

EXPERIENCING DEVELOPMENT: CORPOREAL TENSIONS AND  
GRASSROOTS ACTIVISM IN SOUTH AFRICA'S LIMPOPO PROVINCE

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# EXPERIENCING DEVELOPMENT: CORPOREAL TENSIONS AND GRASSROOTS ACTIVISM IN SOUTH AFRICA'S LIMPOPO PROVINCE

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The Anthropology of Development has studied international aid from numerous perspectives, e.g. development as discourse, transnational processes, and NGO intervention. My dissertation extends the analytic reach of the Anthropology of Development, and will benefit development practice, by focusing on interpersonal dimensions of development practice.

Based in Tsonga- and Pedi-speaking areas of South Africa, my case studies include an evangelical church established by an Afrikaner missionary from Cape Town for the purpose of spiritual enlightenment, an HIV-AIDS awareness NGO run by a nun from Ireland, and a school-based project facilitated by a U.S. Peace Corps volunteer (PCV) designed to improve local teaching methods.

Collecting information on interpersonal relations between the activists and villagers involved spending time in work spaces and, where applicable, host family settings. My interlocutors and I described interactions, noting corporeal evidence of comforts and discomforts. Following perceptions of grief and relief to conscious statements and social practices revealed the significance of embodiment in international development work.

To understand the context for the corporeal perceptions, I accompanied the activists and villagers to their respective social “hangouts.” Attending “alcohol parties” sponsored clandestinely by the missionary’s congregants, frequenting family funerals and weddings of the nun’s co-workers, and accompanying the PCV’s colleagues to their homes and favorite bars helped me discern patterns in how village embodiment worked in everyday gendered and generational situations.

With the exception of the PCV, the activists did not fraternize with villagers outside of work. Instead, I observed their interaction styles, for example, during church retreats and PCV parties. Defining her social space as a relief from village work, the nun closed-off her personal life to her village interactants and to me. However, spending time with her religious ex-patriots gave me access into the nun's interaction context.

Villagers and activists differently value interpersonal contact, with their most spontaneous of gestures respectively expressing comfort and discomfort with physical intimacy. These different expressions of intimacy cultivated incompatible senses of trust, truth, and assistance, confounding relationships and aid work. Development falters as much from pragmatic activity as from articulated discourse.

## **BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH**

The son of a white mother and African-American father, Marcus DuBois Watson grew up dreaming of playing professional football. Despite academically inclined parents, education did not appear on his radar. Listening to his father's Malcolm X tapes as a senior in high school gave him a renewed sense of purpose, invigorating him to pursue academic excellence as an undergraduate double majoring in History and Political Science at the State University of New York College at Brockport. The plight of African-Americans became his chief intellectual concern. After college, his mother's best friend and his informal mentor for years, the late Dr. Alison DesForges, encouraged Marcus to become acquainted with anthropology and to travel abroad. After two years as a Peace Corps Volunteer in South Africa, Marcus knew two things: He wanted to study anthropology, just as Alison thought he might, and skin color was a poor basis for establishing relationships, just as his parents' union had testified. During graduate work in anthropology at Cornell University, Marcus received a Master's Degree and converted to Islam, wherein his motto became, "We are one," the meaning in Zulu of his second daughter's middle name.

To my mother and father

– just the parents I would have chosen had I had the choice.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I owe so much thanks to so many, so let me begin by thanking God for surrounding me with the best of people. Dominic Boyer served as my dissertation advisor, and his support, guidance, and expertise proved indispensable. He expected the best of me, pushed me to reach my full potential and, for this, I am forever grateful.

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I owe a special debt of gratitude to my brother, Malcolm Watson. Malcolm read several drafts of the dissertation cover to cover and provided detailed commentary on each draft. Malcolm returned his comments within days of me sending him the lengthy documents. His comments taught me to write all over again. Thanks big bro’.

At various stages, I have received generous support from the National Science Foundation and from Cornell University’s Sage Graduate Fellowship. Their funding facilitated my extensive coursework and positioned me to make contact with many people indispensable to the research and to my personal life.

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newborn son Malik, I know our families are truly one. I thank Sergeant, Valerie, and Ishmael for welcoming me into their lives and Ishmael for his enduring friendship.

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I hope that my intention to remember you and to love all people in all I do and say will in some small way repay you all for what you have done for me. *Insha'Allah*.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH	iii
DEDICATION	iv
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	v
TABLE OF CONTENTS	vii
LIST OF PSEUDO CODES	ix
<b>INTRODUCTION PHENOMENAL DEVELOPMENTS / DEVELOPING PERCEPTIONS</b>	<b>1</b>
DEVELOPMENT as INTERPERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS	2
PHENOMENOLOGY and DEVELOPMENT	7
ETHNOGRAPHIC CASE STUDIES	11
THE ARGUMENT	15
THE CHAPTERS	25
<b>PART I: BACKGROUND</b>	<b>28</b>
CHAPTER ONE HOPING FOR MODERNITY IN LIMPOPO	29
RURAL LIMPOPO: AN ANALYTIC CATEGORY	32
JUDGING OTHERS	33
JUDGING THEMSELVES	36
STATE OF MARRIAGE	39
PREMARITAL LIFE	43
INTIMATE RELATIONALITY	45
HIV-AIDS and EMPLOYMENT	50
TRUST and JEALOUSY	55
STATE of COMMUNITY: GIVING and RECEIVING	58
CONCLUSION	63
CHAPTER TWO THREE DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS – DESCRIPTIONS	67
PROJECTS: IN TERMS OF EACH OTHER	69
THE PROJECTS: WHEREABOUTS, APPEARANCES, STATUSES	72
SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT – TUVO CHRISTIAN CHURCH	78
HEALTH DEVELOPMENT – KURISANANI	91
EDUCATIONAL DEVELOPMENT – PEACE CORPS	103
CONCLUSIONS	112

<b>PART II: THE PROBLEM OF DIFFERENCE</b>	<b>116</b>
CHAPTER THREE DEVELOPMENT AND RESIDENCE	117
RESIDENCE IN DEVELOPMENT ANTHROPOLOGY	119
GOOD INTENTIONS OF THE AID-GIVERS	123
SERGEANT’S SPECIAL FORK AND KNIFE	126
VALERIE’S LIFESAVING VEHICLE	142
ISHMAEL’S RENT CALCULATION	148
CONCLUSION	159
CHAPTER FOUR DEVELOPMENT AND FRIENDSHIP	167
FRIENDSHIP, FIELDWORK, AND DEVELOPMENT	167
ANTHROPOLOGICAL STUDIES OF FRIENDSHIP	168
FIELDWORK FRIENDSHIPS	171
DEVELOPING FRIENDSHIPS?	204
CONCLUSION	217
CHAPTER FIVE YES-BODIES AND NO-BODIES	219
BODY PERCEPTIONS – CHANGE-AGENTS	221
BODY PERCEPTIONS – LIMPOPO VILLAGERS	226
DEVELOPMENT BODIES AND PHENOMENOLOGY	231
EMBODYING A REJECTION OF BRACKETS	239
RESIDING AND BEFRIENDING BODILY IN LIMPOPO	245
<b>PART III: YES-ING AND NO-ING DEVELOPMENT</b>	<b>256</b>
CHAPTER SIX EMBODYING PARTICIPATORY DEVELOPMENT	257
PARTICIPATORY DEVELOPMENT IN ANTHROPOLOGY	257
PARTICIPATORY INTENTIONS OF PROJECTS	266
CONTRADICTING PARTICIPATORY IDEALS IN PRACTICE	269
ANALYSIS OF SUPERFICIAL PARTICIPATION	272
CONCLUSION	292
CHAPTER SEVEN CORPOREAL INTENTIONS	296
<i>NO-ING</i> the LIFE out of DEATH	301
<i>NO-ING</i> INTERSUBJECTIVITY in TWO	310
<i>NO-ING</i> WORK from PLAY	323
CONCLUSION: CORPOREAL INTENTIONS	337
CONCLUSION ANTHROPOLOGICAL SIGNIFICANCES	342
WORKS CITED	351

## LIST OF PSEUDO CODES

### *PROJECT #1: SERGEANT'S TUVO CHRISTIAN CHURCH (TCC)*

Bapela Sathekge	Girlfriend to Solomon, mother of his child
Brian	Church gardener, feels under-compensated by Sergeant
Cary	Church choir leader, father bewitched
Charles Pelesi	Sergeant's first convert/translator, quit TCC
David	Local church leader, Sergeant's informant
Dean	Self-defined "Disease of the Church"
Ema/Denny	Two 20-something male congregants, critical of Sergenat/TCC
Francis Selope	Teeky's sister, virgin, feels Sergeant shows favoritism
Marlon	Local male trusted by Sergeant, viewed as "sellout" by peers
Mhani Malati	Marlon's mother, distraught by Marlon's neglect of ancestors
Mhani Pelesi	Charles' mother, hosted Sergeant in her home
Sergeant	Afrikaner missionary, planted TCC
Solomon	Church leader disciplined for pre-marital sex and baby
Sue	Dean's sister, quit TCC
Mary	Local female most trusted by Sergeant
Teeky Selope	Bewitched by TCC youth, relies increasingly on tradition
Teres	Cousin to Dean, confirmed male virgin

### *PROJECT #2: VALERIE'S KURISANANI NGO*

Bill	Kurisanani's Education for Life Coordinator, Valerie's favorite
Gaul	Catechist, Laura's brother-in-law, soft spoken
Kathy	Australian nun, mouthpiece of Tzaneen Diocese
Katrina	Kurisanani client
Lateef	Kurisanani volunteer, hard worker, feels under-recognized
Laura	Kurisanani Manager, Gaul's sister-in-law dating police officer
Stella	Kurisanani client
Thomas/Hope	Married couple living with AIDS, Kurisanani clients
Valerie	Irish nun, Director of NGO Kurisanani

### *PROJECT #3: ISHMAEL'S PEACE CORPS EDUCATION PROGRAM*

Evelyn Petenenge	Linton's sister, Huko teacher, cried during workshop
Ishmael	U.S. Peace Corps Volunteer
Linton Petenenge	Ishmael's perceived nemesis at Huko
Mhani Stella	Teacher, disturbed by Ishmael/host family relations
Mrs. Bayana	Huko Principal, wants Ishmael to "lengthen his heart"
Mrs. Gubama	Teacher, husband died, feared as "harsh" by other teachers
Mrs. Rhanzdo	Pfukani Principal, disturbed by Ishmael/host family relations
Mrs. Shikibana	Ishmael's host mother, former Pfukani teacher

## — INTRODUCTION —

### PHENOMENAL DEVELOPMENTS / DEVELOPING PERCEPTIONS

As a Peace Corps Volunteer (PCV) in the rural areas of South Africa's Limpopo Province in the late 1990s, I found myself intrigued by a certain set of incidents. A fellow PCV visited me in my host village. He insisted that we go to buy a bottle of Coke. We walked, together with my host brother, along the dusty streets to a little shop, locally called a "spaza shop," run from a neighbor's home. Observing half a dozen or so local customers jostling each other to be served next, my friend's body stiffened and he crossed his hands in front of his stomach as if trying to hold himself together. Clearly agitated, he leaned over to me and hissed, "Why don't they just wait in line?" The next day, after the PCV returned to his host village, my host brother who had accompanied us to the spaza shop asked me in the Tsonga language, "Why did Peter tighten his body like that? He doesn't want to touch black people?" At the same spaza shop not long after this incident, I witnessed another visiting PCV involved in the same dynamic. She was obviously hiding her frustration behind a smile when she said, "This is chaos."

These two related incidents opened my eyes in two ways: First, I realized that interpersonal relationships are a key element in grassroots development work. Naturally, I did not want to be viewed by locals as disdainful of blacks, especially since I am a black American socialized to appreciate being black. Subsequently, I tactfully dived in with locals to vie for Cokes and bread at spaza shops. I made sure to eat and drink from the same plates and glasses with locals at every opportunity. Engaging myself bodily with my African counterparts became a routine and relatively comfortable practice for me by the time I returned to the U.S. I was sure this accomplishment had something to do with my effective relations with my hosts and

with the success of my development work, which Peace Corps / South Africa continues to tout today to new PCVs as a model project. Years later as a graduate student, I found that anthropological studies of development had not centered their analyses of aid work on everyday interactions between change-agents and their local hosts and among the local hosts themselves. This dissertation attempts to supply a missing piece to the Anthropology of Development.

The “spaza shop incidents” secondly incited in me an outpouring of what I thought was original ideas. I noticed how the bodies of my PCV friends, as well as my own upon self-reflection, spontaneously expressed anxiety in physically intimate situations before words were uttered. It became evident to me not only that the body and speech were not disconnected, independent entities but also that the utterances seemed to take direction from the body’s discomforts. In graduate school, I was delighted to find that philosophical and “cultural phenomenology” spoke directly to the role of the body in conscious expression and in intersubjective exchanges. Thus, my dissertation brings phenomenological insights to bear on the actors involved in grassroots development work. Phenomenology’s insights, however, tend to exhaust themselves before thoroughly analyzing and explaining interpersonal aspects of grassroots aid work. Consequently, in order to understand the dynamics involved, I had to reassess and ultimately challenge phenomenology’s assertions regarding (1) the irrelevance of psychological elements of human agency and (2) the incompatibility of intersubjective relativity and universality.

## **DEVELOPMENT as INTERPERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS**

Anthropology and anthropology-compatible disciplines have soundly objectified the historical project of development on a plethora of analytic levels. Many scholars have tackled numerous elements of development as parts of single studies. Most famously

perhaps, a number of scholars have focused on development as institutional discourses (Abrahamsen 2000, Escobar 1995, Ferguson 1990). These studies argue that development institutions generate their own discourses or languages about Third World communities. The resulting bulwark of knowledge identifies the needs of the communities, and change-agents intervene locally on the basis of this knowledge. The problem is, according to these studies, that while development projects regularly fail to implement their stated goals, they curiously succeed at entrenching the power of the host state and Western modernity under the assumption of political neutrality. The anthropological significance of these investigations rests, first, in their focus on the developers (“us”) instead of on the developed (“them”) and, second, in their use of the Foucauldian concept of governmentality (1991) to show how institutional discourses work to subjectify modernity’s peripheral populations to state apparatuses.

Other anthropological studies view development as a uniquely identifiable experience and proceed to illuminate its emergence as an era in history (Abrahamsen 2000, Escobar 1995, Sachs 1992). These investigations normally trace the development project to the 1950s. In this decade, European colonies in the South began forcefully demanding independence; colonization became, for many Westerners, a deplorable practice that blatantly contradicted European ideals of human equality. In this context, President Truman used the word “underdeveloped” for the first time to characterize the condition of colonial subjects (Escobar 1995, Sachs 1992). This new discursive objectification re-imagined colonial subjects from permanently backward and uncivilized to transformable and potentially civilized. The “development decades” (Esteva 1992: 12-17, Korff and Schrader 2000) ensued. Each decade since the 1950s has roughly corresponded to a different development paradigm, such as economic growth, basic needs, and structural adjustment in the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s, respectively. Each paradigm offers a unique method of

mapping, controlling, and further subjectifying Third World communities to state power and modern Western influence.

Unbracketing development from its identifiable historical era, some scholars attend tangentially to the roots of development in colonialism while others offer full-scale explorations of development within the long historical context of Western modernity. In the case of its colonial roots, development discourse represents a morally palpable alternative to colonial discourse, though both effectively enable Western powers to control, oppress, and exploit inhabitants of the Third World through knowledge production and the practices this production precipitates (Bornstein 2005, Escobar 1995, Sachs 1992). A slightly different angle alludes to a similar psychological motivation implicit in development and colonial projects, namely, that both Western projects transform the “chaos” of indigenous social and cultural formations into the rational “order” of Western organizational structures (Crush 1995). In the case of development’s historical roots in Western modernity, Gilbert Rist (1997) traces development to a deep-seated religious belief in progress dating back to Greek philosophers in antiquity. It is the religiosity of this belief that explains its endurance through multiple “ages.” Even the thought of abandoning some fundamental notion of perpetual advancement causes anxiety in a belief of progress.

While some studies investigate development in its trans-historical dimension, at least one study thoroughly and ethnographically de-centers its transnational circuitry. Erica Bornstein “crisscrosses the globe” (2005: 2) in an effort to trace the meanings of development for a chain of faith-based NGO actors, including donors, child sponsors and office workers in the U.S. as well as grassroots NGO personnel from the “West” and their local colleagues and beneficiaries in Zimbabwe. Bornstein’s overall aim involves debunking the contemporary theoretical and practical tendency to view economic development as separable from religious belief. While secular and

religious aid projects share basic values, such as utopian ideals and individual choice, Bornstein argues that avowedly religious development NGOs incite moral debates between change-agents (whom I also refer to as grassroots activists) and beneficiaries about change more effectively than secular projects, which only silence their religious source of inspiration. The moral tangles observed in Bornstein's case studies shed light on interactions between NGO staffers and their Zimbabwean colleagues and beneficiaries as well as among NGO staffers and participating Zimbabweans, respectively. Yet, while observations, such as locals accused by community members of practicing witchcraft to secure NGO employment and parents disturbed by their inability to access their children's sponsorship money, involve interaction, they remain analytically above a discussion involving everyday verbal communication and body language.

