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"WE ARE USED TO IT": explorations of childhood perceptions of danger and safety in living in the Johannesburg Inner City"

University of the Witwatersrand

Thesis submitted in accordance for degree purposes in fulfillment of a Masters in Anthropology by coursework and research report

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I, ..., student number ..... am aware of plagiarism and its repercussions. This work presented is my own and all relevant sources have been acknowledged accordingly.

Signed:……..

Dated:……...

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A fence is no barrier should a child want to play on the other side

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Introduction

Locating the Child

Growing up in the inner city presents an image of childhood few think is tenable. However, in this thesis, I will argue for a conceptualisation of childhood that speaks to the urban public spaces in the Johannesburg inner city and an inner city that speaks to the a new childhood in South Africa. In 2013, I moved into a flat in the inner city, and immediately noticed the large amount of children who were living in the inner city. If, according to reports on the danger of the city, as well as scholars who have pathologised inner cities as sites of 'not-healthy' childhood, why were there so many children living there? I realised that this contradiction says something about the image of the inner city as well as the socially constructed nature of the inner city. It was this contradiction that I chose to explore in this thesis. One day, during my research, I asked Noli (one of my participants who plays at the half court basketball court on President Street) what she was scared of.

"I am not scared of anything", she said.

"What about if someone comes to steal your money?" I probed.

"I can run, can't I?" she shrugged.

This interchange encapsulates the confidence of the children whereby the children who live in the city negotiate and understands safety as well as live with a sense of entitlement and a philosophy of "we are used to it." Therefore, I have used this thesis as a platform to investigate the everyday realities of childhood in the Johannesburg inner city, not from the point of a constrained childhood but how the children understand and negotiate the possible dangers and probably safeties of the inner city. I have used danger and safety negotiation as the bridge between studies of the Johannesburg inner city and studies of a South African childhood, and as a bridge in the gap between theories on childhood and theories on the city. I investigate the ways that the children negotiate the everyday dangers in the city and develop practices of safety, and how these practices and avoidance techniques speak to the reality of living in the inner city. The Johannesburg inner city is infamous for congestion and harbouring the possibility of sudden and explosive violence. As to whether these claims of violence are disproportionate or a reality is a theme I explore in this thesis and I make a claim that the inner city offers more freedom of mobility than is expected. This mobility is a relatively simple and well practiced form of creating visibility within the pedestrian congestion of the city. These

practises of visibility, I argue, are heavily reliant on the layout of the inner city and the ways in which children understand the dangers that face them. As such, their safety practices are a complex network of sharing cautionary stories and avoidance techniques. For most children, this environment is also the only space that they know and therefore, what to outsiders might seem a dangerous, chaotic and confusing space is to the children just their everyday experience. That one experience is more valid than another speaks to the rigid constructs of what an ideal childhood is and what the reality is of growing up in different contexts. The very nature of the congested inner city offers a freedom that many suburban childhoods lack, and that the children experience an independent mobility within an infamously dangerous space speaks to the changes within the inner city that are often hidden behind the skewed opinion of many of the Johannesburg inner city.

Sandile Melema, a journalist for *City Press*, wrote in 1997 in a feature article on Johannesburg inner city, about the nostalgic memories of a time when "...toddlers would run up and down the pavements while their parents walked slowly, gazing at some article they were planning to buy" (cited in Beavon 2004: 250). He then wrote in the late 1990s that the situation of the inner city had become more like a war zone with thick burglar bars that cover all windows and complete shut-down of the streets after 5pm. He said the inner city looked more like a military fort than a place which families could use. Eighteen years later and the city as conceived of by Melema still holds strong in many South Africans' minds. This contradiction is an interesting exploration of Johannesburg inner city. The gritty streets and high-rise urban landscape of the inner city is romantically evoked in many an adult's story of living in the inner city in the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s, where children were taken to tea houses on the 10th floor of many buildings, and hidden restaurant gems were the highlight of many weekends. However, once these adults started having children, they left the city for suburban spaces. Therefore, I wanted to explore why the inner city is an attractive space for children to live today. The process was a difficult one, mainly because there is very little literature on the positives of childhood in the inner city, and only one analytical framework to begin to analyse risk assessment among children. As such, my theoretical explorations sometimes exhibit glaring holes and it is these holes in the understanding of the social nature of childhood that I wish to fill.

I worked with children ranging from the ages of six to twelve years old. I chose this age because the children are older than toddlers who are in need of constant watching. I saw these toddler-aged children in the inner city with a constant adult presence holding their hands and closely supervising their play in public space. From aged six and seven onwards, the children who live and school in the inner city begin to navigate the spaces and streets without close adult supervision. The city is an

adult designed space and 'playground' for business, trade, clubs, alcohol and partying, and therefore I did not want to focus on high school students (thirteen years and upwards) as there are much fewer perceived constraints on them. They are more able to protect themselves and navigate the complexities of the adult city. This in-between age was of most interest to me. How children, who lack a certain physical strength and understanding of the fast-paced nature of the city, are still able to constitute a childhood for themselves was what I focused on.

*

It is widely acknowledged by anthropologists that children's opinions and realities have rarely been included in texts as participants in their own right and not as only part of a larger study (James and James 2001; Hirchfield 2002; Giordano 2010). While Margret Mead's seminal text of Samoan youth, written in 1930 and 1933, wrote about children as participants in their own right, it did not foster a sustained focus on children in Anthropology and neither was it successful in pulling children from the margins of research (Hirchfield 2002: 611). Since Mead's work, children have featured in various ways over the last seventy years, ranging from the child as innocent to the child as perpetrator of crimes (Sutton-Smith 1959; Whiting 1963; Goodman 1970; Ogbu 1978; Goodwin 1990). Children have largely been seen as members of their parents' household, part of a lineage or in legitimising marriages. Children, Montgomery (2005) says, as members of a community in their own right, and not as people 'waiting to become adults' has rarely featured in anthropological texts (Burman and Reynolds 1986). From the 1980's onwards, scholars such as Allison James have attempted to break away from this side-lined view of children as 'raw material'. Children have also historically been seen as inextricably linked to home and women. As such, today, Montgomery (2005) points out, most studies of children, in an attempt to break with this stereotypical view of children, have moved out of the context of home and are often based in the context of war, famine and hardship; in other words challenging the Western idea of the ideal and safe childhood (p. 477). I break away from the pathological view of the city as a bad place and embrace viewpoints of children adapting to the built environment and creating spaces of childhood (Matthews, Limb, and Taylor: 2000).

In Jones' (1993) anthology of childhood experiences of migration, the very title of his book *Assaulting Childhood* lends itself to an already upfront pathological view of childhood, as shifting and in an 'unnatural state' if experienced in an urban space. Childhood in South Africa is fraught with apartheid imagery of oppression, violence and poverty, and Reynold's (1989) captures the oppression of childhood in apartheid as heavily reliant on their parents for security and support.

Reynold's (1989) view is of children as vulnerable, in need of constant supervision and protection. As exhibited in Reynolds (1989) and Jones (1993), children in South Africa are seen as inextricably affected and victimised by apartheid; the children who are the main participants in these studies are those who live in poverty and whose movement is highly constrained. While this is the case for many children, other children, like the children in my study, live in relatively stable conditions inasmuch as they have a house, an adult to care for them, schooling and food. Jones (1993) details the dangers that are inherent in playing in the hostel areas of Cape Town (p. 113). For the children in the hostels, play and chores becomes one and the same thing, as there is little time to separate the two. Play in the inner city, as I have witnessed, is play as an end unto itself – neither as part of a chore, or something that is out rightly educational in teaching the children skills that transfer directly to adults (Factor 2004). The children in the Johannesburg inner city are afforded the time during the day to simply play in the public spaces in the inner city. How the children achieve a sense of security while walking between places and playing in places is what I investigate. Jones' (1993) anthology on childhood experiences of migrancy looks at the state of childhood as victimised in their situation.

Historically, this idea of childhood is not incorrect as apartheid laws have largely constrained childhood practices and ensured that little happened in public spaces. Children in South African have been conceptualised either in relationship to home and mothers, or to the politics of state and the apartheid regime. In 1960, in 1976 and throughout the 1980s, children and youth played important roles in challenging the apartheid state (Hall and Henderson 2009: 11). In 1960, the Sharpville Massacre and again in 1976 with the Soweto Uprising saw children protesting apartheid policies on education and control. Young children and teenagers were beaten, shot and put in detention for protesting in public spaces, sometimes spaces in which they were not even allowed (Hall and Henderson 2009: 11). Post-1994 and the democratic government that was instated saw the media and society begin to emphasise a return to 'normal' childhood that was 'lost' during the struggle years (Hall and Henderson 2009). Hall and Henderson (2009) argue that this began because of the discomfort that children represented in engaging in the transformation of society inasmuch as their being exposed to violence and mistreatment. These young people who had taken part in the struggle were pathologised and labelled 'the lost generation' as many had forgone education in order to fight against apartheid (p. 12). A 'return to childhood' was seen as keeping children protected and out of the political eye. As such, children at home became more acceptable than children wandering freely in public spaces. I investigate the amount of children who are 'defying' this ideal of a home-based childhood and who enter the public spaces of Johannesburg inner city once again, but for different purposes.

ENTERING Johannesburg Inner City

While there has clearly been extensive writing on adults in understanding the built environment, little has been written on childhood in the city. When children are included in these writing, the view point is often that of a pathological relationship to violence, safety or health. For some, the built nature of cities offer little space for childhood exercise and the resulting obesity coupled with air pollution is seen to inhibit healthy childhood growth. For other scholars, the rate of crime and danger in the inner city does not encourage safe living. In the official Save the Children report, inner city children are seen only as those who are poor, living on the street – dirty, victims and sometimes petty criminals themselves (Guillette 2000; Hillier 2008; Samson, Morenoff and Gannon-Rowley 2002; Save the Children 2003). Little has been written about the everyday experiences of children who live in homes in the inner city, with one or two parents, in relative stability, with food and clothes and cellular phones. Matthews, Limb and Taylor (2000) attempt to break with this concept of the child as victim in the city, seeing children as embracing the urban space as their homes and the space that they love. Malose Malahlela, founder of Keleketla library (a community library at one of my research sites) says that for many of the children, the inner city is their only reality, the only place they have ever known. As such, claiming that the city is a harmful place for children obscures the intricacies and playful experiences in the inner city that children live everyday. My exploration aims to bridge the gap between theories on the city and theories on childhood.

Johannesburg inner city was the site of major colonial and apartheid segregationalist policies and practices. During Apartheid, the Group Areas Act and influx control laws which made it mandatory for all black South Africans to carry passbooks – quasi-passports that allowed for black, coloured and Indian South Africans to enter into the inner city during daylight hours, or if employed, to live close to the employment spaces (Landau 2006). No black South African was allowed to live in the inner city. However, Simone (2001) writes that from the late 1970s, even though it was still illegal because the Group Areas Acts had as yet not been abolished, black South Africans began to move into the suburbs of Hillbrow, Bertrams, Joubert Park, Berea and Yeoville. This was due mainly to the terrible housing shortage outside the city. The inner city is now, according to William, the sports co-ordinator at my second fieldwork site, a pan-African pool of people from countries all over the African continent. The children's conceptions of danger, their reaction to these ideas and how they stay safe are what I explore in this thesis.

This pan-African space is often at the centre of contestations of inner city danger. Hornberger (2011) writes that immigrants now make up the majority of inner city Johannesburg's population. The huge amount of small trading stalls allows, she argues, for a certain amount of invisibility for illegal and informal trading and entrepreneurship ventures (p. 131). With the ending of apartheid, inner city decay began and it was only in the early 2000s, with huge investment from business and individuals alike that the renewal of the inner city began. However, the discourse around the danger in the inner city remains largely intact, refuted only by those 'brave' individuals who venture in and of course those living in the city. Journalist Candice Holdsworth wrote in June 2013 that, "faced with the innocuous scene before us [referring to a walk down Albertina Sisulu, and encountering a road filled with teenagers skateboarding and having a good time], we burst out laughing — all that fearful anticipation and then to be met with something so completely harmless." She writes that there are still dangerous spaces in town, one of the most infamously so is Hillbrow. Hillbrow, part of my second research site, is known as the residential place of Nigerian immigrants who are supposedly the main drug lords and prostitution ring owners in the city and surrounds. Renowned as a "high-rise no-go area", the program Ekhaya Neighbourhood implemented in 2004 has engaged residents in Hillbrow to make the place a neighbourhood. When I entered Hillbrow in 2013, I encountered a space with tree-lined streets and much visible policing. As a volunteer policeman told me, Hillbrow is now one of the safest spaces in town. This is contrary to what many people still think, but is how the children who live in Hillbrow conceptualise of the space. The CBD has similarly undergone much rehabilitation in the form of business investment in street security and rehabilitating abandoned buildings, as well as ensuring the maintenance of public space.

Public space in South Africa has historically been highly politicised, and in the 1980s it was children and youth who were major agents of change, protesting in these highly controlled public spaces in the country (Henderson and Hall 2009: 11). Benwell (2009) says studying children's outdoor mobility in post-apartheid is important, as it challenges preconceived notions of mobility in the developing world (p. 77). In bridging the gap between theories on the city and those on childhood, I explore the routes along which the children migrate daily from home to school, to play spaces and again home, and therefore theorise on constructions of visibility as the children migrate around the city. Benwell (2009) says that the developed world has notions of childhood mobility based on a history of constraints in developing worlds. I explore alternative modes of mobility and the surveillance thereof. As Benwell (2009) argues, there are alternative understandings on childhood mobility apart from constrains as was evident during the apartheid regime. These

alternatives, I argue, afford the children a sense of visibility that also affords them a sense of security in the flux of daily lives.

