elements of the play-making process, deciding techniques of audience facilitation, creating the play and rehearsing, occur simultaneously, although there is a movement from exploration towards the repetition and drill that is part of the final rehearsal process. The process of reflection also moves from exploring issues to deciding whether the play has correctly articulated particular issues. **The performers collectively create and rehearse a play as well as creating and practicing an audience facilitation process.**

In the case of *Isikhathi Sewashi* there was a lengthy period of debate using Image Theatre to explore notions of masculinity and criminal behaviour (pp98-122). The offenders reflected on and discussed their own life experiences, particularly their offending behaviour. Assumptions about their own position as victims of apartheid and their criminal behaviour were challenged by debates about personal accountability (pp201-202). After this period of exploration they started to create the play. In the case of *Lisikhon' Ithemba* they had already identified particular problems related to living with HIV/AIDS in the correctional centre in the early versions of the play. However, in reworking and combining the earlier versions they pushed the play towards being more critical of correctional staff (p160).

As well as choosing topics and making the plays there was also a process where by the performers considered how best to facilitate audience discussion. In the case of *Isikhathi Sewashi*, audience discussion groups were used and the performers practiced facilitation skills for these discussions using role-play. In the case of *Lisikhon' Ithemba*, where they felt speaking out directly might be difficult for the audience, they used Image Theatre. Hlengwa

(p220) used a *sangoma* figure to interrupt his play and engage the audience in public debate.

Throughout the playmaking process the performers were **setting the agenda for audience discussion and engagement**. In the case of *Isikhathi Sewashi* the topic was broad enough to involve reflection on socio-political and historic issues. Members of the audience were able to perceive events in their lives as part of a larger political or historic moment. For example, when engaging with particular situations, members of the audience reflected on political violence (p189), the plight of ex-combatants (p188), or apartheid and poverty (p187). When engaging with characters they reflected on decisions about criminal behaviour and explored personal accountability. For example, when they considered the actions of Nkululeko (p178-179), Gazolo (p179-181) or Ayanda (p 181-182) they proposed alternatives to criminal action. The agenda set by *Lisikhon' Ithemba* was narrower and involved more tangible issues. The following topics were set by the play for the audience to engage with: access to the hospital and medical treatment; bringing food back from the kitchen for offenders who were too ill to come to the kitchen; favouritism by staff in attending to inmates' health needs; and prejudice against and bullying of sick offenders.

The important point is that members of the audience, during the facilitation discussions that were part of the performance and later during informal discussions back in the cells, did not introduce topics other than those set by the plays. The members of the audience thought critically only about the issues presented to them. In the case of the performers, the journey was more intense. In order to set the agenda for the plays the performers had to explore and debate the topics fully. They also make decisions about form and content. After the topic had been fully explored, they addressed ways to generate and manage public debate. Once they had arrived at a **play and facilitation** process they were ready to test it in performance.

9.3.2 Stage Two: The audience engaging the play

The next step, stage two, involves the audience. Now that a play exists the performers **arrange a performance**. The arrangement of performances also involved a negotiation with authority. My role as an 'outside expert' enabled

me to negotiate performances throughout the Medium B Correctional Centre and to the public in the case of *Isikhathi Sewashi*. The offenders only performed their own plays in the sections unless, as in the case of Hlengwa's play (pp218-221) a correctional official arranged the performance. The decisions about where and when to perform can vary: sometimes plays are performed for special occasions to a large audience and sometimes for the audience in a section. The performance marks an important moment. It provides an opportunity to test the play in **performance with the discussion process**. This marks the culmination of the performers' creative journey.

The audience bring to the process their own preconceptions about theatre: **their ways of watching a play**. In the case of the Medium B plays, members of audience bring with them a mixture of western and African understandings of performance (p168). I have described the audiences' engagement in a schematic diagram, Fig 4 (pp250). The major elements that frame their responses are, on the one side the agenda set by the performers through the play, and on the other, the residual influence of traditional storytelling. I have already discussed the processes by which they engage the plays (pp 243-248). The arrows on the diagram indicate that the direction of action is towards the play. The responses involve thinking and feeling differently; thinking critically, and building consensus occur at the beginning of the movement away from the play and move towards engaging life in the correction centre. This movement is indicated by the smaller arrows.