Leaving the international angle of development aside, a number of scholars zero in on grassroots encounters and the implementation stage of aid as their exclusive concentration. They look at development projects aimed at specific sub-groups such as women (Hilhorst 2001; 1997, Rankin 2001) or at issues intrinsic to implementing aid ideals such as local participation (Bornstein 2005, Rahnema 1992) and intended versus unintended consequences of improvement efforts (Bending and Rosendo 2006, Bornstein 2005, Escobar 1995, Ferguson 1990, Hilhorst 2001, Li 1999). While these studies define their scholarly intervention as an exploration of development as interactions, they do not illuminate the richest elements of grassroots encounters. We come to understand that many villagers view cooperation with NGOs as a route to personal mobility (Weisgrau 1997, Ribot 1996); that beneficiaries often envy villagers employed by an NGO and even accuse them of witchcraft (Bornstein 2005); that NGO workers, despite their best intentions, manipulate village participation to their strategic ends (Abbink 2004, Nauta 2006, Rossi 2006, Li 1999) and that, quite the reverse,

villagers may twist the presence, activities, and language of NGOs to their advantage (Bornstein 2005, Li 1999). But raising questions about whether or not activists and their local colleagues and beneficiaries actually get along with each other when consuming food and drink, consummate sincere friendships and romances, or fumble through routine / daily conversations shows just how relatively abstract these analyses of development interactions still prove. In its primary attention to the relationship between interpersonal interchange and development, this study fills this gap in the Anthropology of Development.

A number of discernable, fundamental quandaries inhabit the pages of the literature on development anthropology: How do colonialism and development relate to each other, besides a general and acknowledged correspondence between the two historic moments? How do scholars reconcile their aim of de-binarizing change-agents and beneficiaries and, what seems, the unavoidable tendency to reify their “difference” anyway? Similarly, how do scholars reconcile their good intentions to re-imagine development from discourse from above to development as fusing discourse and social action and the obvious reification of an ideal / material binary this move continues to perpetuate? What motivates change-agents of modernity to persist in their work in the face of objective facts and personal experience that deem development a half-success at best, an outright failure and oppressive practice at worst? Why do change-agents, like anthropologists, appear unable to achieve perfect integration with their local hosts? How do scholars tackle the paradox inherent in providing external assistance to bring about internal independence? Is there any alternative to or space outside of the idea and practice of modern development? Finally, how much of development, beyond speculation and abstract association, is a religious practice?

## **PHENOMENOLOGY and DEVELOPMENT**

The anthropology of development runs up against these quandaries not because many of its most persuasive arguments, such as those proposed by Ferguson, Escobar, and Bornstein, appear discourse deterministic. Recall the epistemological moves, in fact, that acknowledge multiple discourses and the ability of agents to manipulate these language structures (Lewis and Mosse 2006, Hilhorst 2001), as well as the call to embed development discourse in particular socio-cultural and politico-economic histories (Nauta 2006, 2004). The inability so far to transcend binary categories or “spheres,” despite what seems like a universal call to do so, interferes with the potential for a fresh and consequential set of ideas and debates within the anthropological study of development. Scholars within the Anthropology of Development make conscious efforts to marry a range of oppositions. These binary oppositions include, but are not limited to the following: tradition and modernity (Escobar 1995), religion and capitalism (Abbink 2004, Salemink 2006), religion and development (Bornstein 2005, Buijs 2004), change-agents and beneficiaries (Rossi 2006, Weisgrau 1997), “illusory” culture and “real” economic transformation (Heryanto 1995), grassroots detail and enframing context (Lewis and Mosse 2006, Nauta 2006), and development of self and other (Giri 2004). My research findings help me to put the question the other way around. Rather than asking whether and how we reconcile false dichotomies, we now must ask, who in real life experiences life dichotomously and why and to what end? Perhaps like some anthropologists, the grassroots activists who participated in my study worked steadfastly and unconsciously to imagine, reimagine, and organize their private and public lives on the bases of discrete senses of arrangement (esp. Chapter Three). Phenomenological attentions within anthropology, referred to heuristically as “phenomenological

ethnography” and “cultural phenomenology” (Katz and Csordas 2003: 277), are best positioned to examine this “peculiar subjectivity” (Mitchell 1989).

Phenomenological ethnographies base their investigations on the precepts of philosophical phenomenology, whose postmodern disciplinary mission involves historicizing subject / object relations via the notion of perception and kindred concepts (Merleau-Ponty 1964: 66, Sanders 1999: 122). The word “perception” commonly appears in the English language to signal a viewpoint or outlook; in phenomenology, it specifically refers to the idea of subjects and objects, instead of being simply given or naturally occurring, are situationally articulated into recognizable cultural objects (Merleau-Ponty 1962: xi). For example, posing the questions, “How are you, Reader,” reaffirms the reader’s situational identity as a reader of this text while concomitantly reaffirming the questioner’s status as its author. Identity is always and unavoidably an intersubjective phenomenon (Jackson 1998). Following the phenomenological insights of Maurice Merleau-Ponty more than Alfred Schutz, cultural phenomenologists further understand intersubjective exchange as grounded in spontaneous, preobjectified bodily sensibilities (Sanders 1999: 131, Jackson 1989: 34). At the question, “How are you, Reader,” perhaps you feel belittled for being only a reader and not an author so you smirk your way into consciously and reluctantly accepting your ephemeral identity as a reader; and perhaps I feel proud for being the author and not just a passive reader so my eyes widen with confidence as I consciously and happily recognize myself as a writer. Identity is historically experienced as bodily perception triggered by intersubjective interchange (Geurts 2003). Analyses beginning with fully constituted identity, institutions, emotions, or actions, such as “The Nuer,” “initiation school,” “anger,” or “running,” misrepresent the real historical flow of human experience by starting at its end instead of its beginning.

Cultural phenomenology stresses that while perceptions occur spontaneously and precipitously to consciousness, they are nevertheless cultural or habituated actions, not biological (Downey 2002, Csordas 1988). Thus, smiles, for example, may be triggered for different and even contradictory reasons, depending on their cultural milieu of socialization (Csordas 1988: 26). The term “cultural phenomenology” glosses a range of phenomenological interventions which, while overlapping in significant ways, stress diverse existential phenomena. Some studies, for example, stress the sensuous nature of human experiences (Downey 2002, Stoller 1989), such as tasting, hearing, and feeling consciousness, memory, and identity into recognizable constitution. Other investigations emphasize spontaneous gesturing (Boyer 2005b, Csordas 1988, Geurts 2003), recognizing the way subtle body tics, postures, and visceral undulations birth culture and consciousness into practice. Meanwhile, works by Michael Jackson (1998) and John Sanders (1999) elucidate the intersubjective grounds of individuality while, earlier, Jackson (1989) and Laurence Kirmayer (1992) meditate on the metaphoric conjoining of speech and bodily practice. In tracing back consciousness and objectivity, culture and society to irreducible intersubjectivity and to the preobjective gesturing and sensuous activity it triggers, phenomenological ethnography, like its philosophical forbearer, searches for existential beginnings (ibid: 9) or radical beginnings (Zaner and Ihde 1973: 29) of cultural experience via self-disciplined radical empiricism (Jackson 1996).

No sooner do we appreciate the promise of approaching development phenomenologically than we recognize the challenge such an approach portends. With the exception of Boyer’s work, which will facilitate my central argument below, cultural phenomenological investigations to date have focused on a whole or on some segment of an identifiable population, such as the Anlo-Ewe and Charismatic Christianity in North America, respectively. This analytic focus does not solve

problems of “difference” so much as it precludes engaging these problems by concentrating on behaviors and ideas within shared *habitus*. By contrast, studies of development generally and my research particularly spotlight the intersubjectivity of actors from significantly “different” *habitus*. Studying the respective discourses and discursively-informed practices of foreign grassroots workers and their village hosts in South Africa and then noting how individuals manipulate these discursive constructs during development work does not satisfy phenomenological methodology: it reverses the flow of human experience by reifying discourse and individuals as objective facts as opposed to understanding them as cultural objectifications articulated into constitutive fullness on moment by moment bases; it also makes the body subject to consciousness, in discursive form, whereas cultural phenomenology views the opposite as true. In comparison, my study of development experiences involved a self-disciplined rejection of already constituted identities, such as whites versus Africans and developers versus beneficiaries, in favor of first analyzing pre-articulated, though still cultural, body expressions in the course of interpersonal encounters. Beneath situational convergences of ideology and agreeable conversations, I found, in keeping with the vignettes above, that the bodies of the change-agents and their village hosts manifested starkly and consistently different senses of comfort and discomfort. How does cultural phenomenology understand and interpret “difference” experienced by historical subjects?

If intersubjectivity stands as the irreducible ground of subjectivity and identity (Jackson 1998), what do we make of the bodies of the grassroots activists that express discomfort in or say “No” to unmediated forms of social contact? Simultaneously, what does cultural phenomenology say about the bodies of South African villagers that warm up or say “Yes” to organic or immediate displays of intersubjective exchange? One of phenomenology’s defining principles is ontological relativity—

everything is relative, hence *intersubjectivity* as an irreducible precept. Yet it is inadvisable to insist on the historical specificity of these two diverging body orientations and to leave it at that. Just behind this insistence seeps in antiquated ideas about unbridgeable, biological differences between westerners and Africans, whites and blacks. Describing contexts for these preobjective body manifestations does not explain their differences as much as it projects their differences backward from a relatively personal to a relatively impersonal scale. Although the discipline of cultural phenomenology, like its philosophical forbearer, embodies a cogent, negative criticism or what it calls an “Epoche” (Jackson 1996) or “bracketing off” of Western modernity’s universalisms, its strident relativity loses traction when it comes to understanding grassroots development projects in rural South Africa run by change-agents from Western cultural milieus. The theoretical and moral question generated by my research findings is not the abstraction that says the change-agents and their African counterparts are all human beings but were just socialized differently; it is the pointed question, “How are they each other in the immediacy of their encounters, even as their bodies motivate them in conflicting directions?”

## **ETHNOGRAPHIC CASE STUDIES**

The case studies precipitating the un-bracketing of phenomenology’s principled rejection of a-historical universals include spiritual, health, and educational development projects. These projects take place in Tsonga- and Pedi-speaking villages around the formerly all white town of Tzaneen in South Africa’s Limpopo Province. The spiritual development project is an evangelical church ministered by an Afrikaner missionary from Cape Town; the health assistance activity is a parish instantiation of a diocese-wide HIV/AIDS relief program overseen by a Catholic nun from Ireland; and the educational aid activity is a school improvement initiative facilitated by a Peace

Corps Volunteer (PCV) from the US. Pseudonym-ed Sergeant, Valerie, and Ishmael, the missionary, Nun, and PCV each interlinked personally and professionally with numerous other aid projects and overseas grassroots workers in rural Limpopo. I could have chosen any number and combination of these foreign development workers and their projects in rural Limpopo, for their interpersonal and corporeal engagements resonated precisely with Sergeant, Valerie, and Ishmael's. Indeed, this dissertation intermittently draws a host of additional grassroots agents into discussions to suggest the generality of the phenomenon in question. However, giving equal attention to five, seven, or up to twenty personalities would dilute the individuality and idiosyncrasies of the personalities in the study. In this study of cross-cultural bodiliness, face-to-face encounters, and social emotions, it is essential for the reader to know Sergeant, Valerie, and Ishmael intimately. Each must present as a unique individual rather than as one in a litany of case study participants.

Originally conceived of as an investigation of the grassroots work of PCVs only, my research adapted to two situational stimuli: First, the Director of PC / SA rejected my formal request for unmitigated access to PCVs and their training sessions. Since she said, "If PCVs choose to participate in your research, I don't want to know about it," I thought it best to loosen my association with the PC by formally including just one of its volunteers. Second, a PCV, who participated tangentially and early-on in my study, became a Christian missionary in SA subsequent to his PC service. This reminded me of the missionary roots of the PC. In *The Bold Experiment: JFK's Peace Corps* (1985), Gerry Rice begins by highlighting the development of the US by missionaries and understands the PC as a natural outgrowth of many of the overseas missionary efforts since then. To conclude his point with panache, Rice reminds us (1) that one of the PC's first directors said that volunteers only carried out "in greater numbers and without religious connotations much of the same work which church and

church-inspired groups have done for many years” and (2) that Kennedy himself, in proposing the PC, conveyed his high regard for the Mormon Church’s requirement of voluntary service by its young members. This piqued my interest in comparing interpersonal exchanges between change-agents and local beneficiaries representing putatively distinct and demonstrably antagonistic secular, Protestant, and Catholic worldviews and institutions. The fully participating PCV grew up Muslim, a fact that enriched, if complicated the prospect of gaining perspective on some of the world’s biggest differences and conflicts.

Conceiving of development as interpersonal relations occasioned two mutually reinforcing analytic moves: It pointed my investigation less toward intra-national and international networks of institutions and funding sources and more toward scenarios where grassroots activists and their local interlocutors meet outside of formal contexts of work. Thus, Chapters Three and Four focus respectively on “development and residence” and “development and friendship.” It may seem obvious that activists do not just “go overseas and work” but must also “live somewhere” and that they will establish more and less sincere relations with individual hosts. Yet anthropological studies of development both within and outside of Africa largely overlook these possibilities. In their introduction to *The Anthropology of Friendship* (1997), Sandra Bell and Simon Coleman suggest that Anthropology has viewed friendship as private, subjective, contingent and, therefore, peripheral to analyses of worthy, discipline-defining social structures such as kinship. In this, Anthropology has unwittingly projected a Eurocentric, private / public dichotomy into its work.

It suggests itself that a similar presumption of irreconcilable private / public spheres has respectively rendered residential dynamics obsolete while promoting concerns with formalized work in studies of development. Apart from articulating phenomenology to development, then, this dissertation contributes to the

Anthropology of Development by attending to the neglected analytic intersections of directed change, on the one hand, and living and friendship situations, on the other hand. Chapters Three and Four record, from a bird's eye view, where persons go across space and time to transform stressful situations into relatively comforting ones. In this sense, the chapters detail post-perceptual activity occurring late in phenomenological experience. The chapters are important in a phenomenological study, however, for we will see in Chapter Five how the residential and friendship "choices" resonate uncannily with spontaneous, fragmentary body perceptions or gestures of the participants, as well as with residence and friendship decisions of anthropological fieldworkers, including me.

The dissertation's data comes from field notes collected while living for two years with a host family, the Ngobenis, in a village outside of Tzaneen from 2005 to 2007. I first met this family during my PC service in South Africa (SA) from 1997 to 1999. As a member of the first PC contingent to serve in SA, I received language, culture, and work training at a high school in the predominantly Tsonga-speaking township of Nkowankowa. For hands-on experience, the PC/SA team coordinated "home stays" in which volunteers lived for two weeks with designated local families. I was matched up with the Ngobeni family and we have been "like family" ever since. It was my stimulating PC stint that sparked my interest in studying foreign aid and gave me SA as research location. Living with the Ngobenis for two years of dissertation field research gave me intimate exposure to family life in its socio-cultural and political-economic complexity. Situated centrally among the grassroots initiatives I was investigating, my host village facilitated my geographic and intellectual access to the communities hosting the three change-agents.

I used formal interviews, participant-observation, and audio and video recordings to collect information pertaining to the socio-discursive dynamics of the

host villages. To gather data around relationships between body perceptions and conscious expressions among villagers and between them and their foreign benefactors, I noted preverbal expressions of physical comforts and discomforts of research participants in work, home, and leisure spaces. In nearly all data collection exercises, I collaborated informally with alternating, predominantly male youth to gather information. Formally, the PCV and numerous local participants in all three development projects kept diary entries for me related to their daily emotional “highs” and “lows” both within and outside of contexts of actual development work. These confessions shed light on (1) what agitated and comforted various actors and (2) what information should and should not be divulged to whom, and why. The PCV, who I now consider my “best friend,” further shared with me copies of “letters home.”

## **THE ARGUMENT**

Sergeant, Valerie and Ishmael all experienced the world in terms of what Timothy Mitchell has called the “peculiar metaphysic of capitalist modernity” (1988: xii). This metaphysic orients subjects to perceive the world in terms of ontological dichotomies between ideality / materiality (ibid: xii-xiii), subjectivity / objectivity (ibid: 20). In part, then, my ethnographic data charges me not with further critiquing dualistic modern categories (Karlstrom 1999, Mitchell 2002, Nyamnjoh 2001, Piot 1999), such as mind / body, but rather to situate and explain experiences of them as normal. Accordingly, my dissertation aligns tightly with the work of scholars who have turned the corner of criticism in efforts to positively locate and explain “mind-in-a-vat” (Boyer 2005b: 245, Latour 1999: 4) experiences of actual subjects. Innovative studies by Mitchell and Boyer prove particularly indispensable in this regard. While operating at different but complimentary analytic levels, these scholars associate the “peculiar

metaphysic” with the production of intellectual expertise. My argument builds on their insights.

In *Rule of Experts* (2002), Mitchell found colonial and postcolonial Egypt organized around the “peculiar metaphysic,” where everything from dams and private property to *the* peasantry and knowledge appeared detached from its producers. It seemed individual-will displaced inert objects, human manipulated nonhuman, expertise mapped nature. But the techno-science complicit in the production of these dichotomous arrangements and images owes its own sense of autochthonous knowledge to the “objectivity” it feels it lords over. Agency and structure, human and nature, expertise and objects, these sorts of binaries necessarily interpenetrate because they each contain the quality of the other. Personifying the violence of disarticulation, technical expertise reframes as it colonizes Egypt according to its own constitutive logic. The logic of Merleau-Ponty’s phenomenology inquires, “How do individuals corporeally perceive techno-scientific claims into objective forms?” Boyer begins to answer this question.