In exploring these visibilities in the city, I had to investigate the role of geography in influencing how the children conceive of the safe spaces and where danger resides. Matthews and Limb (1999), in labelling this Childhood Geographies, say that land use and facilities that involve children are often different from those of adults; even when the space is shared, it is used for different purposes. The streets for adults offer a means of navigating the city and a space along which to trade; for the children a means of navigating the city in a visible and therefore safe way. Chaterjee (2005) and Matthews and Limb (1999) write that even in independent movement and play, these spaces are still adult-defined areas that have constraints and boundaries laid out by an adult. These boundaries are often those constructed by parents as to where the children are allowed to walk; but they are also constructed by the children themselves based on cautionary tales of dangerous places as passed from child to child. As such, exploring danger and safety as a means to bridge the divide between childhood and cities theory, seeing danger as a constraint in the city would be obscuring the adaptability and method of avoidance practiced by the children as a means to move independently through the city.

Indeed, many hazards that children may avoid in their day-to-day migrations through the city are, as Matthews and Limb (1999) state, not necessarily dangers that adults perceive. It was therefore an imperative that I enter into the world of children in the inner city so that I could get an emic understanding of their lives and their fears. For example, children do not fear muggers and thieves (as highlighted in my discussion with Noli at the start of this introduction) and therefore to understand how children negotiate danger and safety in the inner city my understanding of these hazards were informed by cautionary legends and walking the street with the children, as opposed to any direct experiences of danger. That direct experiences of danger in the inner city are so illusive speaks to the skewed perspective of the inner city as this site of violence when it appears not to be so. Apart from occasional muggings of adults walking at night in deserted spaces with visibly expensive goods, and the occasional bag snatchings, the petty theft present is at odds to the inner city's still present reputation as a dangerous place. Children's perceptions of danger in the inner city further speak to the change in the inner city as a space that is safe for children. In researching childhood in the city, I needed to bridge the divide between the city as a dangerous adult space and children as vulnerable small-adults needing constant protection and yet, in the Johannesburg example, contradicting this claim. It is through these definitive and practiced methods for assessing

risk, avoiding danger and practicing safety that makes this adult space a space in which children can navigate independently. More security on streets, business investment and community projects have aided in creating a landscape in which children can walk and play.

BRIDGING the Divide: Danger and Safety

The inner city space, in which the children move and interact with other people, is a shared space with adults, and even though children and adults may be exposed to the same hazards and dangers, they react to them in different ways (Matthews and Limb 1999). I use my thesis to bridge the divide between city studies and childhood studies by exploring danger and safety in two ways. I firstly look at how children practice safety in the public space as they walk and in stationary play spaces through ensuring a sense of visibility in their movements. Secondly, I look at how cautionary tales and stories of the supernatural influence the choices of where children go in town.

Chapter one focuses on visibility in the streets and squares. I use Foucault's (1975) theory of panopticism and constant visibility as a springboard for further analysis on the concept of passive but always present observation of children in the public space. The circular aspect of the panoticon is further reconceptualised in Blackford's (2004) *Playground Panopticism* where children are surrounded by a constant panopticon of mothers, who gaze at the children and further gaze at each other in assessing each others mothering techniques. I then further conceptualise this constant visibility in the inner city in the form of grid surveillance and grid supervision. I reconceptualise it so because the circular and therefore all encompassing nature of the watching is absent in the rectangular gridded layout of the inner city. The high-rise nature does not enable constant and total observation of the movement and play of the children. Therefore, I analysed this observation and surveillance of the children in terms of the layout available in the city – the grid of the streets. The grid model also offers the sense that this visibility is not total, as there are corners in which to hide and therefore still offers the possibility of dangerous incidents occurring. Both models are passive but every present.

In chapter two, I further explore how the routes along which the children walk are chosen and what factors influence these factors. I used Hyson and Bolin (1990) as a theoretical framework in understanding how children assess risk in the city. They suggest that three questions need to be asked to begin to understand how children navigate through the city: firstly, how do children interpret danger; secondly, what factors influence these interpretations; finally, are children oblivious to danger, are they normalised to danger or do they "...see a troll under every bridge"? How children

interpret danger is driven largely, I argue, through stories and legends of what happened or might happen in 'dangerous' spaces. As such, the children avoid these spaces because of stories, not necessarily because of direct experience with a dangerous incident. The everyday presence of the supernatural in a child's life is in need of daily negotiation and therefore shape the experiences of a child in public space. The children, especially in the Joubert Park/Hillbrow space of my second research site, pass around stories and legends of sometimes disproportionate danger at different places along routes which they walk. Throughout my research, very few definitive descriptions of dangerous people or places were given to me. The supernatural, I argue, becomes a discourse through which the children are able to explain the shifting, ephemeral nature of danger in the city, and guide their perceptions of dangerous and safe spaces and people. I explore these two themes in two sites in the inner city.

THE First Site

My fieldwork in Johannesburg inner city took place around two major sites. The first site was situated in Central Business District, mostly at two of Johannesburg City Parks: Ernest Oppenheimer Park and Atwell Gardens. The Ernest Oppenheimer Park is known for its half-court basketball court and mini-amphitheatre. It can be found on the corner of President and Joubert Street. In Figure A, the road bordering the basketball court is President Street, the road on the left side of the image is Albertina Sisulu. The part of Joubert Street that runs between President Street and Albertina Sisulu Street has been closed for formal street-trading areas (not visible at the bottom of the image).



Figure A: The Ernst Oppenheimer Park, showing the layout – half court basketball court, the circular roof of the amphitheater and the diagonal path connecting the gate the opens onto Albanian Sisulu Street to the gate that opens onto President street.

On the corner of Harrison and Commissioner Street, in the PC College building opposite the National Standard Bank of South Africa building, is Education Alive College – one of the most popular schools in the area. I base this observation on the huge amount of yellow and maroon uniformed children that scatter around the streets in the afternoon, fanning north and south in the CBD. Many of these yellow-maroon children scatter like ants and pass through the Ernest Oppenheimer Park, often lingering for anything from a few minutes to the whole afternoon. The park is three blocks away from my flat. It was this area that first made me interested in looking at how children move and to where they choose to go after school. One Saturday afternoon I waited in the lift foyer of my block of flats for 15 minutes for the lift to arrive. When the lift eventually arrived, it stopped on each floor, each time opening for no one to enter and making a 13-floor lift ride very, very long. Other people in the lift told me that the children in the building are to blame because they press the buttons on each floor which calls the lift to each floor. Somewhere half way up I asked out loud, "why don't they just go and play outside?" To which I was answered with shocked gasps, "they can't play outside! It is too dangerous!"

In this research study, mapping the mundane, everyday movements of the children was an important means of gathering data about how and to where the children choose to move in the city, where they choose to remain and who the children pass – people who become part of a web of surveillance, affecting the way children relate to notions of danger and safety. Many of the children with whom I worked all went to the same school, Education Alive College. Their linear route passed few street traders, except along Joubert Street. I mapped the movements of the children at the Drill Hall area as well as the children in the CBD, and their movements were largely micro in their geographical area. Micro-geographies will be discussed further. The CBD is a serious space, a business space, filled with businesses and its surveillance.

The two parks attract a lot of children everyday, as well as adults using the parks as shortcuts. Both adults and children are regular customers at the street traders stalls in the CBD. The Ernest Oppenheimer Park is part of an inner city regeneration project known as the Retail Improvement District (RID), a City Improvement District authorised by City of Johannesburg and managed privately by business and building owners in the district area. The vision of the RID is a collective effort for re-generation and the maintenance of the public space around their buildings. Johannesburg City Region F (city centre), as part of city planning, designated several formal trading zones for informal traders – Joubert Street was closed between President Street and Albertina Sisulu Street (formerly Market Street) to accommodate several traders, as was an area further north on Joubert

Street between Plein and De Villiers Street. The neighbourhood is known for these closed off street trading streets as a means, in my opinion, to carefully contain business into demarcated areas, as other such large businesses are carefully contained. Businesses in the CBD include Anglo American[1], Standard Bank, First National Bank[2], multiple storey buildings of Game[3], Jet, Woolworths and Edgars[4], Carlton Centre[5] and Small Street Mall[6], to name but a few. Included in this neighbourhood of businesses are the designated street trading areas. It is at this park that I begin to search, as I watch the children moving freely through the park, walking the streets by themselves and playing in the park without immediate adult supervision for the element that makes it safe for the children to play in certain spaces and walk along streets by themselves.

Atwell Garden's is where I was first introduced to the concept of passive surveillance, leading me to understand the way the grid of the inner city encourages visibility and supervision. The park is much bigger with a full basketball court, a mini astro-turf football field and a jungle-gym play space. The park is infamous among young adults, as a place of mugging and theft. Yet the park was filled with children everyday until as late as 6pm everyday. The CBD, apart from the two busy streets, Bree and Jeppe street in the northern part of the CBD, is a quieter part of the inner city.

THE Second Site

My second research site contained one of the main entry points in Johannesburg inner city: Noord Taxi rank. This taxi rank is infamous in the inner city, both as entry point and as a place of mugging and general crime. The space splits at the seams with people, taxis, cars, vendors, pedestrians and children, walking to and from home, school and play spaces. The cacophony of sounds creates the sense of disorder, but even in this space, there is a sense of regularity and order in which the children live.. My main site of initial interaction with children in Joubert Park/Hillbrow was at the Drill Hall on the corner of Plein and Twist Street. Drill Hall is home to Keleketla Library, as well as a branch of the Johanneburg Child Welfare (JCW) which runs an after school program called Chance to Play (See figure B).

Geographically, Joubert Park/Hillbrow consists of the Drill Hall, Noord Taxi Rank, Joubert Park (another Joburg City Park) and Hillbrow Theatre to name but a few. The whole area has a high

[1] Multinational mining company
[2] Both South African banks
[3] Home and appliance store
[4] Clothes and beauty store
[5] The inner city's tallest building and shopping centre
[6] The space of highest economic turn over in the inner city in terms of clothes sales

traffic density, both pedestrian and motor. This makes the area fairly dangerous for young children walking to and from home, school and extracurricular activities. Joubert park is a well-known park, renowned for homeless teenagers sleeping on the grass. The Drill Hall neighbourhood has a high rate of hijacked buildings with no electricity and water, according to the sports administrator at Chance to Play, William. Children who live in this neighbourhood therefore live in fragile, sensitive living conditions. Not all children come from the neighbourhood around the Drill Hall. Some walk from as far as Hillbrow, past the Hillbrow Library, to take part in the after school activities offered by the two organisations. The children apparently walk all the way there because, according to Malose Malahlela co-founder of Keleketla Library, they have a sense of ownership at Keletetla; there are specific spaces for the children only and they work with the adults in developing the space to suit their needs. I spent time with the children walking along their regular routes that they might travel everyday, and visited the spaces *they* visited. Children have once before been mobilised by Keleketla Library to explore the routes that they use to get from one place to another and the results – the ways in which the children conceptualise the spaces around them – point to new and interesting ways to understand how a child negotiates their lives in the city centre. Their map was made for the 2010 football world cup, as a means for the children to navigate their way around town when the order was going to be disrupted. I will discuss the map in the first chapter.



Figure B: The Drill Hall. The centre square is the Drill Hall square; the length of red roved buildings at the top house Keleketla Library and the length of building at the bottom house Joburg Child Welfare. (JCW) The road visible on the left is Twist Street and the road bordering the JCW buildings is Plein Street.

THE ETHICS of Methodology

Anthropological fieldwork emphasises the need for long term participant observation, and therefore, I approached the research methodologically. I spent two days a week at the Drill Hall and two days a week at the two parks in the CBD (mostly Ernest Oppenheimer Park). I spent the other three days a week, writing up field notes (that is, if I hadn't been able to finish the write up on the same day after the research) and planning the class line-up for what became my plan B in workshop based-data gathering.

I began my research process with the idea of doing story-telling drama workshops as a means for data gathering. Hendersen (2011) uses similar techniques in research on HIV among young children in the Kwa-Zulu Natal province of South Africa. Henderson (2011) and the children participating in her research create a drama piece that tells the stories used in the research. I decided to use the drama games as a means to open up communication and begin real sharing. I used the same technique at story-telling sessions at a library in 2011, with some children who used the library, and the games and stories we made were honest and creative. However, after the first two workshops, the children at the Drill Hall were not eager participants and so I decided to change my methods.

Therefore, I started giving ballet classes once a week at a dance hall in the Keleketla Buildings. The room was on the second floor of an old industrial building, with floor to ceiling windows through which dusty sunlight shone. It was through the ballet classes that I developed close relationships with a sizeable group of girls and boys who, in the times before class and after class, shared stories of growing up in the city. Some of the girls took me out into Hillbrow to see their other favourite spaces. The ballet class acted as a space for focus groups to naturally develop, where I discovered what children were fearful of – a vital theme of chapter two.

In looking at the literature on research with children, it is impossible to separate this literature from ethical methodological practices. It is important to note that many scholars note that the way to enable thorough and legitimate studies of children and *with* children, is that one needs to acknowledge children as competent social actors, able to inform studies with their own view points (Christensen and James 2000: 157). In Swart and Chawla's (2002) South African report for UN Growing up in Cities program, they observed the lives of children living in Joubert Park, Johannesburg. The theme of surveillance, while not stated outright, is pulled through this paper as well, whereby children reported that they were, especially girls, attracting the attention of adults on a whole. Swart and Chawla (2002) report that children in the western Joubert Park area felt

constrained by their physical location because of outside dangers. In 2013, with various intervention programs in this area, I was interested to see if children still feel the same way.