The audiences' individual responses are reinforced when the offenders are **discussing the topics again informally and in groups**. They begin **thinking, feeling, imagining new 'correct' actions**, and reflect on the feasibility of these actions. At this time they still occupy the notional and safe space created during the performance. I have presented this moment of reflection through the following questions:

- **Are these 'correct' actions feasible?**
- **What must I do and can I do it?**

If the answer is that these actions are not possible, there is **no change in social relations or solution to the problem**. This is demonstrated in NT's (183) debate about the feasibility for Gazolo, and one presumes him, to give up crime.

9.3.3 Stage Three: engaging the daily life

If the actions seem possible, then the offender tries to **test out the new actions in daily life**. This marks the moment when the experience of watching crosses the boundary between the privileged and ‘unreal’ space of performance into life.

The new actions are then tested in the real world and are subject to the consequences of other peoples’ reactions. The complexity of the real life context will decide if the new actions are sustainable or not. In cases where the changes are successful, the new actions will result in changes in **the quality of social relations, which deliver solutions** to some of the problems the performers identified in the early stages of this process. The changes occur within the context of complicated and dynamic social relations of the correction centre and are, as Foucault (1990: 93) points out, often local and unstable.

Chapter Ten

Conclusion

This case study of Prison Theatre in a South African correctional facility contributes to Thompson's (1998) and Balfour's (2004) projects to widen the range of studies in the field. Prison Theatre in Africa is under-represented (pp39-40). The plays in this case study were created using collective theatre workshopping techniques. This allowed the work to reflect the offenders' reality, in the Freirean sense; the collective process released into the work the kind of aesthetic hybridity that Barber (1997:1-12) describes in her category African Popular Culture. Tocci (2004:5-6) points out that work that speaks to the life experience of the offenders tends to be undervalued and is less reported.

Some of the members of the audience thought the purpose of the plays was to provide a privileged space within the correctional centre for offenders to speak out and solve problems (pp172-174). The descriptions of how the offenders use theatre to negotiate social relations, and relations of power in particular, demonstrates the impossibility for theatre work in correctional institutions to escape the tensions between creative expression and the imperatives of the system. Thompson (1998:10), Balfour (2004:17), Kuziakina (1995:145), and Peaker and Vincent (1990:185-186) all address this tension. Foucault (1994:70-87) explains how the correctional system operates as an apparatus to mould and transform the offender by exercising power that is polymorphous and polyvalent. Zimbardo (2004:19-33) explains how this system produces pathological behaviour affecting offenders and correctional staff. In South African correctional institutions the numbers gang system, operating beneath the correctional system, is an expression of this kind of behaviour. The offenders' challenges to the correctional system and the authority of the numbers gangs represent a struggle for their humanity. Kuziakina (1995:145) also argues that offenders in the Solovki Prison Camp used theatre in their struggle for humanity.

This study also speaks to Thompson's (1998:10; see my p28-29) questions about the role of theatre in correctional institutions. The collective theatre workshopping processes used to make the plays and the participative theatre techniques used to involve the audience provided the offenders with voices. They made plays that reflected their reality and discussed issues that were important to

them: for them it was important that plays reflect their reality (pp170) and were in a broad sense educational (p168). I have termed the act of speaking out and the audience's active engagement through discussion as 'identifying with a character' (pp177-178) and 'recognizing a situation.' (p186), These acts were preceded by reflection and followed by action and demonstrate what Freire (1996:26) describes as the oppressed's struggle to regain humanity. In the correctional institution the opportunity for the offenders to effect change is limited.

Foucault (1995: 271-273) explains the resilience of the modern carceral system. The offenders in this case study cannot not effect change of a systemic nature of the kind the theatre of Brecht (in Willet 1964: 57) and Boal (1979:xix –xxi) attempt. They do, however, in Freire's (1996:64) terms become active subjects who engage their reality in a dynamic and transformative way.

The offenders in the audience effect change at a personal level in terms of how they think, feel and imagine and in terms of their behaviour (pp227-233). They also effect change within their own community inside the correction centre (pp233-238). As well as using theatre to exercise agency and initiate change within the offender community, the performers make use of the opportunities presented by performing and the skills learnt during the play-making sessions to manage a range of personal interactions (p240). I have argued these are expressions of resistance to the power of correctional system and the gangs, and remain unequal, local, and unstable (p242).