Boyer elaborates a model for a phenomenology of expertise (Boyer 2005a-b). As Marx and Engels write, a division and specialization between material and mental labor bespeaks a “true” division of labor. As mental labor solidifies professionally, professional intellectualism emerges, “cultivating a phenomenological awareness of mental distinction into an ‘ontological’ divide between mind and body” (Boyer 2005b). Boyer’s innovation rests in discerning that this “awareness” has a body, or rather, corporeality (2005b). The transformation from East-West blocks to national unity assumed the superiority of West German standards of journalism over East German standards. When Boyer asked them about East-West relations, Eastern journalists preobjectively gestured anxiously and defensively. Thus the journalists’ corporeality expertly recognized and critiqued social distinctions and professional

insults. Even professional intellectuals, whose labor cultivates the perception of a mind / body split, cannot escape corporeality.

Boyer's phenomenology of expertise and Mitchell's "peculiar metaphysic of capitalist modernity" (1988: xii) correspond uncannily; both acknowledge the social facticity of the perception of ideal / material ontological distinctions made by historical subjects. But whereas Mitchell emphasizes the illusory and violent nature of expert knowledge, Boyer stresses its corporeality. My interpretive framework brings these two accents together and, indeed, the fluidity of their union already inheres across the respective and reinforcing insights of the scholars. As knowledge experts, Eastern journalists instantiate Mitchell's "peculiar metaphysic"; they do not just come from but personify and continually cultivate bifurcations of labor. If this personification of binary oppositions implicates the entire mind / body persona, then even the body should bear the marks of peculiarity. In addition to observing and describing the corporeal quirks of Eastern journalists, then, why not further understand them as the first line of defense of mind / body experiences and of the binary ideological and institutional edifices they erect?

This dissertation does this within its larger mandate to understand the phenomenological interactions of grassroots workers and their village interactants at development sites in the Limpopo Province. In their residential and friendship situations, the grassroots workers seek to feel self-complete in their actions whereas Limpopo villagers matter-of-factly experience their subjectivity as interdependent. I trace this contradiction of subjectivity to their corporeal perceptions. On different registers with diverse senses of affect, the bodies of the change-agents gesture their individualities into senses of autonomous selfhood, concomitantly negating social elements of their constitution. By contrast, the bodies of Limpopo aid workers and recipients pivot their individualities toward phenomenological interdependency.

Furthermore, sentiments mark these divergent embodiments; thus, the grassroots seek out autonomy for stress relief whereas villagers move toward others for comfort. I call bodies gesturing with and against the grain of subject / object relationality *Yes-ing Bodies* and *No-ing Bodies*, respectively.

Their *Yes-ing* and *No-ing Bodies* orient, but do not determine the conscious detail of statements and larger residential and friendship decisions made by the grassroots workers and villagers, ultimately unsettling their interpersonal relations. Interpersonal malaise in turn upsets the progress of stated development objectives. Echoing Jackson's conceptualization of metaphors (1993), partial encounters do not so much *lead to* partial progress as much as *are* the partial progress. As anthropologists of development have observed elsewhere (Escobar 1995, Ferguson 1990, Weisgrau 1997), however, the poor implementation of the projects' stated objectives came with unintended or perhaps intended consequences. Circling back to the insights of Timothy Mitchell, the missionary, nun, and PCV worked to institutionalize the "peculiar metaphysic of capitalist modernity" in various ways. Sergeant, Valerie, and Ishmael labored respectively to cultivate rigid distinctions between life and death, individuals and relations, and work and play (Chapter Seven). In each case, villagers managed to domesticate and expose the ideal / material distinctions (Mitchell 2002: 53).

This argument carries several significances: One, previous studies of development trace unintended consequences to grassroots workers' ignorance of beneficiaries' social practices (Weisgrau 1997) or to political blindness (Ferguson 1990). My study additionally stresses the roles played by bodiliness and intersubjectivity in unforeseen but purposeful outcomes. Two, the concept of *No-Bodies* embodies the potential to return to Mitchell's "peculiar" techno-scientists their corporeality and to infuse the corporeality of Boyer's Eastern journalists with its

peculiarity. Consequently, the grassroots aid workers, journalists, colonists and, as we will see, many anthropologists appear to share phenomenological kinship in “expertise.” Three, Mitchell stresses the impossibility and thus the instability and tension inherent in binary arrangements (2002: 36, 53). The spontaneous gesturing of *No-ing Bodies* forms, I contend, the irreducible ground of this tension, for this gesturing works “overtime” to convince individuality of its singularity in spite of its entanglements. Hands pulling back to say “I’m sorry” for accidentally touching another person depends on an “other” for its felt-retreat into autonomous space; it is both subject and object, despite its corporeal “cover-up.” Four, expert discourses, such as development, may certainly have political and economic justifications for constructing objects apart from itself (Mitchell 2002: 242-3). But it seems what makes such a justification thinkable begins in a phenomenological discomfort with relatedness. Sentiments play a role in development discourse and other expert knowledge.

A fifth significance deals with the problem of using Western cultural categories to contextualize data. Partially indebted to Marx for his own intervention, Mitchell nevertheless criticizes him for wanting to “ground his critique of consciousness in absolute distinctions between real and abstract, presence and representation, object and value, labor and ideas” (2002: 30). Indeed, voices raised against the binary biases of Western scientific categories prove numerous (Appiah 1992, Apter 1992, Derrida 1974, Marcus and Fischer 1985, Martin 1987, Moore 1986, Mudimbe 1988, Schneider 1984, Weiss 1996). So in what framework do we base the data? What sort of contextual categories confess rather than conceal, declare rather than depress their value orientations or personifying powers (Mitchell 2002: 30)? In their respective attempts to reframe or *No* villagers’ unproblematic embrace of subject / object unity (Comaroff 1985, Nyamnjoh 2002) in terms of a series of antimonies,

such as private and public spaces, the grassroots workers pragmatically define these binaries as *No-ing* categories. They try to *No* the landscape into personifications of their own “peculiar metaphysic” or “phenomenological expertise.” In return, villagers *Yes* the development projects with their own personifications of knowledge and sociality. The everyday implementation of Western contextual categories becomes an object of study.

The adjectives “yes” and “no” exemplify ontological bifurcations, so does not this argument hypocritically reinforce what it, Mitchell, and others claim as illusory? No, but the question indicates a need to integrate the insights of Mitchell and Boyer into a larger theoretical frame. The Mitchell-Boyer analysis powerfully elucidates the subjectivity of the grassroots workers. But what about Limpopo colleagues, aid recipients, and other villagers? What explains their and other Africans’ (Geshiere 1997, Nyamnjoh 2002, Stoller 1997) embrace of a subject / object quality in both themselves and their “objects”? And if every human and nonhuman contain something of each other (Mitchell 2002: 34), even if *No-ing Bodies* work to negate this fact, *No-ing Bodies* and *Yes-ing Bodies* must relate. How? What do bodies gesturing toward and away from others have to do with each other? If these corporealities orient individual expression and decision-making according their divergent valuations of otherness, how do *Yes-Bodies* and *No-Bodies* get along during routine interchange? Finally, why “yes” and “no” only? Why not “maybe,” “undecided,” “hell yes,” or “hell no”? Related, what stabilizes the “peculiar metaphysic of capitalist modernity” across spaces, times, and professions? Surely not discourse itself, for this only reinscribes how it wishes to see itself as an autochthonous power.

To show how *Yes-ing* and *No-ing Bodies* interpenetrate, I rely on a merger between the work Jane Fajans and “cultural phenomenology’s” unassailable demand for “radical empiricism,” a William James tenant (Jackson 1996). Radical empiricism,

like John Dewey's "empirical naturalism" and Merleau-Ponty's "phenomenology," refers to a commitment by scholars of phenomenology to underscore the historicity and therefore the relativity and relatedness of all human constructions (Jackson 1996), from conscious thought and subjective action to ideologies and institutions. True experience begins in body perceptions and ends in polished products, which nevertheless hold history relatively stably in place rather than freeze it once and for all. Referring to the effect of pure objectivity of the Aswan Dam in Egypt, Mitchell writes, "Like all dualisms, and all artifacts, it was neither original nor completely stable. The artifactual is the effect of a process" (Mitchell 2002: 36). Yet my research data demands a global perspective in order to reconcile corporeal "difference." It is one [appropriate] thing to be leery of differences thought to be constructed out-of-context by ivory towers academics; it is quite another when research participants themselves manifest oppositional forms of subjectivity and do so viscerally within a shared ethnographic setting. How do we understand real difference? Can we speak globally and still satisfy radical empiricism? Can a universal be found being practiced in history instead of being abstractly stated after the fact of human experience?" The work of Jane Fajans helps us answer "Yes" to this question.

Based on a survey of ethnographies in Melanesia, including her own, Fajans develops a rich and resonant theory of schemas. According to Fajans, psychic desire transforms into cultural motivation toward the interrelated sociocultural values of autonomy and relatedness (2006: 105). What combination of these values orient human action depends on the social activities and cultural beliefs empirically practiced by the subjects of particular cultural milieus (ibid: 117). In debunking the anthropological assumption about the irreconcilable relation between emotional and social phenomena, Fajans finds that cultural motivations pivot on sentiments or social emotions and are, therefore, embodied. It is this rich articulation among psychic,

emotional, bodily, and historical concerns that will be mined and explored in Chapter Five to make sense of encounters between development agents and Limpopo beneficiaries. In her monograph on the Baining of Papua New Guinea (1997), Fajans demonstrates how the cultural motivation of Baining commonly encodes for a transformative, nature-to-social schema. In an array of seemingly distinct activities, such as gardening, marrying, and adopting, the Baining work sentimentally to refashion raw, natural products into social and, thus, acceptable ones. This is their “culture,” their social structure.

The recorded actions of African beneficiaries of international aid seem to share the very same nature-to-social schema as the Baining. For example, James Ferguson (1990), in his discussion of the “Bovine Mystique,” observes that Basotho experience the conversion of cash into cattle as appropriate but the reverse transaction as unseemly. Since cattle represent for Basotho a history and maintenance of social bonds, their unwillingness to sell-off cattle, sometimes even in dire financial straits, can be easily understood in terms of working to convert natural objects, such as cattle, into socialized forms, cattle encoding for social relations. In a different case, Erica Bornstein (2005) relates the social drama of a Zimbabwean man who worked as a bookkeeper for the NGO, World Vision. The man is convinced his community members have sent an evil spirit to kill him. The bookkeeper explained what he supposes angered his co-villagers: “Now they [community members] say, ‘he is developed and he is proud of himself’” (142). Here, pride is associated by Zimbabwean villagers with becoming unresponsive to social relations and their witching of the arrogant man can be seen as socializing his crude flight into uncontrollable autonomy or nature. Similarly, the activities of Limpopo villagers work to domesticate the autonomy of development projects, and they do so, as Fajans contends, on sentimental and bodily bases.

A challenge to Fajans' work relates to the fact that the "overseas" development workers in Limpopo embody quite the opposite schemas. Against the grain of their beneficiaries who continually attempt to domesticate presentations of autonomous or socially un-embedded actions and projects, the grassroots activists tried precisely to untie social bonds and relatedness and massage them into seemingly discrete structures. Fajans' formulation can thoroughly explain these divergent schematic movements as well as their bases in sentiments and bodiliness. In putting the two contradictory, schematic activities under one ethnographic spotlight, this dissertation takes on the added challenge of explaining them not just separately but in terms of each other in the immediacy of their encounter. To do this requires putting the schema concept into conversation with cultural phenomenology's demand for radical beginnings. This is accomplished in Chapter Five and leads to the observation of a global framework embedded within the historicity of everyday experience, as opposed to lifted-out and above the real lives of people.

A few caveats are in order: First, my argument depends on concepts such as corporeality, bodiliness, and embodiment yet does not represent another study of "the body." In "Bodies and Anti-Bodies," Terence Turner, in critiquing the work of Michael Foucault and, more generally, postmodernist and post-structural paradigms, concludes, "For Foucault, the body is once and for all an individual body, bounded by its skin and congruent with an individual social person in the modern West" (1994: 38). Instead of studying the body as an inert and individual object, Turner insists we "confront the plural aspect of the body as a relation (both physiological and social) among bodies; rather than the singular and individual aspect of the body as the subject of sensations of erotic pleasure or pain" (1994: 44). Heeding Turner's call, and making his object of scrutiny the Cartesian mind / body bifurcation, Boyer stresses,

“I have sought to write about the physicality and corporeality of professional intellectual life without dropping into a discussion of ‘the intellectual’s body’ that would, I think, have made it very difficult to describe bodily epistemic capabilities and actions without, however unintentionally, asserting that these capabilities and actions ‘belonged to’ an abstract entity, ‘the body,’ opposed to an equivalently abstract entity, ‘the mind’ (2005: 261).

The problem Turner, Boyer, and others (Stoller 1995: 21-22) have discerned in studying “the body” is a key one. From a phenomenological perspective, “the body” as a concept assumes an articulated wholeness or, in Turner’s language, a presumptuously “bounded” nature, thus positing in the beginning what must be shown, along with conscious expression, to have been congealed into a meaningful cultural product via perceptions. The approach taken in this study is far from assuming the discreteness of bodies; instead, it was to patiently see what the bodies of development participants would tell my informant-friends and me about themselves. The concepts of *Yes-ing* and *No-ing Bodies*, as will become clear below, derive from preobjective psycho-social gestures of Limpopo villagers and their culturally foreign benefactors, not from the speculative whims of the ethnographer. Inasmuch as the *No-ing Bodies* of the grassroots workers continuously worked toward experiencing themselves as singular, “the body” in this investigation shifts from a Eurocentric assumption to an object of empirical study. Initially given to me by PCVs, including me, and now diverse grassroots aid-agents, I now offer the concept of *No-ing Bodies* to Anthropology as at least one means of objectifying the documented (Boyer 2005, Riles 2000) slipperiness of modern, that is, our own, subjectivity.

Second, only when read superficially, or perhaps perceived as an existential threat to the self, will the terms *Yes-ing* and *No-ing Bodies* feel dichotomous. The terms “Yes” and “No” signal corporeal responses to a single stimulus, prompt, question, desire, etc. Alternative terminologies, such as extension and contraction or

affirmation and negation, while at first appearing less obtuse and binary, actually prove more bifurcating because they less obviously invoke a mediating signal, a common referent. Further, the “ing” of the “Yes/No” terms recaptures the historicity of the corporeal perceptions. Gestures *worked* to *Yes* and *No* relationships (Chapter Five) and practices (Chapters One, Six, and Seven); that is, they *worked* to naturalize phenomenological experiences of relationality and autonomy, implying “mission not quite accomplished—always.” In this sense, we must understand the terms less as “lopped on” by the scholar and more as “direct quotes” from corporeal perceptions themselves. *Yes-ing* and *No-ing* represents their subjective orientations (Chapter Five), not mine, which I situate in terms of *No-ing Bodies*. Terms such as extension and affirmation accurately describe what village bodies *did*, but what the bodies *said* was “Yes.” Similarly, contraction and negation perfectly depict what the bodies of the development workers *accomplished*, but what their bodies *concluded* was “No.” I now leave it to the reader to listen carefully to the “corporeal voices,” and to embrace the conceptual dynamism and “shades of grey” intrinsic to *Yes-ing* and *No-ing Bodies*.

## **THE CHAPTERS**

The dissertation divides into three sections, Background, The Problem, and Development Work. Chapters One and Two in the first section on Background respectively provide a schematic picture of socio-cultural dynamics of rural Limpopo and introduce the three aid initiatives. Against the backdrop of recent scholarship, which idiomatically characterizes neoliberal Africa in terms of “moral gloom,” Chapter One initiates a discussion of a phenomenology of optimism in African contexts, such as rural Limpopo. Section Two uses Chapters Three and Four to introduce the central problem of this dissertation, understanding real difference. Chapter Three attends to the residential lives of grassroots developers, an analytic

focus missing from previous studies, and finds that their sentimental wish to rigidly distinguish between private space and public space perplexes their Limpopo interactants. Chapter Four focuses on friendship, also unattended by the Anthropology of Development, and finds distinct and deeply-felt approaches interpersonal relations means the grassroots workers and their Limpopo hosts could not be friends in ways satisfying to anyone.

Chapter Five represents the final chapter in Section Two. It first traces the contradictory approaches of the developers and villagers to residential and friendship situations to unique regimes of corporeality and, second, explains their difference in terms of each other with special reference to the interrelated notions of desire and cultural values (Fajans 2006) and phenomenology's demand for radical empiricism. Having traced human experience relatively backwards from living situations to friendships to bodily perceptions, Section Three reengages familiar topics within the Anthropology of Development, but now with a theoretical orientation sensitive to corporeal sensuality. While previous discussions tend to trace the compromising of participatory ideals "up" to flaws in development discourses or ignorance of aid workers, Chapter Six finds additionally that the sorts of interpersonal misfiring between aid workers and Limpopo villagers in residential and friendship situations bleed up into and unsettles participatory ideals from "below." Finally, Chapter Seven draws out theoretically what previous scholars have rather intuited, which is that the unintended consequences of aid work rest primarily in attempting to spher-ize local life in terms of ontological distinctions.