In Hecht's (1998) ethnography of street children in Brazil, he explores the children's connection to place and gathers his information by giving the voice recorders to the children themselves in order to interview each other. I did this as well, and as Hecht (1998) claims that this methodological tool gave him great insight into what children think is important, so too did I discover information about danger and safety that I had never yet thought of asking. I spent time playing games with the children and taking on the role of student as they taught me their games and then invited me to play with them. This enabled relationships to develop through sharing information.

The Inner City Childhood

The children with whom I worked could not conceptualise of where the dangerous spaces in town were but rather of what they are scared. Surveillance, the panopticon and gridded visibility play an important role in analysing the way children live safe/dangerous childhoods in the inner city, and the theme I explore in the first chapter. The supernatural, I argue in the second chapter, is a discourse through which children understand dangers and practices of safety. What is dangerous is spread through legends of invisible worlds, the boundaries of which are shifting and permeable. Finally, Wridt (1999) quotes Katz (1993) when saying "the notion that access to and control of space are greater for males than females is so commonplace that they remain largely unexamined" (cited in Wridt 1999: 255). This statement shows that the idea that boys are freer than girls needs to be re-examined. Throughout my research, I interacted with more girls than boys. This could have been because I represented the feminine element that their male sport co-ordinators and basketball players lacked.

The grid, so often a symbol of universal democratic order, has become a space on which to conceptualise childhood and childhood experiences in the Johannesburg inner city. That there are further influences at play on this grid is explored in this thesis. I do not see the grid as a politicised symbol or as fundamental to sovereign power as a spatial form of disciplinary rule (Blomley 2003: 131). I conceptualie of the grid as a directional flow for the children, an order which they can use to familiarise themselves with their routes and spaces in which they move. And so begins my explorations of childhood in the inner city that breaks with the socially constructed notions of childhood.

Visibility and Safety

In June 2013, I became part of the planning committee for a 1st of December, World Aids Day event that would showcase the work of the Best Life for Every Child and all of the stakeholders. Best Life for Every Child is a program commissioned by the City of Johannesburg to create a precinct between the St Mary's Cathedral and the Drill Hall. The program wants to unite and connect all the stakeholders who work within this precinct in order to strengthen existing programs that affect the lives of children. It is also a means to educate the children about support structures and organisations that are available for their use. At one of the first planning meetings that was held at the Region F (City of Johannesburg Inner City) offices in the CBD, various stakeholders gathered to begin to plan how they could showcase their work that was being done with and for children in the inner city. There were delegates from various NGO's such as Sonke Gender Justice, African Youth Development Fund, Love Life, as well as departments from government and the University of the Witwatersrand (Reproductive Health Clinic), representatives from the South African Police Services (SAPS), social workers from Jo'burg Child Welfare, and a church elder from the St Mary's Cathedral. The meeting was opened with this statement:

"We all know that the city is a dangerous place for the children to live and play in. And so we need to do what we can to make the area cleaner and more pleasant for the children."

The delegates nodded and discussions began, accepting the above statement as reality. I wondered if any of these adults actually knew what it was like to live the everyday life of a child in the inner city. While I was not discrediting their knowledge of their field, that all the delegates accepted this generalised statement that the city is a dangerous and dirty place in which the children live seemed in contradiction to the huge amounts of children still living in this supposed contaminated space where their lives were at a constant risk. Behind all the planning and the organisation for the event on the 1st of December, the philosophy appeared to be to save the children from the big bad city, with little space given to discussing the realities of life and whether these are 'bad' or just different to the types of childhood these adults may have had. The aim was to create a pocket of friendliness in a sea of apparent contamination and outright violence. In the mean time, it was portrayed that the children had little or no independent mobility, or mobility at all, free from the constant threat of danger. And yet everyday, hundreds of children walked to and from school unaccompanied by adults.

This planning meeting foregrounded the major contradiction in which I began to investigate how children live in the inner city. I noticed this contradiction early in my research. However, it took almost two months of fieldwork before the reason was revealed to me. I initially saw the children as living in a 'bubble' of safety that enabled them to walk independently through the inner city; as to how this bubble of safety was created was a mystery to me. I noticed that the children walked through the town with a sense of entitlement and a kind of security that was at odds with the claims of monumental violence and contamination present in the inner city of Johannesburg. I began to explore why this was the case by walking the streets with the children. The inner city of Johannesburg is highly congested with pedestrians and vehicles, through which children move everyday. The ways in which children migrate in the city signal an important change in the use of the city geography based on their relationship with practicing safety and avoiding danger. As the above discussion highlights, adults see the geography of the city in a certain way and it is presumed that this is the same way that children conceptualise the inner city space. I explore this contradiction as the reason why the children are able to live in a sense of security in the inner city.

FOUCAULT and Playground Panoticism

Foucault's (1975) panopticon offered an understanding of how the children navigate the contradiction of the inner city as a dangerous space and children themselves as vulnerable to the crime of the city. The panoptic prison is a circular structure, consisting of a watchtower in the centre with prison rooms surrounding the tower. The person in the watchtower is able to see into every room at the same time. The person in the prison room is not able to see whether the guard is actually watching them. Therefore, the person being watched always behaves as if they are being watched. This is an image of the panopticon view from the watchtower through to one of the prison rooms. Darkness, Foucault (1975) writes, hides, whereas visibility is a trap unto itself as it ensures that nothing can go unnoticed (p. 360). As such, it was this visibility, I discovered, that ensures that the children are able to move around town. I saw the streets of inner city Johannesburg not as the dangerous congested streets filled with too many cars and too many people, but as congested streets that offered a sense of visibility where nothing can go unnoticed. This view is contrary to many studies of children in urban settings. Similarly, I explore what both



Nuttal (2004) and Benwell (2009) suggest in studying cities and childhood mobilities: to explore other shaping agents and identities apart from Apartheid histories.

Studies of children in the inner cities around the world have seen the urban site as pathological in terms of health, violence, safety and way of life. Both Jones (1993) and Reynolds (1989) detail important trends in childhood in the late 1980s and early 1990s, in terms of constrained childhood during apartheid. However, that both detail a childhood that is polluted and unnatural if occurring in an urban setting exemplifies the bounded notion of childhood as existing only in certain settings. Childhood was seen as separate to the city, indicative, in my opinion, of ideas that still permeated many studies and reports on childhood and lends the skewed view of both inner city spaces and childhood in urban areas. Most notably in my work in the CBD and the two parks therein, Foucault's (1975) panopticon enabled me to understand the visibility and subsequent safety that the congestion of the inner city actually affords the children in the city. The prisoner in the panopticon design is on permanent display (Hope 2005: 360), just as the children on the congested streets and within parks are on permanent display. Foucault (1975) says that the panopticon is a type of surveillance that is "cost-efficient" (Vaz 1995: 35) and as I have observed, an attractive type of child-minding system that many parents in the inner city make use of. A panopticon prison requires only one inspector; therefore a city filled with inspectors makes for a space where everyone is observed and everyone observes.

The panopticon, Blackford (2004) argues, can be applied to another space other than the prison – the play ground. In her Playground Panopticon article, Blackford (2004) reconceptualises the panopticon. In the panopticon design, the periphery ring ensures that one is always seen without ever seeing; "in the central tower, one sees everything without ever being seen" (Foucault 1975). Blackford's (2004) model takes this method of surveillance to the playground. Children on a playground, she argues, are subject to constant albeit passive surveillance; not perfect but also enabling independent mobility. The manipulation of public space was a central controlling factor during the apartheid years and thus still influences, according to Benwell (2009), how people relate to public space in South Africa. However, the panopticon model is a new way through which one can understand the shaping agents of a child's life in the inner city. Now that the apartheid laws of influx control are absent, anyone is allowed to move freely through the previous white-only areas, including children. However, as some adults feel that children still need supervision and control in public spaces in the inner city, playground panopticon allows for a model of such surveillance.

Blackford (2004) compares the surveillance found in the panoptic styles of prisons and Foucault's theory on Panopticism to the way in which children are watched while playing in public space. She says, "unlike Foucault's panopticism of the prison, the panoptic force of the mothers around the suburban play ground becomes a community that gazes at the children…" (Blackford 2004: 226). I thus saw that the congested nature of the inner city acts as a community that gazes at the children. The panoptic gaze keeps children well-behaved as they know that they are being watched and so they enforce this behaviour upon themselves. Most importantly, I used Blackford's (2004) concept to understand that the adults gaze at each other as well, ensuring that no other adults harms a child and that the other adults are doing their part in watching over the children. The circular nature of the playground and the mothers who stand in a circle around the children on the playground, not only watch their children but also watch each other to assess parenting skills, in the same way that adults in the inner city watch other adults ensuring that all play a role in supervising the children.

However, both Foucault (1975) and Blackford (2004) construct their arguments premised on the nature of the panoptic surveillance as circular, and the visibility with which I was working with was square and rectangular; a grid layout of city streets, blocks and squares. Therefore, in order to apply this means of visibility in the inner city, I reconceptualised the playground panopticon model to Grid Surveillance and Grid Supervision. Both models are based on the idea of the panopticon and constant, passive watching. However, whereas the circular nature of the panopticon allows for no invisibility, the grid had corners in which totally visibility slips and the children enter obscurity. Just as a grid offers corners in which people can become invisible, so too the children occasionally slip off the grid of visibility as they migrate around the city. It is once again in this contradiction of totally visibility and yet also obscurity that the children migrate in town and what I explore in this chapter.

One more theory that I have incorporated into the understanding of visibility in the inner city is Kiser, Bennett and Brubaker's (2007) *collective socialisation.* Collective socialisation implies interaction and the relationships that developed between adults and youth in the neighbourhood (p. 56). It refers further to the ways in which adults become role models, not necessarily to their own children but to other young people whom they see in the public spaces of the neighbourhood and whom they influence in positive ways (in this case I am not looking at the negative affect that adults may have on children). Collective socialisation in the Johannesburg inner city takes the form of the saying "your child is my child". This notion encourages childhood mobility and play to become a social process as it encourages older children and adults to watch over children playing in spaces in

the city. Collective socialisation becomes the principle that manifests safety in the new types of visibility practiced by the children – grid surveillance and grid supervision.

GRID Surveillance

The origin of the grid as a form of city planning has been challenged by scholars as supposedly being a symbol of "universal democratic ethos" (Rose-Redwood 2008: 51). The grid is, according to Blomley (2003), fundamental to sovereign power as a spatial form of disciplinary rule (p. 131). The grid, in the lives of children in the inner city, plays the role of ordering the space through which the children move and creating a path of visibility in the city. The younger children at the Drill hall navigate according to streets: "jump one, two, jump another street, turn left and on the corner is my house", a young boy called Moussa told me when I asked him how to get to his home. The grid, the fact that Moussa crosses over three streets (none of the names which he knows), turns right at the fourth and sees his house on the corner shows the ordering, directing nature of the grid. That the Drill Hall square is contained within four streets, in a block in the grid, is also indicative of the ways in which children make space within the grid. In some spaces the children are welcome, in others not. The two parks in the CBD are also contained within the grid. That the children are guided by the grid and that their play spaces are contained within blocks and squares in the grid points towards the grid as an ordering design in the ability of children to practice security. The grid, the streets, are open public spaces that allow for visibility for the children, for grid surveillance. This surveillance is neither there nor absent, is what McKenzie called Passive Surveillance.

The order of the grid came to explain how the children create visibility and therefore practice safety in the inner city. I was first introduced to this idea at a meeting on building and housing in the inner city, I struck up a conversation with a gentleman who turned out to be an architect and a consultant on town planning and building related issues for the Gauteng Legislature – a Mr Brian McKechnie. The usual formalities led into a conversation about the new park which has been built in Newtown, to the west of the CBD. He ranted that the park would be a failure, "…because what parents are going to send their children to a park that is next to largely devoid-of-people train tracks, the underbelly of a highway and nearby to a taxi rank?!" I had to agree with him on that point, as it was, in my opinion, laid out to service the children who live in the Brickfields Housing developments in Newtown. What I felt the planners of this park had failed to take into account is that inside each of these housing developments (entry controlled through a boom and pedestrian gate) is a

mini playground of sorts, able to be watched over by all the residents living in the flats surrounding each play ground.

"Take Atwell Gardens for example", McKechnie told me, "while it is filthy and generally not nice, the hawkers around the park can watch over the park and shout at people if they do something wrong."

He gave me the answer to my question about how the children move freely around town; he was suggesting that street traders had something to do with this. Atwell Gardens is a park I nicknamed Poop Park, because it was filled with human excrement as well as litter. This park can be found on the corner of Plein and Joubert Street, five roads up from the half court park, also in the Central *Business* District and opposite Park Station. The start of Joubert Street bordering Atwell Gardens (between Plein and De Villiers Street) is also a closed off section for street traders. This section however is littered with rubbish from the day's trade, which has blown into the park and lies trapped and limp in heaps in the park. This park is much larger that the half court Park, with an mini astroturf football field, a full basketball court and two areas of jungle gym play space. The children there are appeared to be much more cautious of adults and didn't speak or interact with them. Whereas the children at the half court basketball court are quite comfortable and know many of the adults who walk through the park, the children at Atwell Gardens kept to themselves. Poop park contains adults who linger for long periods in the park, whereas adults tend to walk through the half court park, leaving the space in which children can play.

Some of the basketballers who play at the half court are part of a team called InCity Basketball. Twice a week they train at the full court at Atwell Gardens. At one of the training sessions, the coach was cross with a player who had not come to practice for some time. The player explained to the coach that he finished work late, when it was already getting dark. Afterwards, while I was walking back from the park with some of the basketballers, I asked the latecomer why he doesn't just join the team for the last of the training at around 6pm.

"No way, its dark then! Do you think I will come here alone at that time?"