Both Soyinka (1976: 51) and Kamlongera (n.d. 18-26) argue that theatre that engages an African worldview has its roots in the wish to intervene and teach about man and his environment, whereas western theatre has lost this very active function and is usually purely entertaining. The ways in which the audience speak about the plays and discussions in the cells about the plays contain the movement from conflict to resolution common to isiZulu storytelling (Scheub 1975:114) and isiZulu radio drama (Gunner 2000:225 and Copland 198:160). This movement towards resolution is combined with conclusions that express ideas about 'correct' human relations. The plays express and build consensus around values related to notions of *ubuntu*. This is true of all the processes which the audience uses to engage the plays: the first and simplest is probably the 'generating [of] a moral lesson' (pp195-196) in which they formulate simple moral maxims of a conservative nature. This result may be what Freire (1996:33) calls domesticating oppression, in that it lacks the elements of praxis,

present in the other two processes, ‘identifying with a character’ (pp177-176) and ‘recognizing a situation’ (p186).

IsiZulu cultural paradigms appear to absorb the western influences of Freire, Brecht, and Boal, which I introduced into the projects through the lectures and discussions which were interposed into the workshopping process. The techniques inspired by Freire, Brecht, and Boal served to support the isiZulu speaking audience’s expectation that performance would demand interpretation (Scheub 1975:58-59). Both Scheub (1975:173) and Soyinka (1976: 42) describe a kind of catharsis at the heart of African performance which promotes values related to productive human relations. The offenders’ identification with characters and situations and their memories of experiences evoked by the plays combined with feelings of regret and self-pity, and helped to motivate their critical engagement with the plays. Scheub (1975:173) describes how in traditional storytelling the emotional immersion of the audience in the story is essential to the artistic and didactic success of the performance. He argues that this process can be used to purge the audience of anti-social views antithetical to traditional values (Scheub 1975:173), and I feel strongly that is not all that is occurring in the case of the offenders. Values related to notions of *ubuntu* or ‘correct’ human relations supported their common struggle for humanity which they express as resistance to the correctional system and the gangs.

The collaborative nature of the theatre work emerges as a significant condition that produces the kinds of findings that have emerged in this case study. This collective process provides the offenders with a voice and control over cultural production. The plays function as a means of communication controlled by the offenders rather than as a tool for intervention. Some members of the audience understood this and began to make their own plays in the sections (p137), as did members of the cast (pp203-205 and 214-221). At a conference held inside the Medium B Correction Centre in 2008, offenders – men and women, correctional staff, and theatre practitioners – met to generate recommendations for the use of theatre in correctional facilities in KwaZulu-Natal. Included in the list is the offenders’ recommendation that the “use [of] problem-solving plays [to] address broad social conditions within society and specific social conditions within the correctional centres shall continue (Hurst 2008:5)”. Tocci’s (2007:287-288) analysis of plays in correctional facilities in the United States revealed that the real value of the plays was

not their rehabilitative role but how they functioned as a useful social and cultural element within the rarified society of the correctional institution.

Heritage (2003:39) asks if it is possible, when working within the correctional system, to maintain a reforming purpose and to ensure that the offenders remain subjects rather than objects of the work. He describes how theatre work is inevitably conducted on the fringes of the greater carceral project. The findings in this research lead me to suggest that it is important not to link notions of intervention, or a reforming purpose, with issues of the offenders as subjects rather than objects. Prison Theatre that promotes agendas of intervention will inevitably lose the offender as subject in the work when conducted within the correctional system. Projects involving notions of rehabilitation or behaviour modelling are too close to the correctional project. While projects that attempt change of a systemic nature need to be driven by members of the public, often theatre practitioners/ facilitators, because the offenders have no voice, are forced to negotiate with correctional authorities on the offenders' behalf. These negotiations have the potential to become what Freire describes as "acts of false generosity" (1996:26-27). For offenders to maintain their positions as subjects they need to control the play-making process, even when an outsider performs the useful role, described by Mda (1993: 170-176), of challenging their assumptions. Offenders have to maintain an active role in their exploration of the expression of their reality, and for this Freirian processes seem useful.

The offenders remained subjects in this work because they had control over the plays and through them expressed important issues that arose from their over-determined subject position. *Lisekhon' Ithemba* gave expression to values about help and support, related to notions of *ubuntu*, which were useful to a community living in over crowded living conditions with high rates of HIV/AIDS infection. *Isikhathi Sewashi* gave expression to a need amongst some of the offenders to reject gang authority. The Africa Watch report (1994:44) states that offenders want to be rid of the violent gang system. SN in T2 2003:19 (see p234-235), discusses how forty percent of offenders in the Medium B Correction Centre, are united around reducing gang activity. He describes people in cells across the correction centre who are behind this campaign. The plays also provided an opportunity for offenders to express their need to renegotiate the stereotyping of offenders and to react to the power relations in the correction centre. I would argue that their debates and exploration of decision-making (pp177-186) are reactions to their lack of opportunity to make decisions in the

correction centre, rather than having anything to do with rehabilitation. The plays did not create these conditions, but provided an opportunity for the offenders to express them and appear to have played a role in building consensus around such issues.