As mentioned previously, Sergeant, Valerie, and Ishmael were part of a much wider, often interlocking network of foreign agents spearheading rural improvement projects. For example, Sergeant was one of several outreach missionaries, with whom he routinely interacted, sponsored by Letaba Christian Church in Tzaneen. There was

a handful of Catholic nuns and priests spread throughout half a dozen parishes within the Tzaneen diocese. Valerie lived with two of these nuns and maintained good relations with the rest. Ishmael was one of about eighty members of the fourteenth PC/SA group. They were parceled out to different provinces, including the Limpopo Province. PC / SA group number fourteen (PC / SA-14) was a particularly close-knit one, meeting regularly as a large contingent or as smaller sub-factions of the whole group. As the PC / SA program staggers the entry of its volunteer groups, PC / SA-13 members were also in SA. I lived in the same village as one of them during my two years of dissertation field research. I met regularly with these other overseas workers, individually and in group settings, and grew to know many of them well. Their phenomenological experiences corresponded with the perceptual worlds of Sergeant, Valerie, and Ishmael. The chapters highlight this correspondence without drowning out the representative social dramas of Sergeant, Valerie, and Ishmael.

PART I: BACKGROUND

## CHAPTER ONE

### HOPING FOR MODERNITY IN LIMPOPO

Recent scholarship teems with characterizations of Africa and Africans suffering from “moral panic” (Weiss 2004: 17), “epic paranoia” (Comaroff and Comaroff 2003: 288), deadly conspiracies (Sanders and West 2003), profound uncertainty (Durham 2002: 139), growing disenchantment (Bastian 2001: 72), and “social anxiety” (Proxy 2001: 98). On the one hand, we empathize with these descriptors, for they emerge empirically from diverse Africa contexts and represent a range of topical foci, such as postcolonial subjectivity (Werbner 2002), occult activities (Moore and Sanders 2001), conspiratorial state power (Sanders and West 2003), and dilemmas in personal and social reproduction for youth (Weiss 2004). Many of the social facts reported in this scholarship prove disturbing indeed: A Zulu young man enduring the everlasting torment of an ancestor spirit who diviners cannot appease (White 2004); a popular Nigerian fear of mass ritual murders of children confirmed by images of a man broadcast nationally holding the severed head of a young boy (Bastian 2003); the selling of the skin of murder victims in Tanzania (Sanders 2001); and the slaying of women and children in the recently aroused ethnic conflict between Dinka and Nuer of South Sudan (Hutchinson and Jok 2002)—these African phenomena, for example, in their gruesomeness, make descriptors such as moral panic and disenchantment seem like understatements.

On the other hand, my data and resulting interpretive frame make me leery about drawing too tight an association between African hopes and the broken promises of modernism. Consider a few statements: “Stories about university cults speak to a growing disenchantment with the empty promises of late capitalism for Nigeria’s youth” (Bastian 2001:72); “Across Tanzania and across Africa people are

simultaneously taunted and tantalized by ‘modernity.’ Its promises of prosperity for all are too good to be ignored and, as many discover, too good to be true” (Sanders 2001: 178); “In other postcolonial venues, the broken promises of modernity have circumscribed possibilities for hope and uncertainty” (Durham 2002: 139); and “[T]he adoption of neoliberal policy [in South Africa], since 1996—notably the Growth, Employment, and Redistribution Macroeconomic Strategy (GEAR)—has dampened many preliberation hopes” (Makhulu 2004). These assertions, and many others like them, evidently use words such as “hope” and “optimism” and “panic” and “uncertainty” colloquially instead of theoretically, concomitantly capturing the way many Africans surely “feel cheated” but attending only cursorily to African phenomenologies of hope. In an era of globalization where “many are called but few are chosen” (Nyamnjoh 2000), expect individuals to feel bad. But do Africans actually experience hope in terms of ideological assurances? Is there slippage between “feeling cheated” by modernity’s broken promises and phenomenological optimism for Africans?

A study of development as phenomenological interactions can ill afford to make haste with hope. By phenomenology, this investigation does not mean formulated view points or perspectives but rather signals true temporal experience, starting from culturally informed gestures sparked by intersubjective interchange and ending in conscious thoughts and social actions (Jackson 1989, Merleau-Ponty 1964, Sanders 1999). As later chapters on residence and friendship will demonstrate, grassroots workers and their Limpopo interactants perceived hope, optimism, “the appropriate way forward,” in very different ways. For the missionary, nun, and PCV, on the one hand, and for their Limpopo hosts, on the other hand, the next step forward always jugged respectively toward self and others, abstracted ideologies and socialized knowledge. This is particularly critical to understand in a study of development given

its presumed isomorphism with optimism in universal progress. In making hay of hope, an object of optimism, this chapter provides an ideal-typical analysis of contemporary sociocultural life in rural Limpopo, the dynamics contextualizing the spiritual, health, and education development projects and the interpersonal manners of their Western facilitators. When villagers judge themselves and others, skirt marriage, engage in sex for money, eat and drink, struggle with HIV-AIDS, trust and feel jealous, and give and receive, they do so on the basis of a domesticated agency (Nyamnjoh 2001), an orientation toward the value of sociality (Fajans 2006). Even when unmediated flows of resources between individuals grind to a near halt and modern dichotomies govern the discursive landscape, still villagers, in an inside-out way emblematic of post-apartheid South Africa, manifest distrust in individual successes (Nyamnjoh 2001) and imbue cooperative activities with social capital (Fajans 2006). This subjective orientation pervades the short and longer histories of African social practices and, thus, forms a continuum across and in spite of the reifying intentions of colonial and postcolonial labels.

### **RURAL LIMPOPO: AN ANALYTIC CATEGORY**

While differences certainly exist from village to village across rural South Africa, it is sensible to speak of the “social phenomena of rural Limpopo” as a whole. First, divisions along language-ethnic lines are social facts but it helps to remember the historicity of these facts. Having, at one time, no notion of themselves as “tribes” (Kriger and Kriger 1943), many of the people today known as Tsongas, Vendas and Pedis lived together under shared chiefs or queens (Harries 1994). The consequences of apartheid are myriad and paradoxical. The immediate concern here is that it had the centripetal force of helping to create tribal identity (Simmons 2000, Vail 1994), which fomented hostilities among them, but also sealed together representatives of these

“tribes” in common villages and townships (Harries 1991). Hence, the locally famous missionary village of Elim can be considered a place for Tsongas and Vendas; Tsonga villages are scattered through the former Lebowa Homeland of the Pedis; and many locals living in Tsonga areas speak of their Pedi, Venda and even Zulu parental origins. Ethnic differences in Limpopo speak more to views of status and marriage than to substantial departures in social processes.

If ethnic social facts cannot prohibit talk of “rural Limpopo,” shared social practices permit such discussion. With various degrees of implementation and nuances of style, rural communities across the Limpopo Province partake in compulsory payments toward funerals, effectively obligatory adult attendance at funerals, market days corresponding to government grant rollout days, and voluntary “societies” providing financial and labor assistance for events such as funerals and marriages. It is not just that Limpopo villages have these and other social activities *separately* in common. These social events may occur in distinguishable villages but are attended by representatives of multiple villages, townships and cities both near and far. Family and friendship relations as well as the popularity or “bigness” of the deceased or one of the deceased’s relatives account for this multiple origin, attendance pattern. Various situated Limpopo villagers participate in similar social practices, marking them off from the small but powerful number of white commercial farmers and professionals. Indeed, a general resonance of social and cultural practices among Southern Africans has been observed elsewhere (Blacking 1978, Harries 1994, Thornton 2005, Wilson 1978). The development projects included within this dissertation occurred in rural Limpopo.

## **JUDGING OTHERS**

Consciousness of villagers, especially among youth and middle-aged people, is dominated by Western modernity. “Western” is a key qualification because of scholarly agreement that alternative (Gaonkar 2001, Geschiere 1997), vernacular (Hanchard 1999), or cultural (Eisenstadt 2000, Comaroff and Comaroff 1993) modernities exist. Rural Limpopo too has its own unique modernity, part of its singularity involving judging or knowing to judge life by Western-modern standards. Amy Stambach (2000) and Heike Berhand (2002) have made similar observations about parts of Tanzanian and Kenya, respectively. Much of the complexity surrounding the Limpopo aid programs was that while villagers seemed to share significant ideological details with their foreign benefactors, villagers would routinely contradict the ideology in practice.

When I traveled as a PCV in the late 1990s to other African countries and returned to South Africa, locals invariably asked me, “How was Africa?” Now as then, for villagers and South Africans generally, Africa is decidedly not South Africa and even black news broadcasters say, “And now for African news...” Black Limpopo residents ask condescendingly about the infrastructure of “Africa,” sure that the roads, buildings, and bridges they find around them stand bigger, sturdier and more beautifully than in “Africa.” This is similar to how Zambians, in the pre-neoliberal era of the 1960s and 1970s, viewed their notable developments as elevating them above the surrounding “Africa” with which they hoped to never be associated again (Ferguson 1999). Ghanaians and other Africans within South Africa counter this perception of “Africa” in everyday conversations with Limpopo locals, asking them why they eat the same food for breakfast, lunch and dinner everyday, why they drink alcohol excessively, and why they do not save money. Intrigued by this other Africa,

Limpopo locals continue nevertheless to assert the authenticity of their modernity on the basis of their proximity to material developments associated with the West.

If modernity for Limpopo villagers means proximity to infrastructural advancements, it also means whiteness and, in fact, the two factors work together. Discovering my Ghanaian wife hails from “Africa,” some locals ask her disparagingly about presumed chaos in her country or store managers may dismiss her gripes about poor service or faulty products. But when someone recognizes her as the wife of “the white American guy,” i.e. me, shopping becomes easy for her. Here, my wife’s affiliation with whiteness pulled her up suddenly from lowly Africa and into the modern world of order. Other Tzaneen and township locals ask my wife, who is considered a dark skinned black woman in America, “Are you from Ghana? But you’re so beautiful. You’re skin is light.” An internalized inferiority, palpable among Limpopo residents, in the form of Africans desiring light skin was famously documented by Franz Fanon (1967) and has been recently verified to continue existing on the African continent (Nyamnjoh 2000: 10). The grassroots activists in this study, as we will see, had difficulty navigating the benefits and burdens of being viewed as white.

It is inconceivable for many Limpopo residents that even a hint of lightness, associated with white people, urban areas and America, could come from sunburned Africa. Nor could darkness come from America. Limpopo villagers know of black Americans and Latinos through TV and movies but ultimately identify them as whites, a compliment acknowledging their perceived access to material modernity (ibid: 6). Thus, a light-skinned African American such as me is identified as white, my “freedom for oppressed people” language endearing me to villagers but not making me truly black in local eyes. Gaining mastery over a local language and submitting socially to a family, each of which presumes the other, begins to transform a foreigner,

even a white one, into a black person—a feat systematically unaccomplished by the participating grassroots activists of this investigation. Skin color does not over-determine racial affiliation. Some brides move from villages to the homes of relatives in townships, corresponding to a shift from chiefly to private property, hoping to lose a shade of color before their weddings. And black men living in or close to former white towns or displaying signs of material modernity are “white chiefs.” Whiteness and material development—factors repudiated as superficial by the activists—presume and lead to each other; both mark high status to which nearly all aspire.

Observing whiteness as a key indicator of advancement in the everyday thinking of Limpopo villagers should not lead the reader to think these villagers necessarily love actual white people (Nyamnjoh 2002a). As used above, whiteness invokes notions of orderliness, cleverness, and trustworthiness; and approximating it seems to be a way of appropriating its perceived power mimetically (Stoller 1995). But actually liking white people runs the gamut from the vast minority who blindly love white people to most who hold mixed, situational views. Many youth, going by images of racial harmony they see on post-apartheid TV programs, say they do not have any problem with whites. Most boys would love to engage in sexual intercourse with white girls, who are joyfully considered “loose” and sexually wild, given the way white girls can aggress towards boys on TV and pornographic films. Men in their early thirties may despise whites, especially the surrounding Afrikaner commercial farmers, invoking a new Christian spirit (Stambach 2000, Sanders 2003) or just inconvenience for reasons they do not kill them immediately. There are some in this “freedom fighting” age group who vigorously question Mandela’s strategy of forgiveness. Older men and women tend to fear white people, recalling episodes of brute violence exercised upon some of their youth by commercial farmers and their sons in the 1980s. When I first walked up to my host family during my training as a PCV in 1997, a five

year old girl asked her mother in Tsonga at seeing me, “Va ta ndzi dlaya naa? (“Will he kill me?”). More fascinated than scared of “whites” nowadays (Krige and Krige 1943: 22), all concerned wish white people, including the missionary, nun, and PCV involved in this study, would engage them socially but expect what they see as the usual harshness and disinterest.

### **JUDGING THEMSELVES**

The whiteness / material development paradigm is more than a convenient way for Limpopoians to feel superior to “Africans.” As observed in other African milieus (Nyanmjoh 2000, Nyang 1994), this paradigm is so hegemonic that it appears to have either really stamped out other ways of judging the world or forced the other ways into disrepute and near total silence. In other places such as Tanzania (Stambach 2000) and Malawi (Proxy 2001), youth seem particularly committed to discourses of progress and modernity. By contrast, few villagers of any age dare to appear against discourses of progress, sometimes out of fear of looking backwards in the eyes of their peers, sometimes out of really feeling guilty for undervaluing modern signs and sometimes, we may presume, for both and other reasons. Elders and many youth may go to Sunday church services without understanding much of what is being preached. My informant-friend, Chobi, for example, participates in nearly all of his Swiss Mission Church activities but doubts the existence of God. But what matters, anyway—and this would come to haunt the development projects described in this dissertation—is that people are seen dressed in Western clothes inside the church building, revealing their successful appropriation of some of Western modernity’s key identity markers. As Mint, a mid-thirties PCV, found out to her dismay, many teachers have ready-made and already-rehearsed lesson plans they can perform with their students for guests such as parents, government officials and PCVs. A major reason for being at the

school for both teachers and students is to walk around in its assumed institutional modernity. Stambach found a similar dynamic among Mt. Kilimanjaro youth in Tanzania. She notes, “It was not educational programs alone that caught students’ fancies but access to the material culture they had come to identify with ‘cool, hip’ (*safi, wa*) life and to associate with an educated Western culture” (2000: 162). This setting distances “educated” teachers and students from the “illiterate, backward elders” in the villages (Hilhorst 2001) while simultaneously marking teachers as more modern than the students.

Only the few brave people will admit they consult ancestral spirits through traditional healers, who have become synonymous with the devil and witchcraft in the eyes of many Christianized youth (de Lame 2005: 123, Sanders 2000: 170). Sergeant shares with villagers their explicit denunciation of ancestral remembrance, while Valerie and Ishmael, manifesting a more postmodern sensitivity to it, questioned its efficacy only with me. What Comaroff and Comaroff (1999) found in the Limpopo and Northwestern Provinces just a few years after South African independence in 1994 is still true today: Traditional healers are said to have lost previous senses of morality in their work, converting today to business-minded people who unhesitatingly help you, for example, to kill another person for money. These explicit statements of opposition to traditional healers are stronger in villages neighboring former “white towns” and sting less in remoter villages. Yet what is fascinating about these degradations of traditional healing is that, like Tanzanian “born-again” who curse the dances they attend (Stambach 2000), they are largely and apparently contradicted by people consulting the African doctors nonetheless (Atieno-Odhiambo 2000). You will learn of villagers visiting traditional doctors if (1) they trust you enough to divulge the information, (2) by redeemable gossip, or (3) from the mouths of the doctors themselves. The doctors, terribly hurt by their lowly place in the value

hierarchy of rural Limpopo, insist that there has been no slowing in their numbers of patients and that even some church pastors sneak in for consultation under the cover of darkness. A novice young male traditional doctor told me a confirmed story about how he spoke out in protest when a pastor lambasted Sangomas as “workers of evil” during a funeral event. “You, yourself have even come to my mother [also a Sangoma] for help!” the novice remembers remonstrating. While some village patients may be engaged in a conscious game of manipulation, going to traditional doctors secretly so that people will not talk, most seem to actually feel guilty about their continuing felt-need to go behind Western modernity’s back. In the same way that Sowetans have cultivated a second-order belief in witchcraft—lamenting their own belief in it (Ashford 2001)—Limpopo villagers seem to regret their faith in traditional healers.

Other Africans have been seen to chase after “modern” signs of success, of course (Bastian 2003, Sanders 2003). But what is different here is the near total dominance of Western influence, captured and, no doubt, partially propelled by the far reaching stamp of a European-configured infrastructural and ideological order which tend to shape place and space into discrete compartments (Mitchell 1989). Ghanaians in South Africa assert with pride that Christians in Ghana make few qualms about attending public events undergirded by traditionally inspired practices and medicines. In rural Limpopo, by contrast, a thick discourse about the abhorrence of being anywhere near traditionally-related activities predominates, even if to be often contradicted in practice. Like some Kilimanjaro youth (Stambach 2000), the Afrikaner missionary and Irish nun in the study differently despised ancestor-related practices and steered far from them, as will be seen later in the dissertation. Following hard on the heels of apartheid’s ideological push for the positive attributes of tribalization and “separate development,” 1980s youth destabilized South African society with tenacious rebukes as much against complicit tribal authorities as the central state

(Seekings and Everatt 1994). Mandela's refusal to "chase out the whites" may have sidelined "tradition" more resolutely, signaling as it did that it would be through learning white people's knowledge that South Africa would develop. We will see how villagers had trouble learning white people's knowledge from actual white people, who signaled socially aloof behavior more so than a certain skin pigmentation. Indeed, elders' insecurity about the value of their traditional knowledge is palpable in rural Limpopo. Besides being ideologically sidelined, however, "tradition" is surely not helped by its decadent social institutions, such as marriage.