I initially left it at that, until I was talking to another basketballer. I said that I wasn't just going to go to Atwell Gardens when the basketballers went there; I wanted to see it on other days.

"No, really don't do that."

"Why?" I asked, wondering why he was suddenly worried about me, as I go everywhere in the city by myself and I feel perfectly safe.

"You saw how Tee wouldn't go there by himself when it is dark? That place isn't safe. Rather go there when you are with us."

This baffled me. I understand it is a particularly dangerous place, or so these basketballers perceive it to be. They are not physically subordinate either. At over 6f tall, and strong and fit, these men should be the ones who walk through any area in the city with no fear. And as dangerous as they make that park out to be, there were and still are flocks of children who play right up until 6pm everyday. Why, I kept on asking.

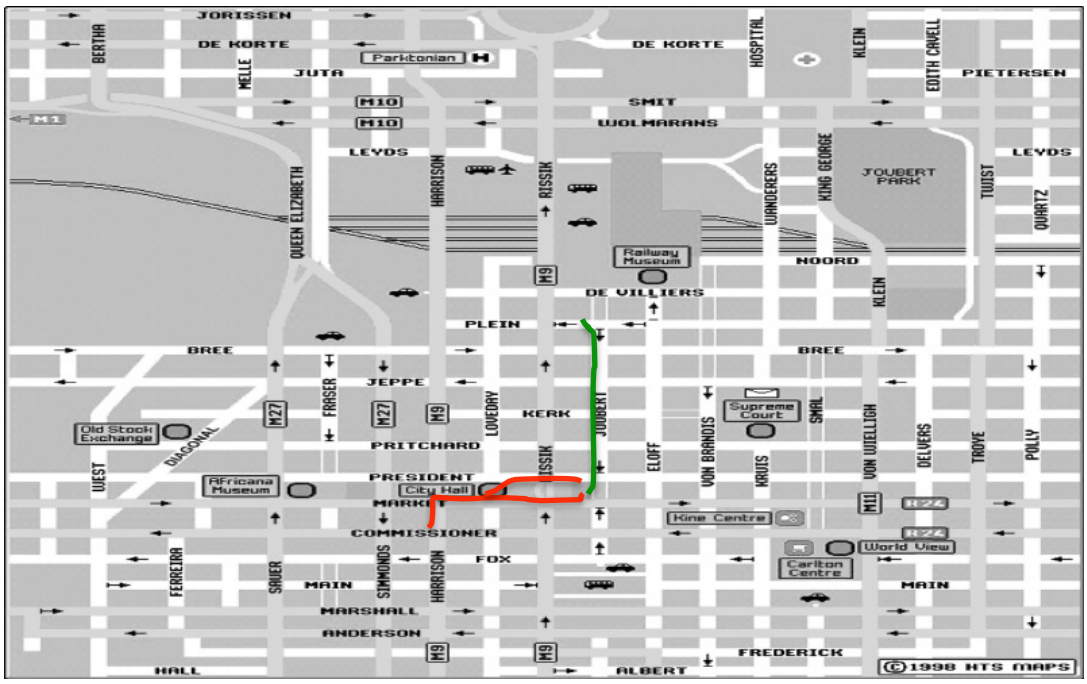
Passive surveillance is apparently the answer and it is into this type of city that the children are socialised and that affects their relationship with the environment – a relationship of entitlement to independent movement and play. Brian McKechnie, the consultant for the Gauteng Legislature, says this is what designates a place safe for children – where there is enough passive surveillance, enough people who can watch over the children and see if anything happens to them. This explained my initial observation of the children occupying a parallel space in the city, one where they are actually quite well protected. The panoptic gaze "automatises and dis-individualises power", and according to Foucault (1975) it does not matter who exercises this power, as long as there is the knowledge that *someone* is exercising the power. The passive surveillance happens on straight lines, in a grid pattern, something that I realised did not fit into the Foucault's panopticon model and therefore needed reconceptualising. I realised that the street traders who spread out along the streets formed the eyes of surveillance along which the children walk and therefore, their grid patterning became the model of surveillance which I used to understand the visibility of children in the city.

One street trader on Joubert Street, at the half court park, told me,

"We get to know the children who play in the place [where we trade] and streets. That way we will notice if someone takes them away or something happens to them."

Houses have historically been the locale of the parents and parental supervision. The street was seen outside of the control of parents and their teachings of appropriate ways to behave (Henderson 1999). In her ethnography of constructions of landscapes in a settlement in Cape Town, Henderson (1999) states that children while ideally kept in the house and kept safe, are often sent outside as houses can be over crowded at time. Her work focused on informal/township living and while the

inner city of Johannesburg is a different setting, that children are often encouraged to spend time outside due to cramped living conditions in flats speaks to Henderson's (1999) work. Children exhibit different and adaptive means using public space in a way that speaks to the new ways that children learn how to stay safe in the city. The children in my research develop a kind of network for themselves that ensures they don't slip into invisibility and thus into possible danger. The visibility along the grid patterns of the inner city roads offers an ordered pattern of mobility that the children use. Surveillance implies an observation not quite present but never absent, a space along which the children can move with autonomy and independence. One of the routes on the grid along which the children in the CBD walk is from Education Alive College to the Ernest Oppenehimer Park or Atwell Gardens. The red line shows the walk from Noli's school, Education Alive, to the Ernest Oppeneheimer Park. The green lines shows the route from Ernest Oppenheimer Park up Joubert Street to Atwell Gardens.



Noli became my main participant in the CBD, as she was known as the child who socialised with adults. She would wait patiently for each of my visits and if I was late, she would shout at me. She was the youngest of all of my participants in the whole CBD but at the same time the most grown-up. She lived with her mom, her little brother and her mom's sister in a shared house in Turftonein, just south of the CBD. They used to live in a flat on Bree street, just four blocks up from the market. The market, as pictured in Figure B in the introduction, is where Noli's mom sells beaded clothes and jewellery. Noli's mom tells me that sharing a flat with other people while trying to raise two children was tricky, and so a year ago they left and moved into the house with her sister. Noli told

me that when she turned seven she would be able to walk to and from school by herself. When I met her, a confident girl who knows all of the basketballers by name, she was six and so her mom would walk her to school and walk back to the park with her. Once there, Noli was allowed to play freely in the park and the market area, but had strict instructions to go no further. She tells me that she doesn't know the route along which she walks but when she turns seven, she will learn the route and walk it herself. Along Harrison Street, outside the school, the pavement is lined with shop fronts which open onto the street and street traders selling crisps, coloured popcorn, called kipkip, and chewing gum, three food items coveted by the children. A street trader outside the school says that he doesn't like the children as they steal things; however, the children stream past him and buy his wares and so while the children may be perceived as a menace, they are good for business. These interactions serves as markers, points of observation along the grid that act as passive surveillance as the children migrate daily. Even if the children are not liked, they are watched over.

It must be noted that this visibility is not total, and the children are sometime careless in crossing the road, or slip into the corners in which danger can hide. This is why I could not apply the panoptic surveillance unproblematically to my research site, as my site still offers occasions for invisibility. However, the children counter this possibility of invisibility through familiarising themselves with their surroundings by walking along the same route everyday. This regular and repeated movement in the same area at the same time every day serves two purposes in enabling the children to practice safety in the inner city. The first is that it enables the children to familiarise themselves with their surroundings and notice something new on the grid of streets. The second came about the one afternoon when I asked the Hillbrow girls to show me more of the areas that they visit in Joubert Park. I met then outside Afro Kombs College, their school near the Drill Hall, and they took me walking. We began at a shopping centre on the northerly side of Noord Taxi rank called Central Shopping Centre. Once we had walked through the shopping centre, we exited out the back entrance and continued walking along what appears to have been a road that was closed off for pedestrians (part of de Villiers Street). We walked in a westerly direction, away from the Drill Hall. Angela said that she loves the mall on Small Street.

"But I am scared of going there alone, I am scared I will get lost."

At first I think she is referring to something like kidnapping and I became excited.

"Get lost? How do you get lost? Tell me more about the Small Street Market."

"There are a lot of people, and I won't know where I am." Anisa chirps in and agrees.

Angela gave me a revelation in how children live in the city – while obvious factors of danger and keeping safe, such as don't talk to strangers or get into a strangers car, define a child's life in the inner city, the thing that Angela and Anisa, and some of the young children like Yvette and Moussa fear the most, is geographically getting lost in the city and not knowing where they were in relation to their home. Wridt (1999) quotes scholar Lucy Mitchell when she says "…children learn from geography through their own experiences in their everyday environments" (p. 253). The highly congested nature of the city is often seen as a direct threat to children; these strangers seen as leering adults waiting to prey on the unaccompanied child. However, the first worry that I ever heard the children state directly was disorientation; until then they had not expressed any real and defined fear in the city. Within the grid surveillance, that the children fear getting lost shows that the sense of security slips when the children are not in their regular places or walking along their regular routes. And so it is through their experiences with the everyday fabric of the city that they learn about their local geographies – where they are comfortable to venture into, and what situations frighten them.

The children were scared of getting lost, and this claim is supported by Reynold's (1989) study of children in Crossroad, Cape Town. She accompanied children on walks around their neighbourhood, and from stories they told her of favourite places, she had them construct maps of their neighbourhood. Her findings stated that the children saw their world as "closely bounded", with little acknowledgement or regard for anything outside of their immediate environment (p. 96). The repeated migration along the same grids, not only creates familiarity for the children, it also foregrounds, as Reynold's (1989) claims, a disregard for anything outside of their known spaces. In an attempt to break with the constrained, heteronormative view of how children use public space, many scholars write about how children explore and wonder around spaces and discover new, informal play spaces, thus breaking out of the constraint of boundaries (Factor 2004). However, the children, in creating a secure space in which they can walk independently in the city, have little inclination to wander off their beaten track. On their beaten grid track, they familiarise themselves with landmarks and people along the grid.

Malahlela, from Keleketla, speaks to the same observation of children walking familiar routes and states that children navigate their way with landmarks rather than street names or distance. During the 2010 Fifa Soccer World Cup, Keleketla Library and groups of children worked together on a project to make a map showing the safe places to which a child can go in case one gets lost or injured or is in trouble. Malahlela says that when there is a marked increase in congestion the children loose

their direction. Even in spaces that are familiar to children, Malahlela argues, the children might still get disorientated. While it supports Angela's fear that she will get lost in congested spaces, it shows that even regular, repeated routes are not fool-proof in ensuring constant security. Within areas of high congestion not familiar to the children, the safety of visibility slips and the children once again enter obscurity. In mapping the routes the children walked in town, Malahlela said that they saw the children using landmarks to make their way through town. Indeed, something like a Spar or knowing street traders along a certain route can act as landmarks in navigating one's way to and from home, school and play spaces. The grid provides space on which these landmarks can act as markers along the routes for the children. These linear paths also provide spaces along which shop fronts open onto as well as spaces on which street traders set up stalls. Therefore these linear paths direct the children along these spaces inhabited by adults who bare witness to the children's everyday migrations.

Geographers maintain that when spaces in a grid are given abstract numbers, spaces are abstract to the people who use the space. However, when spaces are named, the spaces within the grid approach 'place', spaces with meaning (Rose-Redwood 2008: 53). Banks (2010) agrees with the importance of place that dictates the way a person behaves,

> Physically, a place is a space which is invested in understanding of behavioural appropriateness, cultural expectation and so forth. We are located in space but we act in place…it is a sense of place not space that makes it appropriate to dance at a…concert, but not at the…high table; to be naked in the bedroom but not in the street…place not space frames appropriate behaviour

The grid offers a means for children to walk independently through the inner city, as well as remaining in one place for a long period. I have called this long-term stationary observation, Grid Supervision.

GRID Supervision

At the Ernest Oppenheimer Park in the CBD, there is a half court basketball court, where young men and woman meet every afternoon to play basketball. The court is Noli's play space. She is a young, clever and very confident (sometimes bordering on cheeky) six-year-old.

One day while chatting to Noli (when I tell her not to mess up my hair), she warns "I will fight you!"

"Hey, hey, hey", one of the basketballers sitting on the benches cautions. I assure him it is fine but he says even if it is just playing, one day it might become real. At another time, a basketballer tells

me that I must not let her speak to me as she does, because she shows no respect and it is up to us (the adults in her space of socialisation) to teach her better. Your child is my child, he reminds me.

Within stationary spaces, I observed a greater capacity for child-adult interaction and therefore a deeper sense of being watched. I named this 'supervision' because it denotes someone watching over another in the interest of the others security. It represents a greater sense of active watching than the constant moving surveillance wherein children can more easily slip off the surveillance radar. Within stationary gridded spaces, Blackford's (2004) *Playground Panopticism* is practiced. As stated earlier, I reconceptualise her model of surveillance to suit the gridded layout of the street on which the children walk. In the play spaces within the grid, there is more possibility for the circular watching to take place. However, the supervision is still structured around the grid. At the Ernest Oppenheimer Park, the supervision happens along the one side of the park in the street trading market. At the Atwell gardens, the supervision is once again in the closed off street trading area along the side of the park on Joubert Street, as well as along the two lengths of the park along which informal traders, barbers and taxi drivers sit and/or sell their services. For many of the children, there is no adult telling them where to play, yet they remain within these gridded spaces

Noli spends every weekday afternoon at the Ernest Oppenheimer Park. When I first met her I was intrigued as to why this six-year-old was wondering around a basketball court with no sign of some guardian. Neither did she live close by, like other children who sometimes played with Noli. As I got to know her more, I met her mother who rents a street trading stall and began to understand that her mother had clearly laid down a set of parameters for where Noli can move and when she can't move, in fear of a hiding should Noli break any of these rules. For the children with whom I worked, a beating was used to refer to a smack, a punch, a hiding or an actual beating. So as to whether Noli means one of the above, or whether the threat is enough, she stays in the basketball court, occasionally the KFC on the opposite corner of Joubert and President Street (to buy ice-creams) and the public toilets (just next to the courts and still in the park). Foucault (1975) writes,

> He who is subjected to a field of visibility, and who knows it, assumes responsibility for the constraints of power; he makes them play spontaneously upon himself; he inscribes in himself the power relation in which he simultaneously plays both roles; he becomes the principle of his own subjection.