What are the implications of this case study for Prison Theatre practice? Theatre for Development practices and the work of Freire, techniques from Epic Theatre and the Theatre of the Oppressed were clearly of great importance in this project and may not be equally so in others.

My findings challenge notions around intervention. The offenders' limited potential for change, due to the limited influence which they possess, must be recognized. I have argued that the greater potential for collective play-making, is not intervention, but the negotiation by offenders for control over theatre as a means of cultural production within the correctional institution. Speaking out and the production of the plays were important features of the Kamĩrĩthũ Cultural Centre project in Kenya (Wa Thiong'o 1981 and 1997:131-137). Therefore theatre practitioner/facilitators need to be aware that by allowing offenders to speak out and through theatre engage the social dynamics present, and considered by them important, within their environment will inevitably mean they will engage with the power dynamics and pathological behaviour created by the carceral system within the particular institution.

It is important that the management and staff understand the nature of the work and are included as partners in the work. This may be impractical because some people in key positions as 'gatekeepers' in institutions may have no interest in cultural work or in giving offenders a communication tool of this nature. The Head of Prison at the Medium B Correctional Centre understood and supported the challenges that *Lisekhon' Ithemba* would raise. This was congruent with the organizational culture changes related to managing HIV/AIDS in the correction centre that the management was aiming for. The play did not, for example, debate the contentious issue of offenders' access to antiretroviral medication. At Ncome Correctional Facility it appears the management and staff were not prepared for the criticism of living conditions raised by the plays (pp218-221).

Secondly, the work needs to explore the offender's reality, this may involve challenging some of their assumptions, however, one should expect that the work and the audiences' engagement will reflect a range of types of consciousnesses.

Thirdly, the offenders' skill and use of theatre is developed over time. Short projects more often are envisioned in terms of intervention and respond to the need of the project facilitators, their organizations, and funding, and cannot easily give control to the offenders. Projects sustained over longer periods have a greater potential to negotiate control and can build closer relations with the offender community. This has already been established by the Malya project in Tanzania (Kerr 1995:158), which demonstrated that Theatre for Development projects sustained over a long period of time had a greater potential to become involved in the social dynamics within a community.

Lastly, collective play-making techniques draw on the cultural resources within the group and this may lead to the aesthetic hybridity described in these case studies (pp132-147 and pp161-163). The audience, as is the case here, might well bring to the performances their own culturally distinct ways of engaging the plays. This case study demonstrates that debates around the binarisms of Aristotelian and non-Aristotelian theatre are not useful. Processes linked to notions of catharsis, however, were important elements present when the members of the audiences engaged the plays in a critical manner that involved reflection and led to action.

Further research is needed to establish whether the link between catharsis and critical thinking presented in this study is particular to this fusion of western and African culture or whether it occurs elsewhere. Also, research about collective play-making techniques involving a wider range of cultural contexts and in a range of correctional institutions is needed to validate the emergent theory presented here and to arrive at further reformulations.

Epilogue

I continued to work with offenders at the Medium B Correction Centre until 2008. In 2007 we made a play titled *isiXazululo* [The Solution]. During the rehearsal period we explored, using Image Theatre, the offenders' racial identity. We discussed how being defined as black had affected them. I explained to them something of Genet's approach in his play *The Blacks* (1994). The play we created finally explored the relationship between racial prejudice and violence. It explored criminal violence and also traced violence through the offenders' family histories and the use of violence to maintain apartheid and earlier colonial authority. The offenders linked this use of violence to the levels of domestic violence in their family lives today. The play asked the audience to discuss how they should solve violence, "here, today, in the correction centre". The play was performed once on 13 March 2008.

It did not play through the correction centre as planned. The following day a violent incident occurred allegedly involving gang members and a member of the Forum. Levels of violence rose in the Medium B Correction Centre and brought all educational and recreational activities to a close. It appears that the gangs were involved in a struggle to reassert their control. It also seems likely that the Forum had attained the status of another gang. Rumours circulated about the involvement of some correctional staff in this power struggle. The management felt that it was no longer safe to perform plays and the theatre project stopped. Many of the offenders who had comprised the theatre group were transferred to other correctional facilities.