### **STATE OF MARRIAGE**

Development is not usually studied in relation to marriage and sexual practices. This is an oversight as the dissertation will make clear below. The weakening of marriage in South Africa has unique inflexions. Keeping with the character of rural Limpopo, monogamous marriages, and decidedly not polygamous ones, are understood to be the ideal form of wedlock. This understanding may sometimes be a relatively pretentious front, an opinion articulated to demonstrate one's exposure to Western modernity, which in this case would be Christianity's call for monogamy. The Afrikaner missionary, as we shall see, believed his young African congregants' reassurances of their belief in monogamy. The story of a late teenaged boy who called himself the "disease of the church" (Chapter 6) will reveal how far the Afrikaner evangelist is from implanting monogamy in the practices of rural youth. Educated chiefs are expected to marry just one wife, the education and the one wife paralleling each other as mimetic markers of Western modernity (Stoller 1995) and together symbolizing chiefs' ascension into the ranks of whiteness. Others, especially young Christian women, take relatively principled positions on the matter, expecting partners to be faithful and agonizing when this expectation, as they reluctantly anticipate (Haram

2005: 59), fails to come to fruition. These women are working against historical force, however, for although African societies idealized fidelity and premarital chastity, these same practices were quite tolerated anyway in Southern Africa (Krige and Krige 1943). I would estimate that ninety percent of husbands and over fifty percent of wives have extramarital affairs in the villages of the Limpopo Province. The longstanding practice of male migrant laborers trekking off to work in big towns, such as Johannesburg, separates many husbands and wives for eleven months out of every year and certainly encourages extramarital activity. Indeed, it has been estimated that between 1992-2000, sixty-percent of males between the ages of 35-55 from a region of Limpopo comparable to Tzaneen are absent from their villages most of the year (Collinson, et. al. 2006).

For Limpopo villagers, sex seems natural, necessary, and in need of being routinely satisfied. It is believed that a mature man or woman with previous sexual experience cannot go long without intercourse without running the risk of blood rushing to his or her head. This blood-filled head, also felt by Limpopo girls to be caused by the use of contraceptives (Wood and Jewkes 2006) makes a person irritable, short tempered and harsh when speaking to others, a condition everyone wants to avoid. This long-held belief (Krige and Krige 1943), paired at least with the experience of the act itself as gratifying to people, is a powerful catalyst for separated husbands and wives to “cheat.” But even in cases where husbands and wives live together in a village, husbands frequently establish romantic partnerships with other women. According to the Kriges study of the Lovedu from lands falling under current-day Limpopo, marriages connected families together and are not meant to unify sexually compatible partners. Sexual desires could be consummated outside of marriage, and this historical practice appears in force today. I know a case in which a husband leaves his wife at home in the village, goes to work at a hospital in the nearby

town, engages secretly in sexual relations with a female colleague who was dropped off there by her husband, and then returns to his wife and three children later in the day. Scenarios such as these are apparently as normal in other African contexts (Haram 2005) as in rural Limpopo, riding on the backs of beliefs that “that’s what men do” and that a self-imposed faithfulness of a husband results either from his stupidity or his bewitchment by his wife. Extending himself as far as possible socially and, specifically, sexually, is one thing a Limpopo village man, as well as men from other African settings (Setel 1999, Varga 1997), seems driven to do. That an increasing number of women are assuming this form of engagement with the world speaks to the weakened grip in-laws and other family members have on women at home.

Although marriage transactions are suffused with language of cattle, cattle themselves, unlike in previous times (Ferguson 1990, Harries 1994, Krige and Krige 1943), are rarely the currency paid by the groom’s family to the bride’s family. Money is what is demanded by the bride’s family, the amount requested rising with the educational background of the bride. As before, education in itself connotes high status but assumes additional value when it is presumed to be a vehicle for the bride’s future employment, and all the material things her money will buy for her husband and his family. Not being an innocent change in marriage practice, this is all happening with consequences: As James Ferguson found in Lesotho (1990), whereas cattle remain and reproduce as a reminder of a marriage bond between two families, money is quickly spent on material objects, such as bricks, doors, TVs, and VCRs. These commodities do remind the owners of their bond with the giver of the money, but the terminable nature of the merchandise resonates with the weakening influence married families have on each other and the newly weds over time. Mothers can be heard complaining about their in-laws either unfairly siding with their own sons in marriage disputes or failing to intervene at all. In my host village of Poolo, for example, a newly

married girl ran home to her mother and grandmother, her chief complaint being not that her husband treated her unfairly but that her in-laws sided with him over her in an obvious manner. This news so perturbed the girl's mother that she held her daughter willingly hostage without making the customary effort to approach husband's family to reconcile the couple. Wives go particularly unheard when they are unemployed, stay-home moms who, structurally, not only contribute little if anything to the husband's family's march toward material modernity but may be seen as an obstacle to that march. Girls entering marriage already pregnant will likewise garner much less respect by in-laws than girls who are seen to have waited for sex until marriage.

As primary money-makers and urban dwellers, men harness great, almost unilateral-type authority, earlier referred to as a patriarchal or patrifocal ethic (Mayer 1979: viii), over their wives and women in general when it comes to decision-making. During their returns home, migrant husbands can sometimes be heard responding to their wives' criticisms in patronizing ways, saying, for example, that their wives know nothing because they have not been anywhere. It has been found in northern Tanzania that women desiring modern lifestyles are claiming their independence, manifested at least in demanding to choose their own partners in marriage (Haram 2005). A surge by women for stronger voices vis-à-vis husbands is evident in rural Limpopo as well, although with its own specificity: Younger village wives are beginning to muster the courage to protest their husbands' extramarital affairs, a protest driven by a fear of contracting AIDS rather than by an adherence to the principle of monogamy. Perhaps intuitively understanding the enormity of their demand, i.e. women effectively asking men to self-impose fidelity and, with it, "stupidity" (Tsonga: *ku phunta*), some younger wives are mobilizing the monogamy principle to consciously position themselves for divorce, a last resort in this part of Africa in former times (Krige and Krige 1943). Having fulfilled the social expectation to marry and bear children, this

subset of women feel they will lose little by divorcing, believing they can survive alone on monthly government stipends serving single mothers and on petty cash earned from seasonal fruit and vegetable picking. Money, in embodied relationship with urban work and commodities, is effectively loosening up if not unraveling traditional marriage bonds in rural Limpopo. As we will see (Chapter Seven), many of the development beneficiaries instantiated the above marriage tendencies, but they made sure to hide the facts from their benefactors.

### **PREMARITAL LIFE**

Money is not only pressing apart marriages from within them, it is also implicated in prolonging premarital life (de Lame 2005: 159). Local women do not typically pursue men; they do not propose love (Tsonga: *ku gangisa*). That is the job of the men. Unmarried, young men often complain that their female counterparts only want men with a lot of money, money most youthful men do not have. Girls want this money not to save it but to spend or have it spent on them immediately, in forms such as fashionable brand-named clothes and sleek cell phones which will be displayed at school or bar settings to show off their successful appropriation of Western-conceptualized modernity. This is a local method of development, a tenacious practice which, for reasons explored later in the dissertation, resonated better with villagers than foreign ideas of progress considered anti-social and wrong. Objectifying a conspicuous social phenomenon into discourse, local Limpopo boys speak with a mix of humor and consternation about their female age-mates having “Ministers of Finance” and “Ministers of Transport,” indicating girls attaching themselves to wealthier, usually older and married men from whom they receive money and rides in fancy cars. Women using sex and sex appeal for money and modernity (Haram 2005, 2004, 1995) as well as for simple survival (Wojcicki 2002) is not unique to SA’s

Limpopo Province. Limpopo boys, invoking the permissibility of sexual satisfaction outside of formal marriage bonds (Krige and Krige 1943), may console themselves by saying that these opportunistic girls will nevertheless turn to them for true love and real, village sex. While this discourse is common currency among the youth, how pervasive the actual practice is and what girls do for the wealthy men I cannot state with any authority. What is clear is that many young girls are balancing interest in finding true love and their quest for modern status. This quest, in conjunction with young men finding it increasingly difficult in a globalized context to find employment for marriage money, is putting off marriage proposals and ties until later in life.

It should already be obvious that delaying marriage in village Limpopo has, for the vast majority of young people, little to do with principled support of abstinence before marriage or of monogamy. It is effectively a money-saving maneuver. Boys cringe at the thought of marriage, stating plainly that they abhor the responsibility involved. Here, responsibility refers to not having the money it would take to satisfy “the ladies,” a satisfaction seen as essential for increasing the chances of keeping the spouses faithful in marriage. Given the dearth of male financial support, girls find in money a way to live “big” without dependence on marrying a “big man.” Money, like secondary education for Mt. Kilimanjaro girls (Stambach 2000), is becoming a kind of male substitute, shown most subtly in increasing divorces and prolonged premarital life and most dramatically in the swell of financially-motivated spouse murders across South Africa as a whole (Groenewald 2007, Reuters 2005). It is difficult to exaggerate the extent people will go in order to access money, though there are strategies for cash collection more palatable to people with more stable economic means: e.g. girls braiding hair in villages and working as cashiers and waitresses in town grocery stores and restaurants. There are even a few innovative boys who catch fish in nearby rivers and sell them to fellow villagers for small profits. But these and other “acceptable”

tactics for earning money take a backseat to disturbing devices, such as girls intentionally getting pregnant to gain access to government stipends for young mothers.

## **INTIMATE RELATIONALITY**

Development and sex is a conjuncture of concepts and practices which studies of development have also neglected. The opportunistic grabs at independent financial security, which we observed above, are no substitute for sex. Far from it, sex is, as described above, frequently a route to money and modern status and is considered, besides, an essential activity in need of satisfaction. With traditional marriages stumbling, most would-be couples are not finding surer footing in Christian matrimony which is, at once, acknowledged as the right way to marry and practically shunned for the stupidity it carries for men. Haram put it nicely when she wrote, referring to Tanzania, “They exhibit a strong Puritanism in their stated values pertaining to premarital and extramarital sex, but they show much more tolerance in real life” (2005: 60). Linked as it is to modernity and to a kind of natural state, sex is happening before, within and outside of disciplines of fidelity, surely engendering a situation conducive to the spread of sexually transmitted diseases, most notably HIV/AIDS (Dilger 2003, Haram 2005), a subject addressed in the next subsection of this chapter. Making this situation much starker still is that use of condoms is not enforced (Wood and Jewkes 2006). Limpopo residents acknowledge the importance of condom use as a defense against disease and pregnancy, however: The Department of Education stages inter-school competitions at central locations. Here, select students perform memorized poetry, plays, and songs, written solely by teachers, pounding out lessons about AIDS and Africa, condom use, and caring for the sick. Winning schools conspicuously display trophies in school offices. NGO-linked groups of youth, such as

“loveLife” (ibid: 116) bring these responsible-sex messages to rural churches and open fields in similarly dramatic ways. Teenagers may also feel inspired to write responsible-sex poetry privately and then share it with their peers at churches.

All of this concern for living coexists uncomfortably with a self-confident refusal to use condoms during sexual intercourse. Boys ask, “Would you eat a banana with the peel?” Male teachers can say, “We’re going to die anyway,” a sentiment Haram has also found in northern Tanzania (2005: 69). Apparently cold attitudes such as these are actually couched in a less obvious moral framework, however. Less performance, more heartfelt-oriented conversations reveal that boys feel they could never hurt girls by putting on condoms before sex. Resonant with the disrespect implied in revealing one’s love-affair to his or her spouse (Haram 2005), wearing a condom would be like telling the girls they are dirty or untrustworthy and, consequently, that the boys do not love them. Girls feel significantly more guilt than the boys about pushing condom-use on their male mates, according to information to which my wife was privy. The Irish nun and Catholic Church of the Tzaneen diocese also stressed condom-free intercourse. But while their concern was driven by the ideal of abstinence before marriage, for youth it was a sentimental motivation, shared by Africans elsewhere (Dijk 2001, Piot 1999, Whyte 2002), about the disrespect and lack of love entailed in hurting another person frontally. Here, a seemingly unchallenged bond between organic contact, or a being inside each other and love, morality and cleanliness reveals itself. While others rely on dated psychoanalytic ideas about existential distress caused by our inevitable emersion into social life, the current data questions this: Limpopo villagers experienced relatedness as a moral good. It was, as we shall see, disconnectedness that most violated the moral sense of villagers.

Organic sexual intercourse is part of a wider field of practices capturing the importance of un-objectified social intercourse. In a situation in which a group of

people pass around a glass of water, refilled from a larger basin of water, you would likewise signal a lack of love and trust by refusing to drink from the glass or by wiping off the mix of water and saliva on the glass corresponding to other drinkers' lip marks. Similarly, eating communally but being seen to regularly avoid finger-contact with food other eaters have touched will lead people to wonder if the food-avoider dislikes them, perhaps having secret plans to harm them. The saying of a Kabre man from Togo, although in a slightly different context, resonates in rural Limpopo: "It is not good to die without having eaten off someone else's plate" (Piot 1999: 56). People—including the three highlighted activists of this dissertation—disturbed by such intimate human contact are often discursively captured as "having apartheid in their hearts" or, simply, "having apartheid." Meaning absolutely no contact in matters both small and big, "apartheid" is a concept black South Africans are dubiously equipped to mobilize.

Locals, independently of each other, indeed mobilized the apartheid concept to interpret some of the behaviors of the Afrikaner missionary, Irish nun, and US Peace Corps Volunteer. This is detailed in Chapters 3 and 4 on "Development and Residence" and "Development and Friendship respectively. Unrepressed, sex is nevertheless expressed covertly. Seeing public, daytime displays of romantic affection, such as kissing, shocks on-lookers in rural Limpopo. TV footage from the US and England showing kissing, cuddling and mock-sex similarly amaze locals. Girls and boys take it for granted that the forward, usually white girls on TV are "loose" or "prostitute-like" (Wood and Jewkes 2006, Setel 1999), though boys may wish, in the same breath, they were the men in the scenes. What is at issue is not intimacy or numbers of partners but the public enactment of sexuality. In Limpopo, as elsewhere in sub-Saharan Africa (Haram 2005: 60), public displays of romance show "no respect," where respect effectively means, "Keep it a secret from elders." Sexually

active teenagers were enticed into sex by TV images romanticizing the romantic activity; heterosexual girls were additionally drawn to sexual activity by pushy boys on whom they had crushes (Wood and Jewkes 2006).

As common as sex is for villagers from teenage years on up, there is only a small percentage of premarital persons who will ever admit to married people they have boyfriends and girlfriends. Even these admitters can take months and years before disclosing this information, repeatedly saying, “No, I don’t have anyone,” with great senses of embarrassment. Indeed, the sense of shame (Fajans 1997, 2006) is so powerful that premarital people frequently cannot even utter the word, “No,” instead bending in half while turning away, covering their smiles of shame with their hands. (Here is a specific instance, representative of many explored and explained in Chapter 5, of how spontaneous corporeal perception is cultural and has, in the current case, specifically learned to evaluate forced confession as negative.). The boys and girls these teens are often seen with are always “friends,” “brothers” or “sisters,” never lovers, and presentations like these are apparently believed or at least deemed appropriate by elders without scrutiny. What is important is not the truth of the youths’ statements but rather the respect shown to elders by keeping premarital love-affairs “undercover,” for these love-affairs, occurring outside of recognized social bonds, are experienced as shameful. The three activists had fits about the perceived slyness of their hosts; they were far from understanding the articulation of lying and goodness in locals’ eyes. By contrast to this information blockage between generations and status groups, premarital persons know and gossip about each other’s romantic mates (Blacking 1978), and married men and women may talk to each other openly about sexual experiences. Unwed locals of sexual age feel free to express their romantic engagements during the night at bars or house parties or privately during the day. Disclosing one’s romances to appropriate others is a sign of being “free” and “open.”

We will observe that the PCV was accused, behind his back, by male teachers his own age of being “closed” because he withdrew physically and conversationally from others; he particularly did not divulge the many love-flings that he, as a man, was presumed to have. This apparent contradiction between engaging in premarital sex while valuing virginity has been widely documented (Ortner and Whitehead 1994, Paige and Paige 1981, Mair 1971, LaFontaine 1959, Richards 1956). Sexually active youth “caught” by married elders who know one or both of the partners can be reprimanded harshly, the elders often storming into the house where the youngsters hide, brandishing sticks or cowhides to chase them out.

The basic equation between intimate contact and morality is nuanced in various ways. Having obvious signs of sickness, such as mucus running from noses or suddenly becoming slim, will be accepted, for example, as excuses for avoiding intimate human contact. But simply sniffing or claiming to be ill when it is not evidently so are apt to be viewed suspiciously. By contrast, purchases bought with personal money are expected to be consumed separately. For example, whereas water is most often passed around to drinkers in one continually re-filled glass, Coke, a purchased as opposed to a free product, is consumed in individual glasses. This is not an instance of suddenly revoking intimacy but rather an effort at socializing, in a bureaucratic manner, the abstracting nature of a commodity: Whereas equality in drinking free, abundant water has to do with each drinker being able to choose how much water he or she wishes to drink, equality in drinking Coke must be enforced in the form of separate glasses because of the money-based, limited supply of coke. As coke is a key marker of progress in Limpopo, as it is in parts of East Africa (Stambach 2000: 61), consuming it individually and with perfect equality form a perfect expression of advanced, high status idealism. Yet this modern expression is domesticated almost immediately and surely unconsciously as emptied glasses are re-

filled and handed, without being rinsed or wiped, to those who did not get one of the limited supplies of glasses the first time. In the history of the Tsonga-speakers, sharing of consumables on Natal plantations and in highveld mines worked to bond late 19<sup>th</sup> century migrant workers, temporarily untied from rural networks to the north (Harries 1994). The second-round drinkers above will be people of lower status, gauged by age, gender, and relative social importance. Purchased foods, as opposed to garden-grown products embodying an equivalency with free water, are similarly distributed and consumed. Borrowing from the local idiom, “apartheid,” in the mutually reinforcing forms of money and separateness, is successively enacted and socialized in such mundane practices as eating, drinking and sex (de Lame 2005: 244). The development projects faltered often and precisely because the grassroots activists seemed to villagers to choose apartheid rather than socialized forms of eating, drinking, and romancing.