Thus Noli became her own monitor, keeping herself in check because she knew that her mother was watching her. Grid supervision is still passive but there is a more earnest observation of the children, and as the above foregrounds, a sense of boundaries which the children maintain themselves. A few weeks after meeting Noli, I met another little boy called Jayson. While Noli's

mom worked close by and could watch over her daughter occasionally, Jayson's mom worked somewhere in a hair salon, close by but behind closed doors. At age six, it appeared at first glance, to be a very young age at which to wander around the park filled with ever changing people. However, the playground panopticon/grid supervision model for understanding children's methods for creating visibility and thus security, underlies the reason why children are able to play independently within the grid. The grid creates a sense of order that subsequently enables children to order their means for practicing security.

The ordered business in the CBD gives way to seemingly unordered chaos in the Joubert Park and Hillbrow areas. The concept of playground panopticism can be applied to the Drill Hall square and the Joubert Park . Every Wednesday afternoon from noon until 2pm, a group of aged eight to ten years old children come to the Drill Hall square to play games. The square is almost exclusively claimed by children from Afro Kombs College. These few young children are from Teach to Pass, play together and rarely interact with the other children on the square. For the two hours of play time, their two teachers watch over the children. The children, some of the youngest I worked with in this part of the city, loved that I was interested in their games and lives, as they were generally ignored on the square. They showed me the routes they use to get from school to home and also gave me a sense of the independence even younger children have when crossing the road. The children's homes bordered the square, with one little boy walking two blocks north to get to his home. The older children tend to explore wider geographical spaces and this is how they discovered their favourite space within the grid. Joubert Park is a Jo'burg City Park run public green space. The park, as can be seen in Figure 1.2, is further up Twist Street, the north bordering on Wolmeraan Street and the south on Noord Street. While I walked with the girls to their flats, they conspired between themselves to take me to a "great place". The conspiracy began as we walked south along Edith Cavel Street, away from Vuyokazi's flat, towards the Drill Hall. The road terminates on Wolmarans street and Joubert Park.

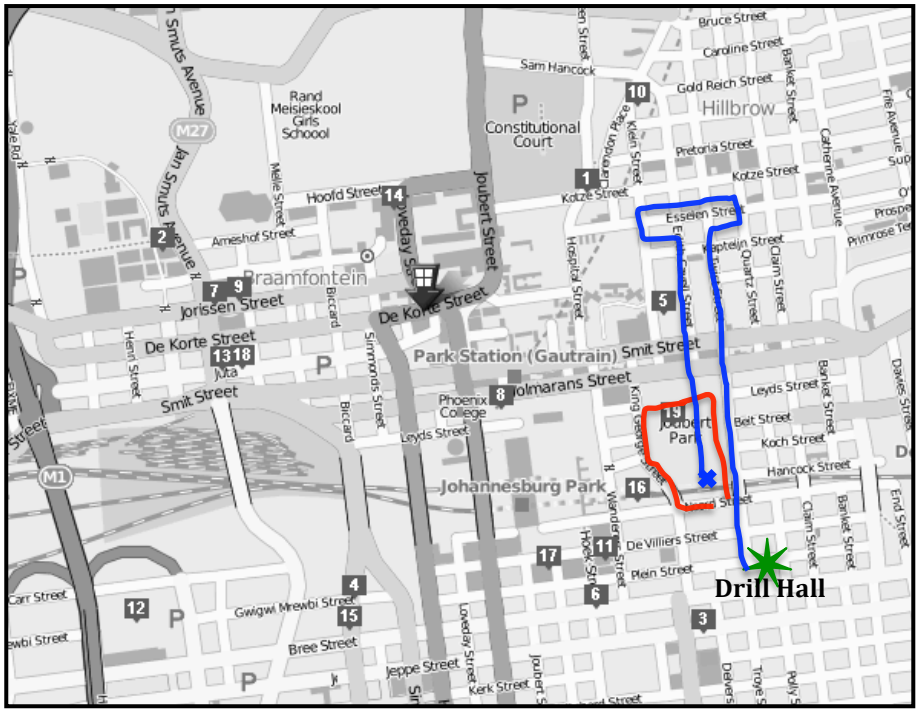


Fig 1.1: blue route shows the Hillbrow walk route; blue cross JAG

We entered through one of many pedestrian gates and into a huge chess area. And old man was moving giant chess pieces around a chess board painted on the concrete, while others sit two deep and watched in silence. Tables stretch on either side with table chess sets and crowds of people lean over and watch. Angela reminds me that she is a good chess player and has travelled for competitions.

"We don't come here that much, there are a lot of rules", Angela tell me, "like you can't wear your school uniform here."

"The security chase you away if you are in your school uniform…", Anisa says, pointing to the children playing in a "13 and under only" play ground on the west of the park.

"I was once kicked off there", I tell the three girls, and I tell them about the time the security guard chased me off the jungle gym because I was older than 13.

"Agggggg, it's not right, its racism", says Anisa. Then she is silent for a while, "no that's not right…"

"Isn't it..?" Angela wonders.

"Sexism?" Vuyokazi suggests.

“Ya, sexism”, Angela says.

“It’s sexism!” Anisa agrees

The seriousness in which the children address the fact that I was not allowed to play on the jungle gym was in my opinion indicative of them questioning rules that they do not like; this therefore speaks to both social/cultural and the inner physiological experiences of space that Moore and Young (1978) discuss as a means through which children develop relationships with space. Moore and Young (1978) suggest that children’s everyday environmental interactions are shaped by three overlapping experiences: physical space/landscape; social/cultural space; and inner psychological space (cited in Wridt 1999: 253). For the Hillbrow girls, their physical experience of space and landscape was affected by the social implication of the space and was therefore not indicative for a long-term relationship with this space. We didn’t linger long. The children continued to lead me through the park.

As we walked along the path and then into the parking area of a hulking building in the south of the park; the children suddenly ran into the great hulking building, which they shouted to me over their shoulders was the Johannesburg Art Gallery (JAG). A serious adult building, and into this space the chaotic sticky sweet fingered children ran. I was worried: I didn’t know how I was going to convince the security that I was going to lead four young excited children through an art gallery. But by the time I reached the security gate, it is open, and the children were introducing me as their teacher. I greeted the security guard and started to explain who were are but the children called me in, “come, come, come”.

“Don’t touch and don’t make a noise”, one of the girls wagged her finger at me. So began our tour of the space. They exhibiteded the embodied power of being watched and therefore behaved in a ‘correct’ manner, a kind of playground panopticon as discussed in Blackford (2004) and Foucault (1975). They had come here before and I could sense a feeling of familiarity in their movement and the way they walked about the space and looked at the art works, commenting on the one installation where tiny repeated words had been used to create an image. Four faces peered close to the painting but glanced down to make sure that their toes didn’t cross over the line parallel to the wall – a line used to demarkate how close to the painting a person can get. Or possibly, specifically put there for the children who visited the gallery, because there were lots of children who filtered in and out of the gallery over the days that we visited the space. The Hillbrow girls continuously reminded me not to touch, acting as the watchers. I became the one being watched and behaving in an appropriate

manner. As such, the self-imposed barriers that Foucault (1975) discusses are imposed and maintained in the art gallery. When we finished the tour, I told the shop assistant that the children are very knowledgeable about the artwork and the space, and she answered that they visited here often enough and therefore she is not at all surprised. And so ended my tour of an adult dominated space of art, colonised by a small group of children.

On the Bodyguard and Micro-Scale Gazing

Grid supervision works on two levels: the macro level as discussed above. It also works on a micro level, as is the case with the Joubert street traders area, next to Ernest Oppenheimer Park, where Noli's mom works in selling beaded hats, shoes and skirts. Almost every time I met with Noli, she was lording over her basketball court. Very occasionally she could be found sitting in a circle of adults – her mom and her mothers friends, listening intently and laughing with the adults as they gossiped about the day. When she would see me approaching she would run towards me, stopping quickly and frisking my pants to find out if I had brought my phone so that she could, "shoot people", referring to taking pictures

The days I saw her sitting in the street trading section were the days where there were no basketballers on the court and when all the children had gone home. Noli would see me walking towards her and would take off at a sprint, side stepping pedestrians and taking a short cut through the hair shaving stall. We would walk to her mother's stall and her three year old brother Neo would greet me with, "I am fine thanks." I would sit on an upturned box behind the street trading stalls. The street trading area is organised chaos, with double-sided stalls running down the centre of the the space. A second row runs along the fence that borders the park. The children of the owners of the stalls hang around their parents on some days, dribbling footballs up and down the walk ways. Further up Joubert Street, there are a few more stalls that have spilled out from this covered closed off area, and the children sit with their feet dangling off the edge of the pavement and play card games.

On the day that I am sitting with the children and the other street traders, a man walks through the stalls to greet Noli's mother.

"This is my body guard', Noli's mother tells me.

"Makwerekwere[7]!" Noli shouts.

He grabs her wrist and pretends to twist it. She shouts dramatically.

"Save me", she implores and holds her caught wrist up towards me. Everyone laughs.

"They don't love me anymore, now I have no one to cook for me", he sighs.

"He used to live with me and my sister", Noli's mom tells me..

"Now he is my body guard."

Bodyguard is an interesting term which Noli's mother uses to describe the panoptic surveillance within the street trading area. Studies on the panopticon has emphasised that it should not be taken literally but as a metaphor for surveillance, with the emphasis being on the dynamics of power relationships (Dobson and Fisher 2007: 307). Within the reconceptualised model of grid supervision, the power relations of a bodyguards imply even closer observation of a particular child. The geographical metamorphosis of the panoticon type surveillance is of one towards mutual observation for the benefit of another as opposed to simple control.

While still sitting with Noli's mom and brother, an older woman pops in to say help.

"Gogo, hello gogo!" Noli exclaims and waves. It isn't her real grandmother but another one of Noli's mom's body guards. At this point I notice that Neo has wandered off and I anxiously ask after him.

"What can I do, I can't stop him from walking around, but I have my body guards all around who will watch him and make sure he doesn't go far or into the road."

There I saw the panopticism of grid supervision in micro-scale. Obviously not everyone was her designated body guard, only the women with whom Noli's mom was friends, who knew the children and, most importantly in Neo's case, whom the children knew. In letting another watch over your child with such trust that they will do what you deem as best for your child (even in the case of the basketballers who consider Noli as their child and responsibility) means that the mother needs to be less possessive of their child than a mother who is with their child at all times. This is different to Blackford's (2004) analysis of the panoptic surveillance by mothers in playgrounds where the surveillance is a thinly veiled possessive competition between mothers in comparing who's child is

[7] An often derogatory term for foreigner from another African country; in this case used as a nickname

best and maintaining constant contact with their children (p. 239). In the panoptic surveillance on the playgrounds in America, Blackford (2004) states that, "the playground becomes a space in which…parenting requirements are performed, contested and reified by the community" (p. 239). In the case of the panoptic city fort, and more specifically the micro fort of the street traders section on Joubert Street, parenting requirements are not so much performed as actually part of the community requirements to look after a child.

In this way, while children are watched, protected and admonished by all adults, they appear to have a lot more freedom to develop their own games and their own elaborate schemes of sharing and turn-taking without the interventions of adults, who only intervene when the children are in danger or are disrespecting someone. For example, I have noticed here at the half court, at on the Drill Hall square, that the children will, without reminder and without any fuss, happily share their food with other children. This is not to say that parents have not told their children to share. But left to their own devices, the children still willingly share their R1 bags of coloured popcorn called kipkip deciding how many kernels each child gets, which colours and how often one can ask. In other words without constant adult supervision, the children learn to sort out their own problems between themselves. As Blackford (2004) states, it is obvious upon watching children play, they the children have a clear sense of what they think is fair, without the parent confirming or opposing this in anyway (p. 240). This too is clear in the way the children play in both the half court park and Atwell Gardens. While I believe that the surveillance is directed mostly towards naughty adults who might harm the children, this allows the children to develop their own methods for dealing with childhood conflict, without the surveillance and sometimes interference from adults, something Blackford (2004) says is evident when children play in public spaces where there are few adults.

SURVEYING the Future

This chapter has shown that not only is what it means to be a child a socially constructed category dependent on the social and built environment in which they grow up; similarly the people who are labeled as caregivers are equally socially constructed and roles are dynamic in as much as they allow many different people to play the role of child-rearers. It is therefore my view that it is the location as much as the people within the location which determines the way in which childhood is lived. This childhood of relative independence of mobility is made possible by passive grid surveillance and grid supervision in the inner city. I argue that children experience a different if not greater sense

of freedom that the constantly watched playtime that children in suburban areas experience, such as detailed in Benwell (2009).