I have not had further access to the Medium B Correctional Centre to conduct any research to substantiate these details or to analyse the offenders' reaction to the play. This account is derived from informal conversations with ex-offenders and correctional staff. They tell me that the play had no role in provoking the violence. These accounts do, however, provide an example of the way in which collective play-making can capture dynamics that are particularly current within the offender community. It also demonstrates, as Heritage (2003:39), points out, how peripheral theatre work is to the power dynamics of the gangs and correctional system. It also


demonstrates how effective violence is as a method of closing down communication and opportunities to exercise personal choice.

The theatre work continues at the Westville Correctional Facility at the Youth Centre and Female Correctional Centre. It is not possible to track all the offenders who were involved in the plays after their release. Two of them have graduated from the University of KwaZulu-Natal. Some contact me to tell me of about their continued involvement in theatre. I meet them at various performances of plays and music concerts. They maintain an interest as consumers of culture. Some run community theatre projects and others work in the entertainment industry, occasionally appearing on television, releasing music CDs and performing in concerts. There are also some who continue to be involved in crime.

Appendix 1

Permission from the Department of Correctional Services to Conduct the Research

10/12/2001 07:27 012-3285111 CORPORATE PLANNING PAGE 03/03



**DEPARTEMENT KORREKTIEWE DIENSTE
DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONAL SERVICES**

012-307 2944

To: UNIVERSITY OF NATAL	From: DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONAL SERVICES
Attention: C H P JOHN	Ref: 8/7/1
Tel: (031) 260 1144	Date: 2001-12-03
Fax:	Enquiries: Ms J B SEBOTHOMA
	Tel: (012) 307 2942
	Fax: (012) 328 5111
	Section: CORPORATE PLANNING

Re: RESEARCH APPLICATION ON PRISON THEATRE IN KWAZULU-NATAL BY THE DRAMA AND PERFORMANCE STUDIES PROGRAM AT THE UNIVERSITY OF NATAL

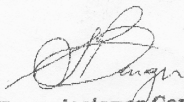
Your application to conduct research in the prisons has been approved. The Area Managers of the selected prisons for your research have been informed (as indicated on your application forms G179).

You will be informed of your internal guide when she/he is appointed. It needs mentioning that the research remains the researcher's own work and the internal guide may not be prescriptive, dictate, and be used for other tasks other than that outlined tasks in the Agreement form.

It will still be your responsibility to make arrangements for your visiting times with the Area Managers of the prisons that you have selected for your research.

It is recommended that your approval letter accompany you when visiting the prisons.

Please do not hesitate to contact this office for any enquiries.


for Commissioner Correctional Services
Director: Corporate Planning
Dr S N V Bengu

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Appendix 2

List of English Transcripts of Interviews with Members of the Audience

T1 2003 pp1-28

T2 2003 pp1- 25

T3 2003 pp 1-30

T4 2003 pp1-15

T5 2003 pp1-28

T6 2003 pp1-31

T7 2003 pp1-34

T8 2003 pp1-33

T9 2003 pp1-24

T10 2003 pp1-20

T11 2003 pp1-22

T12 2003 pp1-17

T13 2003 pp1-13

T14 2003 pp1-33

T15 2003 pp1-17

T16 2003 pp1-24

TE1 2003 pp1-27

TE2 2003 pp 1-19

TE3 2003 pp1-11

Appendix 3

List of Tape Recorded Interviews with Performers

Bhungane April 29, 2004
Chiya March 16, 2004
Dlangalala March 17,2004
Gwala March 25, 2004
Hlengwa March 31, 2004
Hlengwa June 30, 2003
Madondo March 16, 2004
Mdunge April 8, 2004
Mfeka March 29, 2004
Mpanza April 5, 2004
Mphemba March 25, 2004
Mphofu March 19, 2004
Mtambo April 8, 2004
Mthembu March 29, 2004
Ndaba March 29, 2004
Nguse April 5, 2004
Ntombela March 17,2004
Ntusi June 8, 2003
Nzuza April 7, 2004
Siyaya March 25, 2004
Siyaya H April 30, 2004

Appendix 4

Unpublished Material

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Correspondence

Bengu S.N.V.

Commissioner Correctional Services

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Mhlanga, Cont. 2008. *Re: From Chris Hurst* [An account of working with
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Ruding, Simon,

Director TiPP Centre,

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Appendix 5

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Appendix 6
Video Clips 1-20

The attached DVD contains video clips referred to in the text of this dissertation.

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