### **HIV-AIDS and EMPLOYMENT**

As noted earlier, it has been argued that male out-migration, which became a de facto male initiation rite in the late 1800s (Harries 1994), from rural Limpopo to cities is associated with the spreading of HIV/AIDS. Others have added that improved transportation links since 1994 and the dissolution of “pass laws” in 1987 have further facilitated migration and general travel, helping to condition a rampant HIV/AIDS problem (Lurie, et. al. 1997). My research shows additionally that destabilized marriage practices, a triangulated rationale for the necessity of sex, and a morally-understood rejection of condom protection is a deadly articulation of motives, undoubtedly conducive to the spread of HIV/AIDS. The vast majority of funerals in rural Limpopo occur on Saturdays, although they may happen on Wednesdays when the dire poverty of a family calls for a government funeral or on Sundays for religious

deaths. The timing of a death also weighs in on the timing of the funeral. It is rare for a Saturday to pass without at least one funeral in medium sized and large Limpopo villages. Small villages, populated by 1000 people or less and having zero to two churches, will have fewer funerals because of having fewer people and because, as they tend to be relatively remote from main roads and towns, they participate less in high risk, inter-place sexual relations. Partially lamenting and partially I-told-you-*soing*, elders stress the disproportionate number of young people being buried on Saturdays. While HIV-AIDS is routinely associated with international development, what I found consequential yet missing in development scholarship is whether or not development workers attend the funerals of HIV-AIDS victims (Chapter 6).

Similar to other sub-Saharan African people (Haram 2005, Dilger 2003, Setel 1999), many grandparent figures, after having gained their confidence, assert self-confidently that young people are dying because they refuse to follow traditions, especially remembering ancestors. They believe that, without the protection of ancestor spirits, the newer generations are, more than susceptible to witches, baldly exposed to them. Instances in which youth who stray from traditional practices lose the protection of ancestors (White 2004) seem structurally analogous to the idea of youth being highly susceptible to witchcraft. There is a real sense in which a generational antagonism is defined, in SA and further a field in Africa (Geshiere 1997: 45, Stambach 2007: 7), in terms of youth suspecting elders of using magical means to steal and hoard wealth (Comaroff and Comaroff 1999). Yet these Limpopo grandparents who locate blame in the youth show that the generational “conversation” goes both ways. In addition to elders, many others, representing various social groupings, also blame witchcraft for youth fatalities but without the elders’ ideological certainty about it being tied to the bracketing-off of tradition. Being roundly stigmatized, AIDS, the likely biological agent responsible for many of these losses, is

never openly considered the cause of death. Young, schooled survivors and committed Christians may insist privately that AIDS is the killer, almost always noting the emaciated condition of the deceased before passing. Publicly, AIDS victims are said to have died from a less shameful sounding condition, TB-plus. Quietness about witchcraft accusations and AIDS are different kinds of quietness: the first an matter-of-fact phenomenon (Ashford 2001) whose enforced illegality (Nichaus 2001) has habituated people to a cautious silence, the second an increasingly accepted cause of death whose symbolism of infidelity in marriage or sex-before-marriage embarrasses living friends and relatives to a hush. In inadequately immersing herself socially among her Limpopo hosts, Valerie, the Irish nun, as we shall see, advised HIV-AIDS clients to publicly embrace their status without understanding the social consequences involved.

People who suspect they have AIDS are terrified to get checked—who is thrilled to know he or she is going to die? And who wants to symbolize the embarrassment that your family will soon endure (Haram 2005: 63)? It is only after multiple visits to hospitals and traditional doctors, usually in that order, fail to stem a fast decreasing state of health that people will finally get tested for AIDS, if they get tested at all. After being tested at free-service, government clinics in villages, AIDS clients are assigned a volunteer care-worker from their villages, given monthly doses of anti-retrovirals, and determined to qualify or not for monthly, government stipends of R820 or between \$100 and \$150 per month. To gain perspective on this monthly stipend, consider that monthly government stipends for the aged and handicapped are R820 each, state grants for young mothers is R190 per month, female domestic laborers working for nearby white farm owners or for burgeoning black middle class families in townships and cities earn roughly R700 per month, and villagers working in town restaurants and grocery stores make around R500 per month.

Having AIDS is then quite a lucrative condition in the context of rural Limpopo. Receiving this money while having your condition kept a secret is also a real, if twisted appeal. AIDS clients qualify for this financial service if they have a CD-4 or, to simplify, a white blood cell count of 200 or lower. A disturbing number of HIV+ clients manage their intake of anti-retrovirals to purposely keep their CD-4 counts under 200 for fear of losing the most stable access to “good money” they have perhaps ever experienced. Care workers, meanwhile, volunteering through government and NGO enterprises, are given R500/month stipends. Their work is intense, involving walking for hours in the hot sun, caring for ten to fifteen clients, and frequently bathing for near-death, sore-ridden bodies in large metal tubs. Many of these care workers, including local colleagues of the Irish nun, feel that sick people who are doing nothing but dying get paid more than they do, and they are adamantly perturbed by this fact. Lateef, Valerie’s Volunteer Coordinator, said regarding this matter, “Do you see how hard we work. I walk around all day and you see how hot it is. I care about the [sick] people. I do most of the work for Kurisanani and they [Valerie and other leaders] know it. But they are cheap [rubbing her fingers together to indicate money]. The sick people get more money than we do!” The Irish sister meanwhile expects her local counterparts to work with a volunteer spirit and bemoans their orientation toward money. Her African co-workers, confiding in me, strike back, pointing out the contradiction whereby the sisters lives plush in Tzaneen while telling them to work for free. Chapter 4 takes up this dynamic.

Care-working for AIDS and TB clients is becoming a pervasive, low rung form of employment in villages for women who are also mothers; and it is typical of other African “economies that favor female piecework and nonstandard labor over salaried jobs” (Comaroff and Comaroff 2004). The burgeoning of this work has been contextualized in terms of the continuity of local white ownership of great portions of

farmland and by the trickling in of precious few jobs associated with the capricious international capital of free-market neoliberalism (Nyamnjoh 2000). Care-workers may work for the government through township and urban hospitals or through clinics which are situated in almost every village in Limpopo Province; however, they may also labor for what seem an increasing number of smaller and bigger NGOs, such as Hurisic and the Catholic Church, respectively. While Hurisic, a government sponsored NGO, has less than 20 care-workers servicing just a few rural communities around the town of Tzaneen, the Catholic Church, funded mostly by Catholic Relief Services in the US, boasts of hundreds of workers in its diocese jurisdiction. The most prominent government operation is Choice. There is overlap, sometimes with tension, among these care-working services related, at least, to who covers which communities and clients within communities and which regimens of anti-retrovirals are given. In one case, for instance, tensions between Tzaneen-based Choice and Kurisanani increased around the care-worker, Lateef. Once a favored employee of Choice, Lateef now works for Kurisanani and complains about being underpaid and unappreciated. Choice, which is an additional sponsor of Kurisanani, lords the threat of withdrawing support over the Kurisanani NGO if Valerie and other Catholic leaders do not better support Lateef.

Notwithstanding the few salaried opportunities for locals who are offered leadership positions, being a care-worker is a volunteer arrangement, earning R500/month minus R50 for taxis. This compensation is felt by care-workers to be desperately small, paying merely for transportation to and from central meeting locations for the government or NGO service provided. While many care-workers more and less tactfully decry their self-perceived exploitation, most continue on based on some combination of genuinely feeling for the sick and hope that their years of volunteering will land them better compensated, higher prestige posts as nurses. This

route to professionalizing has happened in individual cases. Most remaining volunteers seem to have read mistakenly into these disparate cases a promise by the care-working industry to provide similar opportunities to climb the financial and, therefore, status ladder. A good number of care-workers can recite what seems an exhaustive list of workshops and trainings they have attended, concluding the recitation bleakly by saying, in essence, “We work harder and are more qualified than nurses but what do we get out of it?” de Lame has written of Rwandans, “Solidarity does not correspond to the Judeo-Christian notion of assisting the poor” (2005: 281). In a similar vein, blind, “do-gooder” volunteerism is a practice and expectation essentially foreign to rural Limpopo (Chapter Four).

### **TRUST and JEALOUSY**

In fact, there are only two sure ways of accessing cash in rural Limpopo. First, if you are old, handicapped, or a single mother and are known to be so by relevant representatives of the state, you will receive monthly social grants. Second, if you served the struggle for freedom you will get a job as a traffic or crime officer, government contractor or some other civil servant, though clandestinely. This second surety is limited, however, to ANC-related freedom fighters only, a point grumbled by some who fought under specifically homeland forces and propaganda teams.

Jealously, as locals say, is implicated in these avenues to wealth (Comaroff and Comaroff 1999). Witchcraft accusations, occurring more covertly in urban-influenced villages than in remoter ones where suspected witches and their properties may still be burned by angry mobs, are regularly aimed at families receiving two or more social grants: Elderly women may deny their mildly retarded children the chance to marry, it is suspected, to keep the children and their free monthly grant under their control; the two partners of an elderly marriage will both receive social grants. However, as

Geschiere (1997) and de Lame (2005) found in parts of Cameroon and Rwanda, respectively, simultaneous to feelings of jealousy, many poorer Limpopo residents also assume the impenetrability of wealthier people's protective magic.

The implicit and sometimes explicit accusatory question asked of these double, social grant situations is, "Why does one family receive more than one monthly stipend?" One of Sergeant's congregants, Alice, for example, moved to Tuvo Village from the Giyani area, where she and her family believe jealous murders bewitched her father to death for receiving a government grant along with Alice's mother. The jealous accusers would certainly embrace the situation if they were beneficiaries of it. Against the momentum of such indictments eddies a flow of adult, family siblings jockeying to live with grant-earning mothers. Whereas widowed women may live alone, albeit just next door to a family member, in Rwanda (de Lame 2005), no one in rural Limpopo should reside singly, especially the aged. But who should live with the elderly person who is a rare pillar of financial security in rural Limpopo? Should it be the youngest son and his wife and children as was the dominant form of social security in the past? But the son is employed in Johannesburg, so perhaps the youngest, unmarried or divorced daughter deserves living with the mother, it could be argued. In reality, these decisions appear to have been flexible for some time in this part of Southern Africa (Krige and Krige 1943), and it may be simply that the more assertive sibling will make these or other claims. Though manipulated, the sentiment that no one should live alone is real (Wood and Jewkes 2006)—it is what needs to be manipulated because it is there. de Lame's observation, "The weak are above all solitary" (2005: 129), applies as much to rural Limpopo as it does to Rwanda. Further, none of this vying is experienced in contradiction to loving one's mother, an embodiment of love if a pillar of financial security as well. Boys continue to have especially close relations with their mothers (Krige and Krige 1943).

Lack of trust is a locally acknowledged issue in rural Limpopo, as might be expected given what has been just said regarding witchcraft accusations and jealousy. “Mother” is the only social category routinely mentioned by villagers and township dwellers when asked, “Who do you trust?” (Fortes 1950: 263, Kuper 1950: 94). No matter how physically grown or economically successful, the vast majority of men and women revere and adore their mothers. As Meyer Fortes discerned among the Ashanti of modern-day Ghana, showing disrespect toward mothers in rural Limpopo is “tantamount to sacrilege” (Fortes 1950: 263). This, I suggest, is structurally analogous to, and perhaps the key symbol of the quotidian activities of eating, drinking and sexual relations which positively assert a connection between being a good person and sharing in one another’s being: You came from inside your mother, your beings and juices mixing before being born. Adoring your mother, with whom you share “unbroken intimacy” (Fortes 1950: 243), almost like she is a god is to accept your inextricable connection to her and to be a good child (Krige and Krige 1943). Comaroff and Comaroff (1999) have painted a picture of the Northwest and Limpopo Provinces as inundated with generational antagonism; scholars of other sub-Saharan African locals (Bastian 2003, West 2003) suggest that anxiety and conspiratorial imaginings are pandemic. My data confirms but nuances these insights by finding that “love of one’s mother” serves as a reliable location for intergenerational harmony. Future research on mother-child bonds in the context of general distrust will prove valuable. It will be shown below how the Afrikaner missionary’s biblically argued demand on his young congregants that they choose God and church over family relations drummed up real tensions between many of the congregants and their parents (Chapter Seven).

Besides “My mother”, the most frequent response to the question, “Who do you trust,” is “No one. Myself.” Certain siblings or an African foreigner may now and

then surface as answers but usually not local friends or fathers and certainly not girlfriends and boyfriends. Typically, trust grows as strangers transform into friends and then fictive and real kin. Reality nuances this ideal-typical scenario, of course, for as found in other African locales (Geschiere 1997), kin often source witchcraft against kin. Distrusting someone has to do with assessing the person a gossip, not being able to keep secrets. Trusting someone presupposes the opposite characterizations. At other times, however, distrusting deals with suspecting someone or a group of people wants to harm you out of jealousy: A mechanic with a well known and envied gangster past asked, for example, “Why would a person avenge a stolen car radio by spending ten times the amount of the radio to have traditional doctors bewitch the thief?” Stories about situations such as these circulate and exemplify a discernment of “pure hate” and rampant jealousy that is “out there,” contributing to lack of trust among people. Young men, particularly successful ones, may distrust “forward females,” asking themselves, “What do they want from me? They might want to poison me.” As others have noted (Auslander 1993, Geschiere 1997), jealousies and witchcraft have not faded with the coming of the Eurocentric-imagined poverty-panaceas of objective reason and science but have found fertile ground in post-apartheid SA (Ashford 1996, Shaw 1997). Evidence suggests, in fact, that occult activities, such as witchcraft (Comaroff and Comaroff 1993) and female possession cults (Harries 1994), have proliferated most in contexts of increasing colonial and postcolonial influence.

### **STATE of COMMUNITY: GIVING and RECEIVING**

It may be difficult to understand such distrust happening within a context of moral economy or “limited good” if, by these concepts, we imagine harmonious relations and other romanticized pictures of mutual trust and cooperation. Better defined as the felt experience that when one person gains, another loses (Sanders 2003, Scott 1976,

Foster 1972,1965), this phenomenology of wealth may mutate and stretch, perhaps to its near and dismal limit in rural Limpopo. Here as elsewhere in Africa (Geshiere 1997, de Lame 2005, Nyamnjoh 2001), it is assumed that superfluous amounts of wealth should be distributed, as opposed to hoarded or, in suspiciously innocuous language, saved. Yet unlike in Rwanda (de Lame 2005) and Tanzania (Stambach 2000) there is relatively little circulation of resources, especially of money and the products it affords.

You are not likely to find someone announcing he or she got paid and offering to take out friends to celebrate. A mere apple is unlikely to be bought from town and given to a neighboring child. Instead, nearly everyone says, “I have nothing” (Tsonga: *A ndzi na nchumu*) or “I’m struggling (Tsonga: *Ndza xanseka*),” consonant with what the Lovedu would say long ago (Krige and Krige 1943). By contrast, people may be seen to share homegrown foods with friends, family and neighbors in an easy going manner; they are also relatively fast to offer physical assistance to the same categories of people, such as an electrician installing wires to a home, so long as the electrician spends of his energy, not of his money. Rwandans live by the sentiment, “Poverty makes reciprocity impossible” (de Lame 2005: 295). In Limpopo too, believed to have nothing is the only legitimate excuse for not sharing wealth and this is, at root, how moral economy or “limited good” operates in this part of South Africa; it works to ensure others that one is struggling, a key indicator of common humanity and owed respect in rural South Africa (Thornton 2005). Like the unimaginable prospect of a person living alone, this moral economy is an inextricable part of most people’s reality, the thing that must be pivoted on because people cannot yet imagine standing without it.

Whether or not people really have no extra money is a key question. On the one hand, formally studying a range of people’s monthly earnings and expenditures

and informally seeing how informant-friends of mine lived financially, people are probably being truthful when they say they have no money to spare. But it depends on *when* they are asked. Being paid toward the end of each month, for example, a large number of government employees have spent their salaries within a week. Paying interest on loans from banks and insurance companies for the financing of vehicles, homes and children's education, paying on a plethora of layaway accounts from the most prestigious and high-priced clothing and furniture stores, buying more clothes for themselves and their children marking their privileged status, investing in building materials for houses, and grocery shopping and travel expenses sap nearly all monthly earnings. What little remains—and it is made sure to remain—is for purchasing alcohol on weekends and, for many, throughout the work week.