The children "…assume responsibility for the constraints of power…he becomes the principle of his own subjection" (Foucault 1975: PAGE). In other words within this visibility – this grid surveillance and supervision, the child enforces and reinforces their own boundaries of movement and play, thus acting as their own supervisors as well. The spaces of place that were prominent in the after school lives of the children in the inner city were adult –defined and created spaces, and neatly laid out. The linear grids on which the children walk every day – straight down the hill from Hillbrow to their play space, right angles from school to play spaces – mixes childhood and adulthood. These spaces of mixing create a visibility that both endangers and protects the children in the inner city. The notion is an ephemeral shifting idea that no one with whom I spoke and interacted can accurately describe. This, I hypothesize, is precisely why the children are granted so much freedom to migrate independently throughout the city; because there are no definitive reports of violence against children in the inner city no definitive descriptions of what perpetrators may look like, there is no conclusive need to fear public space in the city, on both adult and child accounts. Children will play (and walk) wherever adults do or don't go (Factor 2004: 150). That children have had to adapt to the way the city is design, shows a lack of, as Hall and Henderson (2009) the inclusion of children and their opinions in planning is absent. Children have adapted the grid to ensure visibility as they walk along the grid and play within the grid. That there are still spaces of obscurity highlights a need for better planning and better education in using the public space. However, the children have taken it upon themselves to create an informal education network for themselves to educate subsequent children about danger and safety in the inner city.

This collective socialisation of adults and children renders for many children and parents the area safe; there are constant albeit silent witnesses to the everyday play of their children and therefore extra eyes to watch over the children. According to Foucault's article on the panopticon prison, this constant visibility, "induce[s]…a state of conscious and permanent visibility that assures the automatic functioning of power" (Foucault 1975: 6). It is this visibility that I believe is a primary function in keeping children protected. Collective socialisation is widely prevalent in the inner city, between the adults – who take the forms of informal street traders and shop owners – and children – who live, school and play in the various public places in the CBD. Collective socialisation in the inner city precludes the interaction of high amounts of adults and children in one space, opening up avenues of co-operation or conflict, and most importantly, visibility.

The Supernatural and Dirt

Some of the younger children from the school called Teach to Pass, once told a cautionary tale to me when we were discussing what was dangerous. Satan lives in bathrooms. I only understood the implications of such a statement when it became evident that the supernatural plays an important role in dictating to the children where the safe spaces are in the city.

"Satan and vampires", Aisha tells me, "Satan he eats your neck just like that and you see blood coming from the bathroom".

"Satan is a vampire and lives in toilets", Nel tells me, "my sister was once in the bathroom and she told me that blood was running under the door." This cautionary tale warns young children not to go into unknown toilets on their own. While this speaks to general toilet fear, it ensures that the children will not go into public toilets, a site, as I will discuss bellow, that is rife with not only crime but legends and fear.

The previous chapter explored the physical movements of the children around town and how they used the visibility and the many eyes in the inner city to ensure a sense of security as they walked from home, to school, to play spaces and home again. This chapter investigates *how* some of these routes are chosen and what legends or real experiences of danger act as shaping agents in enabling the children to practice safety. Matthews and Limb (1999) refer to hazards that affect a child's life, dangers that might frighten a child but that may not be relevant at a later stage. This space in which the children move and interact with other people is a shared space with adults and even though children and adults may be exposed to the same hazards and dangers, they react to them in different ways (Matthews and Limb 1999). In this chapter, I explore how the children assess risky situations, and I discover that danger and its opposite, safety, is an ever-shifting world of invisibility and visibility.

Sociological research views risk is a social construct; risk and the theorising thereof should be contextualized in the social environment in which it is found and in conjunction with public discourses and socio-economic circumstances of the specific location of the research (Simpson 1996: 453). Simpson (1996) says that while objective danger exists, perceptions of danger are rarely derived from 'real' observation of the surrounding world, leaving room for socially constructed beliefs" (p. 549). The children in the inner city oscillate between danger as perceived from the surrounding world and danger as socially constructed. Danger is real – how it is perceived or

misperceived, depends on the environment and the people experiencing it (Simpson 1996: 550). In spending time with the children in the two sites in the inner city, through understanding the perceptions of danger and safety among children in the Johannesburg inner city, I argue that the special conditions of childhood can be analysed in further understanding the changes that have occurred in the inner city over the last few decades. I propose that the supernatural is a discourse through which children can understand the ephemeral shifting boundaries of what is constituted as dangerous and what is not. Because I have observed that there is no concrete notion of who exactly is dangerous, where the dangers are and what exactly constitutes danger. These invisible boundaries of what is dangerous and what is not are sometimes unexplainable and never clearly defined, the invisible world – the supernatural – enables the children to grasp at explanations for occurrences, as well as give definition to the routes along which the children walk every day

CONTRADICTIONS of the Dangerous Other

When I walked on the streets with the younger children from Teach to Pass school, we past a street lined with street traders, some of whom the children knew. However, even if they don't know them, the children still ask them for a free sweet or biscuit from the stall owners. This is precisely why one of the street traders feels that it is unsafe for the children in the city; they put themselves in dangerous situations.

"They can ask please give me R1, please give me R5, and they don't even know the people. The adults can say yes I can buy for you, and the children go with the strangers and they can get kidnapped or even raped, especially the girls".

When I try to understand more about whom these kidnappers are, all I am told is that they are strangers – men – whom the children do not know. There is no description of a certain type of looking man, but there is a certainty that there will be some men who will harm the children. I found no definitive proof that these men do or do not exist, but it is a common notion of stranger danger – that elusive person, non-identifiable but certain to exist somewhere. Jensen's (2008) study on gangs and politics in Cape Town, touched on this topic of the elusive 'baddie'. In the book, he labeled this baddie as a *skollie*, an Afrikaans slang term denoting someone of shifty character, usually jobless and engaging in criminal activity. Jensen (2008) says that this stereotypical character is a product of the Afrikaans informal settlements and townships in Cape Town. There is the 'African township' version of this shady character known as the *tsotie*, Jensen (2008) says, and this idea of a criminal is what defines notions of dangerous people in the inner city. The *skollie* is a person whom no one

wants to be, yet everyone acknowledges exists. This idea of the undefined dangerous person is neither here nor absent. Jensen (2008) says that parents refer to the *skollie* as 'someone else's child'. The *skollie* is always 'over there', somewhere else close by but not here, not clearly defined. There is little concrete evidence, in my investigations, of who these supposed violent Johannesburg perpetrators of violence against children are. One women told me, "they are tall dark men with covered faces". When pressed as to whether there was recent incident, she said no. This was mirrored when I spoke to other street traders and child caregivers there was no present example of any violent act towards children. These contradictions are what define danger in the inner city of Johannesburg. When I spoke to children about what was dangerous, they too had an idea that mirrored that of the *skollie*. People who were not known to them posed the threat of the danger of the man with a covered-face. Dangerous places were places that were not their school, home or play spaces. Just as 'someone else' is the *skollie*, so too is 'something else' dangerous other than the present time and place in which the child finds itself.

Therefore, where children choose to walk and play, it seems, is intricately linked to notions of where perceived danger is located. Avoidance of the idea of danger and perceived dangerous people and places is one way the children *practice* safety. I use Hyson and Bolin (1990) three questioned model to investigate how children perceive the danger which directs their routes around town and their choice of places in which to play. The three questions are firstly, how do children interpret danger; secondly, what factors influence these interpretations; finally, are children oblivious to danger, are they normalised to danger or do they "...see a troll under every bridge". The idea of the *skollie* shapes these childhood interpretations, as the danger is always removed from their present circumstances – another place not of their neighbourhood and another person whom they do not know but whom they would recognize based on the tall, dark, covered-face stranger.

To begin to investigate these three questions in defining danger in a child's city experience, I will describe an enlightening walk through Hillbrow. This description answers the first question – how do children interpret danger. For the Hillbrow girls and their friends, it is through identifying an indistinguishable but ever present 'dangerous other'. The Hillbrow girls were so named because they are three girls, all friends, who live in Hillbrow and who took me on walks through their neighbourhood and favourite places to visit. They are all thirteen, of the oldest of my research participants. The walk and the revelation began with a voice recorder and school children on the Drill Hall Square. In line with Hecht's (1992) ethnography where he gave street children the voice

recorders to interview each other, I had given a voice recorder to three girls – Anisa, Angela and Vuyokazi – and I asked them to interview their school mates. I start them off.

"Where are the dangerous places in town?" I asked Angela and Anisa.

"Here and Park Station" they both agreed.

Then it was Anisa's turn.

"Where are the dangerous places?" Anisa asked some other girls.

"Hillbrow definitely."

Anisa, Angela and Vuyokazi sucked in air noisily and disagree with shaking heads. These three girls, all from Hillbrow, disagreed that it was a dangerous place. Dirty and old yes, but not dangerous. And so they took me for a walk to their homes. As Jensen (2008) writes that the dangerous person is always someone else whom you do not know, so the dangerous places are the places that the children are not familiar with. For the girls, Hillbrow is home and a safe space. We left for our walk from the Drill Hall towards Hillbrow. As we started walking up the hill on Twist Street, Anisa spread her hands out wide and said, "Welcome to Hillbrow" and began to point out the rubbish caught against the railing along the walk way, rustling with the rush of car and bus tires as the vehicles careened downhill. Angela pointed to the crumbling plaster on the walls of the flats – faded blue, powder blue, cream, maroon – peeling and dry in the hot spring afternoon. Her little brother was walking with us. He is relatively unattended to except when we crossed an intersection. Then he bumped against us to catch hold of his sisters' hand. As discussed in the previous chapter – the older sibling looks after the younger sibling. I asked her about this and she told me she looks after him walking to and from school. He also comes with her to her after school recreational places; in this case, the Drill Hall. I had seen quite a few other older children, with a younger sibling or two in tow. The lore of navigating the city, it seems, is passed on from older to younger sibling. The hill flattened at the top, in Hillbrow, and the streets were lined with acacia trees.

"It's much better here", one of the three girls told me, "quieter, and not as noisy as town".

We reached Angela's flat first, turning off Twist Street and onto Esselen street.

"It is much nicer to live in Hillbrow", Angela said again, "I know almost everyone here in the building and people are very friendly".

The contradictory statements given by the two groups of girls as to where the dangerous place were, brings to the fore those contradictions, those shifting boundaries of danger that enables different children to construct different dangers for themselves. There appears to be no, or very few, concrete descriptions of danger that makes for a cohesive understanding on what exactly is dangerous and what exactly is safe. The spaces of the city are transcribes with the essense of the *skollie* – the danger is not here but 'over there'. Hyson and Bolin (1990) make the argument that once again, danger and the assessment thereof is a subjective process based on what has been taught at home, the contextual environment and most importantly the different age developments. That different age groups will fear the same place or person but for sometimes different reasons foregrounds the different development stages through which a child progresses in assessing dangers in the inner city,

Hyson and Bolin's (1990) first and second question, how do children assess risk and what factors influence these interpretation, can be answered by understanding stories that are passed from older children to younger children and between children of the same age in 'giving them the tools' to understand danger and safety in the city. In Vetten, Dladla and Vetton (2000), the authors conduct interviews with women living in vulnerable circumstances in the inner city (sex workers and municipal security/waste workers). The authors suggest that the creation of fear is a social process. The women in the research spread fear not only through first hand encounters, but also though passing on stories to each other; in this way, fear becomes generalised. If one incident occurs in a place (example Hillbrow) the whole area becomes dangerous. Passing on knowledge of what happens in places is also important. Therefore, it is important for the women to know that public toilets are unsafe, and the more specific a person can be, the better (addresses, street corners etcetera) (Vetten, Dladla and Vetton 2000: 72). This story is of adult's understandings of danger. The toilet however, is a popular site of danger (as cautioned to me by the youngest children at the Drill Hall), as I also encountered with the older children on our walk through Hillbrow.

We were still on the first Hillbrow walk when I encountered toilet aversion. From Esselen Street and the first flat, we had turned right into Edith Cavell. On Edith Cavell, between Esselen and Kotze, there is a Bus Rapid Transport (BRT) *Reya Vaya* bus stop. Suddenly Angela took my arm and says, "Let's walk over here", steering me almost onto the street, "I don't like the bathrooms." Opposite the *Reya Vaya* stop are some public toilets. When I asked why we walked away she said they are smelly. I had encountered the notion of dirt with danger, and therefore cleanliness with safety. Angela never spoke about an incident of violence at the bathrooms but her sudden agitation and movement away

from the bathrooms signaled to me that she was "creep'ed" out about the very location of the bathroom. As Vetten, Dladla and Vetton (2000) suggest, social process – in this case a legend of sorts – dictates the relationship the children have with certain spaces in the inner city and therefore how danger and safety play a role in their every day movement. For this girl, avoidance meant she could stay safe. Children, in my research, assess risk based on stories and cautionary tales that are passed from child to child; the factors that affect this assessment include dirt as pollution and signalling danger. This story, this idea, that places where the air or the physical space is polluted therefore meaning that the person or place is dangerous, is mirrored on the basketball courts in the CBD. I interpret the *skollie*, the unknown but 'mythologised' dangerous person, to be places in the inner city as well.

Noli, some of her school mates from Education Alive College and I were sitting on the cold concrete step/benches at the half court in Ernst Oppenheimer Park on President Street, in Johannesburg Central Business District (CBD). Wave after wave of younger children would take a short cut through the diagonal path connecting the south side of the park (Albertina Sisulu – formerly Market Street) to the north side, President Street.

On this day in winter, two raggedy young men are sat on the court steps at the other end of the court. Their faces are broody and their eyes hooded. They look like they have lived a hard life. A third young man with a soft hat pulled low over his forehead stepped into the court, his hand in his pockets, moving as stiffly as his dirty clothes. Noli and the other children were sitting bent over the concrete steps near this man. Noli suddenly straightens and excuses herself, "Sorry, just let me move over here", and she moved quickly behind me, so that I was between her and the entrance/man.

I asked her what is wrong. She said she didn't like them. I probed as to why she didn't like them. "They don't wash", she told me. The other children, all of them boys, say they also didn't like them. But they were not too worried about physically moving away.