This phenomenon speaks to socio-economic policy literature on the new black middle class in South Africa (Nyanto 2006, Turok 2006, Tsele 2005), also called the black spending class (Ericsson 2006) to high light this class' lack of assets such as savings. Nyamnjoh (2000) and Soyinka (1994) trace the effect of wolfish African consumerism to various Western advocates who have steadfastly pushed Western products as “must haves” for Africans. If you ask a Limpopo resident for a small amount of money, for instance the equivalent of a US quarter after the first to second week of a month, and he or she says, “I don't have anything,” it is probably true in rural and township Limpopo. Boys and girls learn to ask for money from parents and guardians at the beginning of months to increase their chances of getting it. For example, the self-proclaimed “disease of [Sergeant's] church” (Chapter 6), Dean, asked me for R20. One of his girlfriends requested the same amount from him to pay her transport cost to her home village, where she anticipated participating in girls' initiation school. Dean continued that she had asked her uncle, with whom she was now staying, too late to borrow the money, for it was the 10<sup>th</sup> of the month he had

already spent it all. Still, a professional person may deny having money even at the beginning of a month, spinning what is basically true, i.e. quickly spent cash, to his perceived advantage. For their part, manual laborers have less financial stability than professionals, earning week by week instead of month by month. “Indian”-owned beer and all-purpose stores, ubiquitous across villages and townships now and historically (Harries 1994), seemingly pay black workers just enough to drink alcohol for a week so they will have to come to work again.

It is difficult to give money under these circumstances, even if a person had it to give. Giving your money when no one else is giving theirs is structurally foolish. In rural Limpopo, the giving person is the only one giving, marking him or her off as rich, simply as someone who has something to give. This rare benefactor in Limpopo will become, no doubt, a “big man” or “white chief” in many people’s eyes; he will simultaneously be the target of what can appear a heartless milking of his cash, for Southern Africans of this region still prefer begging to stealing (Krige and Krige 1947). Failing to bestow when it is widely suspected that you have the wherewithal to do so, one runs the risk of looking stingy, a quality of a witch with which no one wants to be associated. Better not to give at all, a curious conclusion when the premise is sharing is a must.

However curious, the deeply buried obligation to share locates hope most fundamentally in others, in sociality. This insight initiates a debate with anthropological scholarship that characterizes Africa in terms such as “popular nightmare” (Comaroffs 1999: 293) and “crisis” (Weiss 2004b, West and Sanders 2003). Whose nightmare and whose crisis is this really? I open this debate in the conclusion of this chapter. Moving forward, the practical diminution of giving and taking of money and modern commodities may signal sociality’s final days of unquestioned hegemony. Corroborating this possibility are the twin spiritual

movements occurring in rural Limpopo in which, first, people widely feel that others can and may intend to harm them through witchcraft and, second, ancestor spirits are slowly losing their power to assist their living relatives (White 2004). Succinctly, spiritual others are hurting more, helping less. The respective local interactants of the Afrikaner missionary, Irish nun, and US PCV will be seen holding on to hope in their ancestors, despite keeping this secret from their foreign patrons and feeling guilty about undermining Christian spiritual prescriptions. Much of development would be about keeping financial, sexual, and marriage facts secret from activists.

In this moral matrix of perceived togetherness, fading goodwill, and rising antagonism, a minority of relatively by-the-book Christians are all but opting out of the received sociality, arguing steadfastly that Jesus is their marriage partner, God their father. Righteous discourses such as these, echoed in Malawi to the north (Dijk 2001) and other African settings (Comaroff and Comaroff 2003), against being beholden to family or any human beings are efficacious in the lives of their protagonists, providing genuinely experienced ideological optimism; but they are also contradicted by their continued felt-need to consider others as they maneuver through life. Few born-again Christians dare deny parental wishes, at least not blatantly. Understanding this contradiction not in terms of double-consciousness but rather in terms of a mind-body incongruity is taken up in Chapter 5 on embodiment and development. The majority of people also acknowledge God but live as if they will turn to Him fully only when all else fails. Jesus and God operate much like ancestor spirits in the imaginings of nearly all Limpopo Christians. Missionaries from the US who were associated with the Afrikaner evangelist, as well as committed Christian PCVs, used to say this to me and several black Limpopoians have admitted apologetically to me that God is the same as the ancestors. But I first noticed this connection when I would say after a promise, “If God wants it” (Tsonga: *Loko*

*xikwembu xi swi rhandza*) and everyone separately and self-assuredly responded, “He wants it” (Tsonga: *Xa swi rhandza*). This nearly exact and oft repeated verbal exchange sits well with Christians and non-Christians alike, calling on their sometimes respective and sometimes common metaphysical entities to find them jobs, cars, TVs and DVD players, in short, to acquire modern status through modern possessions. Departing from scripture which stresses what followers must materially sacrifice to enter the Kingdom of Heaven, for most rural Limpopoians, Jesus and God, like ancestors, are here for them, not the other way around. They are currently here to provide the material conditions of Western-fashioned modernity at least equal to those of others, a powerful claim to being inherently and, thus, deservingly on par with all other human beings, particularly the white kinds (Stoller 1995). If Christian ideology reaches rural Limpopo through translocal ideoscapes of media and human purveyors (Appadurai 1996), villagers have domesticated this religious article of modernity “in their own terms” (West and Sanders 2003).

## **CONCLUSION**

In Rwanda, de Lame found, “Relations no longer create a hierarchy within an indeterminate space by considering a place important because it contains an important person.” Rather, “It is space, hierarchically organized ‘from outside,’ which connotes relations by considering any relationship that brings one closer to town as important” (2005: 110). Where “town” signals the literal sense of towns, such as Tzaneen and Johannesburg, in addition to the Western modernity they represent, Limpopo social and cultural activities similarly evince a shift in focus for senses of relationality. In a time of institutional and ideological disarray and uncertainty, Limpopo villagers, particularly youth, strive to acquire material and discursive evidence of their own Western modernity. In the pragmatics of their search for Western modernity, in their

movements and relations to individuals and through space, however, Limpopo villagers rely on and recreate a historical frame for action based on a paradigm de Lame, in reference to Rwanda, calls a “circulation of forces” (2005: 109). Action and particularly upward mobility retains older style expectations of open exchanges and negotiations of material and ideational entities; its flow aims now at towns rather than at kings and queens.

Limpopo villagers negotiate modernity and even espouse its ideologies of rigid demarcation on a basis of a subjectivity of flow or relationality. This clearly obtains, for example when girls seek the materials of modernity, such as cell phones, through transitory sexual relations with “Ministers of Finance and Transportation.” Certain Limpopo practices hide their relational bases, and this in itself marks them as peculiarly South African. In the case of reciprocity, for instance, little spontaneous sharing of money and commodity goods occurs in rural Limpopo. While this statement rings equally true within many Western neighborhoods and supermarkets, Limpopo villagers accept this lack of flow and exchange only insofar as potential givers are known to have nothing to share. Thus, the basis of “give little” in rural Limpopo is “must share.” In the case of divorce, some wives espouse Christian ideals of marital peace and fidelity to broach the subject of divorce from abusive and faithless husbands. Yet these wives dare not act until winning the consent of their in-laws and bearing children. Otherwise, runaways, childless, and “in the wrong,” these wives will become the objects of unbearable gossip, casting them home-breakers and even witches. In these ways and more, Limpopo villagers domesticate modern products and ideologies to their relational standards of action.

This realization poses a particular theoretical problem: What is ideology? The vast majority of Limpopo villagers spoke in terms of modernity’s infamous bifurcations (Mitchell 2002, Nyamnjoh 2001, Piot 1999); they spoke of tradition

versus modernity, pagan versus Christian, ignorant versus educated, and village versus town, for example. Yet their dichotomous speech almost always followed along the contours of relational expectations of action and interaction. The value of relationality infused both dichotomous speech and interaction styles and, in this sense, when looking at socio-cultural values, no contradiction inhered between them. The contradiction rather obtained between the sociality congealed within both the polarizing language and everyday activities, on the one hand, and the content or detail of the bifurcating language, on the other hand. In rural Limpopo, tensions arise from an increasing awareness of social distinctions or “difference” by individuals who concomitantly feel a perplexing moral need to maintain a flow, even as little as a draft, among representatives of the distinctions. Chapter 5 explains this conundrum in terms of embodiment. Chapters 3 and 4 respectively show how the autonomous approaches to residence and friendship by grassroots workers “blocked flow” in local eyes, significantly crippling relations and ultimately stated development aims (Part III).

For now, I want to conclude as I started, with an engagement with recent discussions of postcolonial subjectivity, witchcraft, and transparency in Africa. These commentaries turn on characterizations of African moral uncertainty and gloom as well as on the conceptual kin of these characterizations, such as hybridization (e.g. Comaroff 1985, de Lame 2005), variation (Bastian 2001: 89), and articulation (Comaroff 1985). Popular notions such as alternative (Gaonkar 2001), vernacular (Hanchard 1999), and cultural (Eisenstadt 2000, Comaroff and Comaroff 1993) modernities also congeal a sense of utter uniqueness and indeterminacy. The notion of “articulation” best anticipates my intervention. After describing articulation as the “multilevel process of engagement which follows the conjuncture of [colonial and African] sociocultural systems” (Comaroff 1985: 154), Comaroff underscores, “There is nothing inherent in the concept of articulation which dictates a priori what is being

joined or how” (ibid). My dissertation fieldwork observations do not shy away from documenting colonial and postcolonial penetrations of ideology and social structures into rural Limpopo life. Still, Limpopo hybridization congeals within its messiness a definite pattern: Villagers expend great amounts of energy chasing down and accumulating modernity’s material and linguistic signs on the basis of relational or social subjectivity. Limpopo villagers experience hope, I submit, not in reference to accessible or inaccessible objects of modernity but in terms of accessible and inaccessible individuals who might facilitate the materialization of their modern fantasies.

## CHAPTER TWO

### THREE DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS – DESCRIPTIONS

Since statist development turned neoliberal in the late 1970s and early 1980s (Stiglitz, Appadurai), NGOs have proliferated alongside international capital as promised sites of social security (Carroll 1992, Clarke 1993, Edwards & Holme 1996, Fisher 1993, Fowler 1991). NGOs have been assumed to be either politically neutral harbingers of marketable skills for the poor (Annis 1988, Bongartz et al 1992, Brown & Kortan 1989, Padron 1987, Semboja & Therkildsen 1995, Thomson 1992) or heroic mobilizers of civil societies against oppressive states (Escobar 1992, Patkar 1995, Wignaraja 1993). NGOs have enjoyed this spotless public image in part because their widely referenced evaluators include economists, political scientists, scholars of international relations, and development practitioners for whom an alteration in global political-economic structure and a promise of empowering the poor have certain and intriguing disciplinary and surely personal appeals (Fisher 1997). The popular idea that NGOs, whether considered domestic or international, “do good” (Cooley & Ron 2002, Fisher 1997) or are just a reform or two away from “doing good” is an element in the discursive construction of NGOs as fitting into a relatively homogeneous “black box” (van Driel & van Haren 2003, Friedman & Reitzes 1996, Reitzes 1994, Friedman 1993).

With the completion of just a few anthropological critiques of development (e.g. Ferguson 1990, Escobar 1995), a startling small number of scholars have since felt a need to call for more finely detailed ethnographic studies of concrete aid projects. William Fisher’s (1997) represents one of the first and more famous anthropological appeals for analyzing NGOs and civil society in terms of their relationships to power and dominance within the discipline of anthropology. Years

later, however, scholars have continued to sense an unacceptable dearth of scholarship that explodes the “black box” insulating NGOs from clearer, critical examination. In addition to further investigating NGOs according to how they situationally represent themselves to different audiences (van Driel & van Haren 2003), negotiate normative versus market considerations (Cooley & Ron 2002), jockey for power and influence among a fast increasing number of private and government service providers (Cooley & Ron 2002), and situate within a web of global, state, and local discourses (van Driel & van Haren 2003), these investigators have stressed the importance of objectifying the micropolitics of “the local” (Peters, Fisher 1997:454-459) and specifically the interpersonal relations between change-agents and members of their target communities (van Driel & van Haren 2003: 541).

While several studies may be seen responding to the call for examining NGO activity in terms of their local, interpersonal relationships (e.g. Rahnema, Ribot, Patkar), two are exemplary for the depth of their descriptions and analyses (Weisgrau, Hilhorst 2001). [briefly introduce their contributions to interpersonal dynamics]. Their avowed theoretical homage to Foucault, through Ferguson, Escobar and others, however, predictably structured Weisgrau and Hilhorst into contextualizing interpersonal encounters “up” or “forward” to already constituted discourse and, philosophically, to idealism or consciousness. By contrast, a phenomenological emphasis on intersubjectivity and particularly on the historicity of identity and academic categories, such as “discourse” and “social,” implores investigators to trace interpersonal relations “down” or “backward” to factors precipitating everyday interactions. Consequently, context for phenomenological studies becomes precisely the under-remarked, if not absent data in discursive approaches to “up-close” looks at NGO activities: i.e. historically personal as opposed to objectively discursive aims of development from perspectives of change-agents, descriptions of villages and project

sites hosting “interactions,” key project actors, situations leading diverse actors to join the projects. Looking at these factors within each of the three grassroots initiatives studied in this dissertation, this chapter explores this phenomenological-friendly context. [first, generalizations across the projects]

### **PROJECTS: IN TERMS OF EACH OTHER**

Before detailing the individual histories of the three grassroots development projects that participated in this dissertation research, this chapter briefly paints with a broader brush a picture of precisely what sorts of development interventions the relevant “NGOs” represent. The idea is to get a concise but workable understanding of the aid initiatives in terms of each other by pivoting them off of a few common variables identified in anthropological scholarship of development. Variables that illuminate similarities and differences among the concerned NGOs include: NGO status (Weisgrau 1997: 4); scale of operations (van Driel & van Haren 2003: 537); normative versus market concerns (Cooley & Ron 2002: 8); explicit versus implicit concepts of development (Weisgrau 1997: 4); self-representations (van Driel & van Haren 2003: 535); and funding (Cooley & Ron 2002: 8). To the list I will add a separately-sectioned discussion of the projects around the interrelated variables of their proximities and relative access to the central town of Tzaneen, a locally perceived and valued symbol of Western modernity. The aid projects include, first, a spiritual program run by an Afrikaner missionary from Cape Town named Sergeant, second, a parish instantiation of a diocese-wide HIV-AIDS initiative overseen by a Catholic nun from Ireland named Valerie and, third, an education project facilitated by US PCV named Ishmael.

With respect to “NGO status,” only Valerie’s parish project is geared to be a registered NGO. Taking the same name as its diocese-wide parent project, Kurisanani

or “Caring for each other,” Valerie and her local leadership staff were surprised to realize, during my last few months of fieldwork, that the NGO status of its Tzaneen-based parent organization did not automatically give their rural initiative the same NGO status. The lack of NGO status came to the attention of Valerie and company when their major local sponsor threatened to withdraw its sponsorship until Kurisanani ascertained an official NGO identity number. Meanwhile, Sergeant’s Tuvo Christian Church is not registered as an NGO with the South African state but is formally recognized by Tuvo Village’s traditional authority or Nduna as well as by central authorities of the Modjadji-The-Rain-Queen’s Queendom in which Tuvo Village is situated. In Ishmael’s situation, the PC is funded by the US government but is considered administratively distinct from other foreign agencies, such as USAID, and missions. PCVs themselves are considered, meanwhile, US civilians overseas as opposed to government employees. In short, Valerie, Sergeant, and Ishmael may be seen as part of the recent wave of private organizations and citizens providing welfare services formally identified with the work of states.

Regarding scales of operation, Kurisanani and Tuvo Christian Church are the largest and smallest projects, respectively. Co-funded by US-based Catholic Relief Services and one of the largest and most identifiable South African NGOs, Choice, Kurisanani covers a diocese of roughly 310 square miles and employs dozens of South Africans as project leaders and careworkers. Ishmael’s PC assignment has him working in three primary schools in two adjacent villages whose combined populations may be estimated at 20,000 people. The total number of principals and teachers at the three schools reaches upward of thirty-five educators while the combined student population is roughly nine-hundred pupils. The smallest of the three participating improvement projects is Sergeant’s Tuvo Christian Church. TCC draws its roughly 115 congregants mostly from Tuvo Village but also from a number of

surrounding communities. Its funding, which is apparently unimpressive and goes mostly towards Sergeant's living expenses, comes from Sergeant's home church in Cape Town and from a locally-based Tzaneen church. Despite their varied operational magnitude and reach, all three grassroots projects are financially sustained by funding external to the hosting communities and, significantly in two cases, by foreign sources.

All three projects imply a definition of development involving a "process of change mediated by some form of human intervention" (Weisgrau 1997: 4). In these particular cases, "human intervention" hails from outside of the beneficiary communities and may be characterized as foreign. From a nation-state view, Ireland and the US are clearly not SA. But Cape Town too was officially recognized, during the Apartheid era, as part of a Western-aligned state distinct from black homelands, such as Lebowa where Sergeant now ministers. Sergeant himself thinks of his host communities as foreign and all three change-agents and their institutional affiliates accept the idea of "cultural difference" by offering formal and informal training in cross-cultural knowledge. Without explicitly using the term development, Valerie and Sergeant's schemes nevertheless offer clear definitions of their respective development interventions. For Valerie, development means caring and providing a quality life for HIV+ clients as well as educating villagers about the HIV-AIDS disease and how the centrality of the Catholic faith in preventing the spread of this disease. For Sergeant, development involves eradicating moral and material poverty in rural Limpopo by spreading and inculcating Christian values in youth. Uniquely, PC's SA program only broadly defines its intervention as assisting with education and HIV-AIDS, leaving volunteers such as Ishmael to concretize their plans on case by case bases.