Douglas (1966) engages with such notions of pollution, purity, danger and acceptance. The central theme to the ethnography is that pollution is uncleanness and dirt, "…and dirt is something, anything, which is out of place and a disturbance or threat to the proper order of things" (Douglas 1966: 463). The dirty men were 'polluted' physically in that, according to Noli, they didn't wash and stank, as well as being pollution; matter out of place in the chaotic order of the basketball court park signaling to Noli that they also represented possible danger. The study of pollution, Douglas (1966) argues, is at the same time the study of the social order (p. 463). In the case of the basketball court,

the social order was this: the children usually inhabited the courts from about 1:30pm onwards as they tended to finish school before any adults finished work. From 3pm onwards, the first young men and women basketballers started to arrive at the court. The children are quickly chased off so that the baskerball games can begin. Children and adults recognised each other as mutual inhabitors of the space. When matter of out place arrived in this space, Noli interprets this as a threat to her carefully constructed secure space. Dirt has crossed over her boundary of security and she interprets the interlopers as one might interpret litter in a clean garden – unwanted. Douglas (1966) writes that all societies have ways of dealing with anomalies – incidents that deviate from what is normal, standard behaviour. For Noli, this normal behaviour constitutes the basketball players and her bodyguards at her mother's stall. Hyson and Bolin's (1990) first question asks how children interpret risk, and their second question asks what factors influence this decision. As the above two examples have shown, children interpret risk through familiarising themselves with their immediate environments and then either noticing anomalies within this space, or adhering to stories of danger – both examples dictated by ideas of dirt and pollution as danger. There is one more example that influences the decisions of what is dangerous and what is not and this is the notion of the supernatural as instigators of danger.

CHILDREN and The Supernatural

When I first met Anisa, one of the Hillbrow girls, we were standing in the Drill Hall square, leaning against the fence and I asked her a question I have asked many of the children: do you enjoy living in the city.

"I hate it here, it's like a jail. Do you understand what that means?" Anisa holds the fence behind her and yanks on the fence with each word to emphasise her point, "you – can't – get – out."

"Is this not where you are from?" I ask.

"No, from Limpopo, we moved here when I was seven and I miss my friends there and I just want to go back", she says.

"Oh…" I have never received a response like this, as most of the children are happy with their life. I spoke to Malahlela about this and he says that for most of the children, they have grown up in the city and it is their world, a world they love.

“Most of the children will take any opportunity to go and visit family in Soweto, or back home in Zimbabwe or Limpopo. But they love the city and more intervention and development projects need to speak to this.”

Anisa expressed a deep dislike for the city. However, on our walk to the JAG in Joubert Park a few weeks later she answered my question about whether they were looking forward to holidays by shrugging and saying, “just going home.”

“Aren’t you excited?” I asked.

“No, there are too many witches and they fly at night”, she answered.

“What do witches look like?” I ask, “and do you know witches?”

“They are old ladies who are jealous of you”, Anisa anwers, “I have seen them at night, flying in the sky”.

This shows the importance of the research methodology that Anthropology uses. Throughout my research I have encountered contradictions – none however as profound as Anisa’s statement. If I had done a once off interview with her, my findings would have been “Anisa hates the city life”. I would never have understood the complex layers, which govern city life, and indeed the lives of the other children. This is one of the many things that govern the ways children live in the city – the contradictions of limits and traversing those limits, of both loving and hating city life, or fearing strangers and seeming to be fearless in their movement around town. This I attribute to both the notion of the *skollie* – everything is dangerous but here, the known/familiar spaces. I also attribute it to the supernatural because it enables different age groups to express different fears of the same space. The shifting barriers of the invisible worlds of the supernatural enables for these contradictions in the everyday practice of safety in the inner city.

The dangers of the city appear to be grouped into three groups: dangerous places, dangerous people and dangerous activities. But the grasp at the supernatural as an explanation for why dangerous things happen or why dangerous places must be avoided differs between adults, older children and young children. While Anisa found the city oppressing sometimes, she feared the ‘witches’ in her home in Limpopo Province. The children didn’t like the dirty public toilets and therefore stayed away from then, the youngest for fear of encountering Satan and vampires who would cut their necks. For the older children, the fear was rooted in smell and sight, equating dirty

places to dangerous places. As an adult, as Vetton, Dladla and Vetten (2000) wrote, the stories of rape and murder are liked to public toilets – same fear, different motivations. Similarly, I observed that while a common-place fear amongst adults of dangerous places is that these places house muggers, rapists and other criminals, the children fear these places for reasons of magic and the supernatural.

One of the biggest fears among children in the city centre when I asked the simple question: "what scares you?" wasn't traffic, being hit by a car or physical danger. Not ever rape or kidnapping on its own. It was a much more complex fear. It was a fear of an *idea*. Angela, Anisa, Vuyokazi, Bella, Sisa, Sanele and Gugu, among others, were all at the ballet class that I gave every Wednesday afternoon. While we waited for some more children to arrive I asked them the above question. Sisa leaned forward to begin the story

"There is this place in Berea[8] called Myama Ndawo – it's a dark place."

The girls nod their agreement and a few exclaim 'yes'.

"If you are walking in Berea and someone bends down and takes something, and they run, you know they will be running to that buildings. It's a building like this", she gets up and spreads her hands wide to incorporate the whole of the JCW building, "but its dark, there is no electricity."

An abandoned building, I begin to understand.

"No one goes there, it is very dangerous. Except the people who live there and the little children who are taken there", finishes Sisa.

"My friend was taken there and they raped her", Angela's face is serious. Some girls who are taken there are turned into prostitutes she tells me.

"They especially like the younger girls, like that one", pointing to a little girl between the ages of 6-8 years old.

"And there are these cars", Sanele adds, "a black car, like a Venture [a make] or something, without a number plate, with two men in the car who will stop at a bunch of girls sitting on the pavement and will take them.

Vuyokazi, who is usually reserved in the conversations, begins her story.

[8] A part of the inner city, just next to Hillbrow

“There is this other car, called Bambatha, that will take you either to Myama Ndawo, to be a prostitute, or they will rape you and use your body parts at Myama Ndawo, or they will rape you and dump your body at a dam. Lots of these girls are from Zimbabwe.”

“At this dam, the mermaids will take you under the water. Any fish actually-

“This is why I don’t like the sea or any place with water”, Anisa interrupts Vuyokazi.

“Because the mermaids move and fast and you can’t see them beneath the water. They have blue eyes-

“And blades that cut your neck!” Sisa and Sanele chop their necks with their hands to emphasise the sharpness of the blades.

“So if a child is missing, a parent must not cry, they must go to a Sangoma. If they cry the mermaid will hit the child on the neck with their tail that has spikes, not chop it off, just so that it is cuts and bleeds”, Vuyokasi explains.

“They mustn’t cry, they must beat the drums and then the child will be returned”, Angela says.

In searching the internet for repots on missing children in the inner city (missingchildren.org and online newspapers), I encountered but one report of a little boy who had gone to visit his grandmother and the parents didn’t know of his whereabouts. This can be for two possible reasons: either the parents of the children do not report these missing children because they follow the above directions of going to the sangoma and not reporting the child. It could also support the claim by a volunteer at the Youth Desk at the South African Police Services (SAPS) station in Hillbrow, that the inner city has in fact become a safe space in which children can move. I asked the volunteer who was working the Youth Desk (as part of the SAPS Community Policing Forum) at the time of my visit if there were any dangerous places in Hillbrow that children know to avoid. I told him that some of the boys had mentioned in passing that there was a street in Hillbrow that they called the criminal street. Needless to say, the boys didn’t return and the other children whom I saw regularly didn’t know what I was referring to. When I asked the Youth Desk volunteer, he said that this was very unlikely, as he knew every corner of Hillbrow and there is no such dangerous place as a ‘criminal street’. According to the volunteer, Hillbrow was a very dangerous place in the 1990’s. However, since the inception of the Youth Desk offices in Hillbrow and various community based interventions, the volunteer said that Hillbrow has become a safe place in which children can live. The role of the

Youth Desk is to patrol the streets of Hillbrow, focused only on monitoring young people, teaching skills to young people and assisting young people from 16-35 years old. The volunteer said that this extra monitoring of older children and young adults ensures that apart from occasional marijuana smoking in the parks, the young children are not exposed to dangerous activities. However, there was more to fear, according to the children, that marijuana smoking teenagers. The cautionary stories were scary enough.

"The worst is Valelisa Uyihlo Monyoko", Sisa starts to tell a story again, "and it means say goodbye to your father and mother in Zulu."

"I saw it!" Buyiswa told me.

"How do you know what it looks like?" I ask.

"It has it written on the side of the car, it's a silver taxi, written on the side Valelisa Uyihlo Nonyoko", Sisa explains.

"A man came to us, my friend and I," Buyiswa adds, "and said here is some money. And my friend loves money so went to get the R100 note and the man grabbed her arm and tried to put her in the car but she pulled away and ran away".

"What about the police? Why don't the police stop this car if it can be found with writing on the side?"

"No, sometimes the police are in the car!" Sisa tells me, "this is why our parents tell us never to trust the police. You will see the police man shaking hands with the {street} traders" she slaps her hands together like a handshake, "and they will come away with some packet of drugs in their hands. You will see the traders, the ones with only a few things on the top of the table, like only a few sweets; but underneath there are drugs and stuff."

The contradictions of the police as protectors and the policeman as the people whom the children fear speaks to the shifting notions of danger. One day when a policemen chased an illegal trader onto the Drill Hall square, the children were not fearful of the man and ran after him to see what would happen. The grasp at the supernatural stands in as an explanatory voice for why a child should not get into a strangers car. That there have been only one sighting of the infamous muti car Valelisa Uyihlo Monyoko, indicates the ephemeral existence of both the car and the danger it represents. Cautionary tales of living in the city are a mix of both supernatural beliefs and solid foundations of

practicing safety such as, don't get into cars with strangers. The ways in which the children deal with the hazards of city life, is by spreading these stories about supernatural dangers found in unmarked cars and abandoned buildings.

I am proposing that witchcraft and the supernatural is the discourse through which children see and experience their childhood in the Johannesburg inner city. While various philosophical scholars write about discourses that define life, little if any focus is on childhood life. The supernatural, with its emphasis on the shifting invisible world, appears to explain to the children their spaces and roles in the inner city, as a liminal space. I move away from supernatural as merely a social structure in a persons life – a structure such as kinship or migration – to exploring such phenomena as inherent beliefs that permeate a child's understanding of their place in the world and more specifically the inner city of Johannesburg. The place is that of avoiding danger by knowing what is danger. Danger is constructed through the supernatural as warnings of danger. Ciekawy and Gecshiere (1998) argue that while 'western' scholars tend to see witchcraft as stories that subvert modernist values, these stories can also be seen as quasi-philosophical explanations for occurrences in everyday life. The above scholars argue that witchcraft for many people is an ongoing part of life, something that they have to deal with, in much the same way as Marxist discourses argue that power is an everyday ongoing part of our lives. The supernatural too deals with power relations, and in the case of the children, it appears to denote the power in which children negotiate their safe spaces in the inner city. It locates the children in a space where they are fearful of the possibilities of the supernatural and witchcraft while also empowering them with the tools to keep themselves safe. The supernatural, I argue, is a discourse through which the children understand the dangers in the city. Because these dangers are never clearly defined and are understood in terms of the *skollie* reference, the children create a sense of order in turning to the supernatural as an explanation of danger.

However, just because the children can assess danger, Hyson and Bolin (1990) question whether children are then able to avoid danger. The answer is complex. While children are able to remember their parents' cautions and their friend's tales of violence and magic, it does not mean that the children will put these into practice (Hyson and Bolin 1990: 56). Curiosity, they argue, might over-come a child's ability to remember these cautionary tales. As was seen with Buyiswa's friend, whose love of money overcame her knowledge of the dangerous vehicle, so the authors claim is supported. However, in my experience with the children in the inner city, in more cases that not, the children will avoid the danger. This is done consciously through moving away from dirty 'polluted' men or toilets. It is also done unconsciously through choosing routes along which they are unlikely to

encounter risk. The children also avoid danger through demarcating and maintaining certain barriers of movement, as Noli does on the basketball court. As such the relationship of the child to the Johannesburg inner city is a complex state in which the children know what constitutes danger and practices avoiding it, as well as ignoring danger signals and putting themselves in danger.

NORMALISING Danger or New Safety Assessments

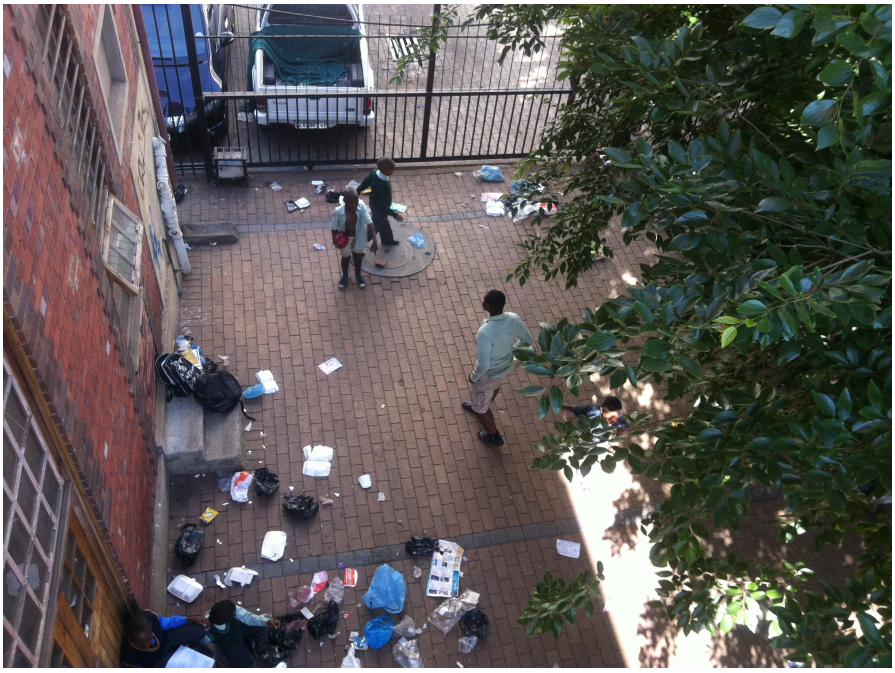
Hyson and Bolin (1990) state that risk is objective (p. 51). Therefore, when scholars write that "today, children have less freedom to negotiate the urban environment for themselves" (Christensen and Romero Mikkelsen 2009: 38), this statement needs to be localised. Over the course of my fieldwork, adults who lived in the suburbs asked me the same question each time I told them about my research: "is it safe for the children?" While I understand that as a young person, children may be more vulnerable to violence, I didn't see strong evidence that children are at much more risk than adults in living in the inner city – in fact at some stages adults are more at risk to muggings as they carry the laptops, cellphones and large amounts of money. The city is a child's reality, as Malahlela said, and therefore instead of trying to change what adults see as danger, one needs to understand how children are currently living 'safe' and 'dangerous' lives. In being their reality, the children in the inner city familiarise themselves with their environments at a young age. Indeed the very nature of the way the children walk from home, to school, to their after school play/socialising places and again back home signal their avoidance of danger. How they choose these routes is influenced by stories and legends of what makes places dangerous and what type of people frequent these spaces. Interestingly, the children could never give me the description of the type of people who engage in the supernatural practices at Myama Ndawo, just as the street traders could not describe the dangerous men who prey on children. It is sufficient, it seems, to merely acknowledge that such a person exists.

Assessing matter out of place and pollution as Douglass (1966) suggests, answers Hyson and Bolin's (1990) second question in assessing risk of 'what influences a child's assessment of whether something is a risk or not'. As soon as Noli detected a source of pollution in her safe space, she avoided any possibility of getting close to the men. In the chaos of the inner city, in both the CBD and more so in Joubert Park/Hillbrow, the children create an ordered set of rules for creating security in their spaces of mobility and play. In fact Douglass (1966) writes,

> Granted that disorder spoils pattern; it also provides the materials of pattern. Order implies restriction; from all possible materials, a limited selection has been made and from all possible relations a limited set has been used. So

> disorder by implication is unlimited, no pattern has been realised in it, but its potential for patterning is indefinite. This is why, though we seek to create order, we do not simply condemn disorder. We recognise that it is destructive to existing patterns; also that it has potentiality. It symbolises both danger and power.

In this chaos, the children grasp at the supernatural as explanatory and cautionary tales that direct their routes throughout the inner city. These routes, micro and regular, enable a large degree of avoidance should dangerous situations arise which are unusual in the familiar space. Hyson and Bolin (1990) says that while children may listen to parental and friend advice in avoiding danger, they do not always practice this avoidance. I disagree largely with this statement, as the children are conscious of parental orders of how to cross roads and of their demarcated boundaries of where they are allowed to visit. The nature of the once violence-torn inner city is changing to become a space in which children navigate their everyday lives in the public space, Murray (2008) writes that for Johannesburg to become a safe space once more, it needs to reclaim its spaces. Reclaim, I ask, from whom? The children have already begun the process of claiming the city as a space in which they live, and a space which they choose to be in. Sisa told me that schools in Soweto are violent and therefore many children *choose* to school and spend time in the inner city. This is an indication that the inner city, through increased police presence and increase monitoring by everybody, is becoming safer. Therefore, with no direct incidents to fall back on in explaining dangerous spaces, the children grasp at the supernatural as the invisible explanation for occasional incidents and why certain spaces scare the children. This combination of visibility as discussed in the first chapter and legends of pollution and the supernatural combine to enable children to practice safety and avoid danger in the inner city.



Danger in the city is after seen as litter and contamination. I only saw this litter scene once while I was in the field. That the children are fearful on a concept has never been explored

Conclusion

Writing about danger and safety has been a difficult task, especially in a space filled with contradictory stories and shifting notions of danger. The final question that Hyson and Bolin (1990) suggest one asks when attempting to understand a child's assessment of danger is whether children are normalised to danger and fear or whether they see danger everywhere. In my opinion, children are neither of the two. Sisa, one of the girls who play at the Drill hall square, emphasised the fact that many children who live outside of the Johannesburg inner city choose to come into the city. She told me that schools in Soweto (for example) are rife with violence, and that the schooling is bad. The schools in the city, she tells me, are of a high standard and some of the best schools in the area. That the children spend free time walking in the city, even if they are from out of town, shows that the city is a safe space in which to release children to migrate to and from school and play spaces every day. This contradiction of the inner city as a dangerous space filled with children playing in public spaces, foregrounds the coping abilities of the children to assess and understand risks surrounding them. As such, I argue that while children do not see a troll under every bridge, they are aware of what is dangerous for everyone in the city and what they constitute as dangerous (which may be different to adults). These dangers often take the form of an idea or a story, and while never grounded in actual experienced examples, are very real to the children and are powerful shaping agents in the ways in which the children move and play in the inner city. These notions of danger affect the routes and spaces along which children walk and in which they play. These practices of safety inspire new types of visibilities and while their practices of safety are not fool proof, their avoidance of danger is a well-practiced method of visibility, sharing cautionary tales and avoidance.

When I was first told the story of Myama Ndawo, I felt like I had been let into a fraternity of inner city childhood. The intricate story telling and sharing of legends of danger in the city is a psychological/emotional space in which the children create for themselves understandings of these ephemeral notions of what is dangerous and what is safe. Should a child have had a scary experience such as Buyiswa's friend who was almost pulled into the van, or Angela's friend having been raped at Myama Ndawo, the space of sharing and building into these legends acts as a catharsis; the children can voice their fears as stories without the fear immobilising their necessary migrations in the city. The children build on existing cautionary tales of abduction and stranger danger, to create their own warning tales. In a space where things could go wrong, the children have equipped

themselves with the mental skills to assess risk and then avoid these dangerous situations, such as abandoned buildings, public toilets and strangers in cars.

The danger that defined the routes along which the children walked and the places in which they played is a fear of an idea. How one conceptualises an idea was the greatest obstacle in this paper. What stood out was the lack of a definitive definition of what is dangerous – what the dangerous person looks like, where the dangerous place is. As such, in a space of shifting and unclear notions of what is danger, the children turn to the supernatural as a fixed explanation for an undefined concept. Hart (1997) says "Children living in different cultures, environments and social classes are exposed to different materials, experiences and informal teaching by their families and neighbours, and this results in the appearance of different competencies at different times" (cited in Wridt 1999: 253). These competencies are what came to the fore in my research. The competencies that the children in the inner city with whom I worked exhibited was their ability to use the layout of the city and the facilities therein to ensure their space is safe. It helps that the children do not carry valuables with them that attracts the most common petty crime in the inner city – muggers. However, the fact that the fear was an idea, a concept itself, was a turning point in my research.

Methodologically I was presented with many contradictions as I tried to sift through the information I was given regarding the dangers in the inner city. Most notably was the fact that dangerous places were conceptualised as any place other than the chosen play spaces, where they lived and where they chose to walk. Just as the *skollie* is never someone you know, danger is never in the space in which the children are. I had to separate my notions of danger and safety in order to fully appreciate a child's perception. Due to the fact that none of the children with whom I worked actually experienced dangerous situations while I worked with them, I gathered my data via stories and conversations. These stories have reached legend proportion, told to me while we sat in a circle, the children leaning forward excitedly at each new detail. Myama Ndawo became an adventure story with a cautionary undertone of not going into abandoned buildings or climbing into strangers cars. This is an example of how danger is socially constructed. These spaces identified – abandoned buildings, public toilets and unmarked cars – are perceived by the children in this social context as dangerous. These places are dangerous because this is what the children have collectively identified as risk in the inner city. In exploring these dangers and risks, I encountered contradictions and stereotypes that were sometimes validated and sometimes 'imaginary'. This why I used Hyson and Bolin's (1990) model of risk assessment to understand why children choose to equate certain places and experiences as dangerous and others as safe.

Valelisa Uyihlo Monyoko embodies the fear of abandoned spaces and the supernatural. The car takes the children to the abandoned building called Myama Ndawo and there the children are either raped and/or turned into prostitutes and/or murdered and their body parts used for muti. The story is passed down from child to child, and exemplifies what Matthew and Limb (1999) argue that what children fear is often not what adults fear and vice versa. In this case, while adults have a vague notion of a dangerous man, the children have clear cut idea of what they should be afraid of – people kidnapping them in order to be used for muti and witchcraft. Ciekawy and Gecshiere (1998) argue that witchcraft and the supernatural is not a once off experience for many people; it is something that many have to negotiate on a daily basis. It becomes a discourse though which the children understand their everyday lives. Understanding danger and the assessment thereof as a discourse of childhood in the inner city is how I conceptualise of the way in which children live in the city centre – through sharing *ideas* of danger, children are able to avoid danger. I conceptualised Myama Ndawo and Valelisa Uyihlo Monyoko as symbols of what children fear in the inner city and as shaping agent that direct their micro-geographic maps around the city.

I used danger and safety as the bridge between theories of childhood and theories of the city. The Johannesburg inner city, infamous for danger, is a site in which children practice their particular form of safety as a tool through which to use the space for their childhood needs – walking and playing. Attempting to capture these experiences posed the threat of me over-explaining the children's stories, describing their experiences as a function of something larger. For the children, these stories were an explanation unto themselves, not standing for a larger caution. As an adult, that the children didn't climb in to strangers cars, go to public toilets on their own, or walk in abandoned spaces without witnesses signifies the 'lesson' behind the legends. How then does one write about a space in which adults are more at risk than children? A space in which adults see the children as sometimes putting themselves in danger by asking strangers for money or running across busy roads?

I therefore place childhood within the grid of the public space of the inner city in order to attempt to write about this contradictory space. In this reality of contradictions of what I was observing – clean spaces, safe spaces as opposed to the doomed vision portrayed by many previous theorists, as well as spaces in which adults are mugged but children walk independently – children in the inner city have, if not developed, fitted into a network of living, playing, schooling and migrating between the three places in the business centre neighbourhood. The space in which they fit are square and rectangle spaces. The layout of the inner city streets and parks ensures that the children are able to

practice safety by maintaining visibility in their public space usage. The layout too included adults in the process of maintaining a visibility that ensured a relative safety that sometimes slid slightly, but on the whole was well practiced.

Already, my research contradicts other research on children in Johannesburg and children in South African inner cities. Samson, Morenoff and Gannon-Rowley (2002), see young people in the urban neighbourhood as victims to the social process of poverty; in other words, children who live in the inner city, it is presumed. Children living in the inner city are often seen as living in dirty and contaminated settings, putting not only their well-being but they physical health at risk. While this inner city decay was evident in the past in the inner city, government, private companies and grassroots organisations have been cleaning up the built environment and making it a cleaner area in which children can live and play. The Chance to Play program at the Jo'burg Child Welfare at the Drill Hall, the efforts of the RID to keep the half court park clean, and even the City of Johannesburg relatively successful efforts to keep city parks clean, are all efforts to create a clean environment in which children can exercise and play. Therefore, it was a shock entering the field with these studies echoing in my mind, and repeatedly encountering situations that contradicted these reports. Even the 2002 *Save the Children* report portrayed urban children as inherently vulnerable, painting all children from the same poor background and with limited access to basic services. Danger and safety is a much more complex situation than the inner city as a dangerous space filled with poverty. When I moved into my flat in 2013, the city that I encountered was not the dangerous space that media and scholars had written about. It was a space with streets along which children skateboard and walk and play independently. The grid as the conceptual model along which to understand the progression of the children in not only living and walking in the city but also conceptualising of their own avoidance techniques that in turn are their methods in practicing safety.

Ironically, when I was walking with the children, my presence as an adult also acted as a type of safety that may not have been present had I not been there. One time while I was walking with the younger Teach to Pass children, and we had to cross a road so I stood back to watch how children negotiate this four lane one-way street. They stood and waited as well and eventually turned to me, asking me when they should cross. I realised that the presence of an adult somewhat inhibited my research, as I became the person over-seeing their safety. Eventually, they ran, as the traffic light turned green and the cars slowly began to move forward. Myself as the research tool sometimes interfered with the process of assessing how the children navigated along the gridded streets on the inner city.

Observing the movements and plays of children in the inner city was a complex negotiation of what children fear, what adults fear, and how these fears play out over the grid of the inner city. Geographies of Childhood emphasises the importance of understanding a child's perspective of space, not through the eyes of an adult, but from a child; their understanding of space, access to, use of and attachment to space (Holloway and Valentine 2000). Exploring danger and safety perceptions among children in the Johannesburg inner city meant that I had to look past my interference in the research. I also had to give the children the benefit of their stories as an end unto themselves. I stress again that danger and safety is a much more complex situation than simply labeling something as dangerous or something as safe. I have argued for a conceptualisation of childhood that speaks to the urban public spaces in the Johannesburg inner city and an inner city that speaks to the a new childhood in South Africa. Childhood is a socially constructed network of well-practiced methods for avoiding danger and practicing; the congestion of the inner city provides a sense of visibility which further enables the children to negotiate a safe space in the city. How danger and safety are perceived differs from adults to children. However, there is some over-lap in the understandings of danger and safety in the city that encourages adults and children to live together in the inner city. The theories of childhood and cities over-lap in this space where dangerous spaces are avoided and safe practices are cultivated.

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