Only Kurisanani concerns itself seriously with market considerations. The Catholic Church as a whole in SA won a lucrative grant from CRS for its proposed

HIV-AIDS intervention. Consequently, Catholic Churches participating in Kurisanani at both dioceses and parish levels feel pressure to produce clear and positive results to its donor within strictly observed time frames. Such reporting is seen as a sign of the project's worthiness of the sponsored funds as well as an indication that Kurisanani will deserve receiving more sponsorship in the future. As mentioned above, Valerie's parish-based Kurisanani also competes with other health-related NGOs for funds from Choice. As a result, Valerie and her local leadership team spend much of their energies and time preparing monthly feedback reports for their Choice sponsor, reports seen as tickets to continued funding for Kurisanani. By comparison, Ishmael's PC funding is experienced as non-competitive and guaranteed and Sergeant receives revenue from his Cape Town church and a Tzaneen-based evangelical church, both of which offer assistance less on a competitive basis than out of moral obligation to help one of their brave, pioneer-sons of Christianity's "Good News." Thus, while all three projects present themselves to their respective beneficiaries in the normative terms of selflessly helping the poor, under-educated, and diseased, the TCC and PC projects, unlike Kurisanani, do so without the contradictory specter of positioning themselves to other audiences as fiscally responsible corporations.

### **THE PROJECTS: WHEREABOUTS, APPEARANCES, STATUSES**

Where do Sergeant, Valerie and Ishmael live? The three change-agents settled themselves around the town of Tzaneen located just east of the center of the Limpopo Province, sixty miles east of Limpopo's capital, Polokwane, 300 miles northeast of Johannesburg, 60 miles west of Kruger National Park, and 180 miles south of the Zimbabwe border. Tucked behind the merging feet of the southwest-to-northeast running Mogoebeskloof, Devielskloof and Georges Valley mountain ranges, Tzaneen is a town built up in the midst of lucrative, white-owned fruit, vegetable, and timber

farms in South Africa's lowveld or low-lying, near-coastal areas. An on-going housing boom has middle-class blacks moving from villages and townships to Tzaneen in search of modern lifestyles.

The communities hosting the efforts of Valerie and Ishmael are only about six miles apart from each other and roughly 20 miles from town. Half of the approximately 15 villages serviced by Valerie and the two rural communities worked in by Ishmael fall under the authority of Chief Muhlava II, the 3<sup>rd</sup> Chief of the only Tsonga-speaking chiefdom to have immigrated into South Africa from Mozambique en masse in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. During apartheid, this area was simply called "Muhlava," one of the five, roughly north-to-south running sub-divisions within the Gazankulu homeland.

Everyone living in these "Muhlava villages" sees the nearly all-black township of Nkowankowa as their "Tsonga" township, although members of other "ethnic" groups have always lived there, and it remains a destination today for diverse young people with cars who like to go bar-hopping in various townships and larger villages. This township lies between Tzaneen and outlying villages which are shaped up around large white-owned commercial farms nestled in the valley. Conspicuous for its relatively large, brick houses, mostly paved roads and grass lawns, Nkowankowa is home to professionals such as nurses, teachers, police officers and many government administrators; it is also in itself a nearby symbol of modernity for locals and, thus, the residential destination of choice for many village youth.

Situated 15 miles north of the communities hosting Valerie and Ishmael, and only about 10 miles from Tzaneen, is the rural area which received Sergeant, the evangelical missionary. Under the authority of Queen Modjadji, also called the Rain Queen, members of these predominantly Pedi-speaking villages understand Mokopani as their "Pedi" township; many young ones aspire to live and breathe its

Nkowankowa-like modernity. Only twenty-five miles apart from each other, the townships of Nkowankowa and Mokopani are seldom visited by most representatives of the “opposing” ethno-linguistic groups. Lack of time, transportation, money and contacts are disincentives for such, otherwise, appealing visitations. Working in the villages outside of these townships, Sergeant, Valerie and Ishmael, although theoretically “in the same boat,” do not know each other.

We mapped out where the change-agents live in relation to the Limpopo Province and the town of Tzaneen. But what do the communities actually look like? Valerie’s home-base for work is a locally-run Catholic or “Roman” Church in a village called Bonketsi. Ishmael lives and works in Pensi and Nenge Villages. Bonketsi, Pensi and Nenge villages approximate modernized rural areas, crisscrossing dirt roads lined with yards for residential, commercial and educational purposes. From an aerial view, the brown dirt of the roads are juxtaposed to the yards significantly greened over with vegetation from mango, avocado, orange and lemon trees, as well as from peanut, strawberry and pumpkin leaves. How much green can be seen and in which combinations depend on the seasons.

Bonketsi sits off of a main road connecting Tzaneen and Palaborwa, another relatively large, formerly all-white town bordering Kruger National Park to the east; it is also the last eastward village under the Muhlava Chiefdom along this road. Populated by more than 15,000 inhabitants, bisected internally by a tarred road off which the more usual dirt roads shoot, and the first and last stop for public taxis, Bonketsi is popular for its township-like modernity; its multiple and robust bar lounges see to it that Bonketsi joins townships such as Nkowankowa and Mokopani as bar-hopping destinations, a sign of its approximation of modernity.

Pensi and Nenge, Ishmael’s host communities, sit off of a tarred road like Bonketsi. In fact, the tarred road roughly connects Bonketsi with a small, still all-

white farming town called Riteli. Being situated on a tar road says something generally about a village's modernity: inhabitants can relatively easily find public transportation to "white towns"; they can sit on the roadside and observe drivers in their modern machines zooming from one advanced town to another; and they can more straightforwardly play host to bars and "Indian" shops as well as to special guests all of whom may be attracted by the ease of transport.

Given this, Bonketsi is, however, materially and symbolically closer than Pensi and Nenge to modernity, the overriding issue being that Bonketsi villagers, living on a road going straight to town, are just one taxi ride away from Tzaneen. Pemsians and Nengens, meanwhile, sitting on a tarred road leading only indirectly to Tzaneen, must take two or three taxis, depending on which way they choose to go, significantly and inconveniently prolonging waiting periods along often sun-scorched roadsides. According to symbolic schematic in rural Limpopo, Bonketsians are more fortunate for their roadside situation than Ishmael's host villages.

Materially as well, Bonketsi benefits from its relative proximity to town, having more regular though still imperfect access to running water and electricity than Pensi and Nenge. With just three long dirt roads running perpendicularly away from the tarred road, alongside a small mountain to the north, and crisscrossed by a dozen or so smaller, intersecting soil roads, Pensi's green vegetation would look like a roughly elongated rectangle from a bird's eye view. By contrast, Nenge and Bonketsi would look more squarely green, given that their intersecting, mostly earthen roads are horizontally and vertically similar in length.

In contrast to Bonketsi, Pensi, and Nenge, Tuvo, the village hosting Sergeant in Queen Modjadji's Queendom, is far from a tarred road, about 3 miles away in one direction and 10 miles in another direction. Going the 3 mile route means moving down one road, tarred with potholes for the first half mile and then roughly earthen

and twisting for the remainder. This twisting conforms to the hills the road has been made to navigate, for this village is situated upon a mountainside as opposed to Bonketsi, Pensi and Nenge, which all sit in valleys. It would be difficult for a driver unfamiliar with the place to stay on the one road, however, as similarly sized roads connect with it rather seamlessly, as if they could possibly be the continuations of the main road. All this twisting, ascending and descending to Tuvo happens as you pass three villages sitting side by side. So side by side are some of the village borders that it would not be obvious where one begins and another ends to an area newcomer. The village distinctions matter situationally to locals, however, since villages have different ndunas or headmen and have assumed certain reputations for residents.

So far from a main road are Tuvoians that high school students may only travel to Tzaneen once a month to buy essentials, such as groceries. Similarly aged Pensi and Nengens, located two or more taxi rides away from town, also struggle to reach town more than once a month but may manage while a good number of Bonketsians of the same age can be found in town multiple times a week. The relatively great distance from a tarred road corresponds for Tuvoians to having to wait for long periods of time for precious few public taxis going to town. As public transportation does not make it to Tuvo at all, the situation is graver still—Tuvoians endure this inconvenience from a neighboring village, to which they have walked, where public taxis do come. Young Tuvoians, including the bulk of the Sergeant's congregants, are aware of their relative isolation from all that connotes progress and would, at almost any opportunity, leave the village to see newer and bigger places and things.

Resonating with its relative physical dislocation from tarred roads, town and modernity, is Tuvo's conspicuous lack of prefigured road ordering. The closest thing to a straight road in Tuvo is the main road coming from the tarred road three miles away and heading past Tuvo to the neighboring, larger village hosting the public taxis.

As this main dirt road has been superimposed on the landscape to enable vehicles to access distant villages, Tuvo can hardly claim even this imperfectly linear road as part of its planning. Truly Tuvoian roads, with grooves so deep as to be inadvisable to pass on them by car, curve about in relation rather to a dried up river bed, hillside slopes, and original homesteads which were settled for cattle-grazing convenience, not for the sake of order impressive to sight. Contextualized in these ways, Tuvo roads have structured yards laid out rather jaggedly, markedly different visually from Bonketsi, Pensi and Nenge roads.

Tuvo roads are a backgrounded visual feature of the village and are not central for moving within the community. More important for this tiny village whose members number in the hundreds, as opposed to the thousands for Bonketsi, Pensi and Nenge, are narrow dirt pathways skirting almost imperceptibly between closely situated homes and down and up the parched river bed. Consequence of this road and housing organization is that the vegetation of Tuvo would not appear, from a bird's eye view, ordered into shapely blocks, squares and rectangles but strewn haphazardly with the situationally demanded bends and curves.

Relative access to Tzaneen does little to predict levels of infrastructural development. We have seen that Bonketsi has a tarred road running perpendicularly off the main road connecting Tzaneen and Palaborwa and have surmised that this would have something to do with its relative access to trade. Apart from this one feature of Bonketsi, one would observe residents, especially women of all ages and some boys, of all three villages collecting heavy barrels of water from common water pipes and stressed by sporadic electrical blackouts.

More of a determining factor in having reliable amenities seems to be the rare case in which a village is actually connected to amenities being used commonly for residents of modern spaces, such as urban areas and white farming towns. This was

the case in the village where I stayed: Sandwiched between the township of Nkowankowa and Riteli, the all-white, modernized farming town, Poolo shared an electrical grid with the farming town and sourced water from Nkowankowa. Thus positioned infrastructurally, Poolo was understood locally as being township-like, though it was not necessarily the closest rural community to modern residential and commercial spaces. All this to say that, in rural Limpopo, a village such as Tuvo can be much closer geographically to a major town, in this case Tzaneen, but more distant materially and symbolically from the town's modernity than more distant communities such as Bonketsi and Pensi.

#### **SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT – TUVO CHRISTIAN CHURCH**

*Objectives.* The stated objectives of missionary, Catholic Sister and PCV's projects may be said to be, respectively, spiritual, health and educational assistance to local people. Sergeant is a Christian missionary and the driving force behind his work is to get local people to hear about Jesus Christ. If all else fails, Sergeant will take solace in having put the name Jesus in the earshot of his African contemporaries. During a formal interview, Sergeant sums up the overall purpose of his missionary work: "People are dying without Jesus Christ. They're going to hell. I'm here to tell them the good news—that God loves them. It's not pompous. It's like having the solution to AIDS—don't keep it for yourself." Sergeant has a friend, Pastor Pam. Standing on the name of Jesus with pride, she is a long-time missionary from the south part of the US running a church just over a northerly hill from Sergeant's church. She and Sergeant cooperatively plan, through inter-church programs, to bring local youth to Christ. As a predictable guest speaker for Sergeant and his congregants celebrating the birth of their church, Pam speaks from the podium at Sergeant's church, explaining his aim in coming to this area: "Why did Sergeant come and start a church here? So that souls

will come into a church to pray for the Lord, to worship God in a spirit of holiness.” This rationale speaks as much to Pam’s aims as to Sergeant’s. Sergeant is consciously targeting children and youth under the age of 25. Of the 100 or so congregants, there are fewer than 10 women older than 25 and only one man, who is quite old, around 80. As Sergeant says, “We are a children’s church.”

To ensure the name “Jesus” is heard often, Sergeant, in addition to leading Sunday services, oversees weekday services for sub-social groups such as small children, boys, girls, older women, etc.; invites parents and guardians to church on special occasions, such as birthdays for the church; and has his congregants meet with the congregants of other foreign missionaries in the area for combined social-religious events involving hiking, soccer and so forth. Until recently, Sergeant would initiate “home-sells” in which a group of 10-20 congregants would visit another congregant’s house at night to sing, praise and evangelize about Jesus and the Good News. A husband and wife team of longtime US missionaries in Africa, Tim and Tammy, live in Tzaneen. Like Sergeant, Tim and Tammy zealously evangelize the name of Jesus, though their target population is adults and their method is formal indoctrination through courses.

Adamant that his church be a-political, Sergeant has tried to tie spiritual development with economic progress. He argues that instilling honest, i.e. Christian business practices in young people will domino the value of truth into the larger community, transforming Tuvo from falsehood to truth, bad to good, evil to divine. A stalled, small-scale, brick-making effort involving 10 or so congregants and an operational 5 person vegetable garden represent Sergeant’s two attempts to mix Jesus and economics. Sergeant prides himself on not copying other missionaries’ project ideas and hopes to live and die in Tuvo, spreading the Jesus appellation far and wide. We will see how effective Sergeant has been in realizing his objectives.

*Close-up look.* Sergeant's church resembles an east-to-west shoe box made of amateurish-looking brick walls and a zinc roof. Measuring 25x15 yards, the church is internally walled off, cutting the 25 yard length roughly in half. Another internal wall slices the eastern half of the structure roughly in half again, though in an east-west direction and not a north-south one; the northern quarter of the building is then cut in half again, making the entire structure essentially smaller boxes inside of a larger one.

Standing outside the church, there are two doors on the south wall, the right and left one significantly spaced apart and respectively opening into the church hall and into Sergeant's living area. Apart from the metallic silver of the zinc roof, this "House of God" is white, standing to the north within a wide-holed, metal, perimeter fence shaped into a rough square dimensioned at about 45x45 yards. A double gate wide enough for two vehicles to pass is situated at the fence's south-east corner. Between the 15-yard eastern side of the church and the eastern portion of the perimeter fence sits a small vegetable garden enclosed in a pest-preventing net. A mound of dirt sits just south of this garden, a few steps away from the gate. The dirt pile comes from the place where the sand-filled volleyball court now lays, along the southern most line of the outlying fence.

Deep in the southwest corner of the fenced area are the pit latrines and, between these latrines and western side of the church lie the remains of the church Sergeant originally had built on the site. With nothing but a couple of low-lying, broken down walls and the foundation, this old church serves now as a brick-making area for Solomon, a 20-something, former leader of the church. Standing tall in the narrow space between the back of the church and northwest part of the fence is a water tower providing water for Sergeant's needs; among other things, it better ensures that water comes regularly from a faucet situated just beyond the flower garden in front of the church. This set-up, with its modern fencing, regular water supply, thriving

gardens, and volley ball court, represents a small patch of modernity sitting awkwardly amidst the relatively haphazard configuration of Tuvo.

*Local membership patterns.* Described as a “children’s church” by Sergeant, TCC has a membership base coming predominantly from the hosting community of Tuvo. Tuvo village sends about 18 sets of nuclear family relations, many of whom are related in extended ways, and 6 strong friendship groupings to the church. The average number of people within both kinds of sub-sets is four, though some Huvo families attend TCC 7 and 9 deep while in two cases a congregant is the only member of his immediate family in attendance. In the latter cases, the lone family member inevitably forms part of one of the friendship groupings, so that no one is seen attending the church without company. Since there are marital and distant blood-connections among members of many of these “families,” loners may be seen identifying with these looser family relations as well as with friends. “Loners” may be only children, the only sibling interested in the church, or may have remained at the church after other siblings quit. The age range of the vast majority of the Tuvo congregants is 5 to 24 years old. There is an 80 year old man, a handful of 30-something women, and infants of teenaged attendees as well. The average age of the local members is 14 years while girls outnumber boys by a 3 to 2 ratio. Members from Tuvo’s neighboring villages boost the total number of congregants to between 110 and 125, change average age insignificantly, but tip the gender balance even more toward girls.

*Key project actors.* Besides Sergeant, key actors in the Tuvo Christian Church project are Dean, David, Mary, Marlon, Steve, Cary and Brian. There are other locals, such as Dean’s brother Teres and Steve’s brother Squirt, who engage with the project significantly, of course, and many of their interventions will be noted. But those mentioned by name above represent key positions in church and in wider community dynamics in the Tuvo Christian Church organization.

Sergeant is a roughly 6'1" tall, 39 year old Afrikaner male who identifies geographically with Cape Town, although he spent significant time growing up in towns and on farm lands in Swaziland and outside Pretoria. Although he steers his young congregants away from discussing politics, Sergeant clearly shows his antagonism toward the new ANC-led government and his critical support for the Democratic Alliance, a palatable version of the National Party in the post-apartheid era. Sergeant never said why he discouraged his congregants from discussing political issues. With a stiff body, a neat, tucked-in dress style and a tight tongue, Sergeant's self-control is meant to be a model of Christian restraint in the throes of what he sees as the loose talk and incessant sounds of drumming, drunks and bar music of backward Tuvo Village. Sergeant is the founder and pastor of Tuvo Christian Church.

David, Mary and Solomon were all locals in leadership positions when I first arrived in Tuvo in 2005. Solomon has since been demoted for reasons explored below. Solomon was a soft-spoken leader; his kindness and eager desire to be a good person deep within his heart showed through his down-turning eyes and bright smile when speaking to others. Perhaps it was Solomon's easy kindness that led Sergeant to appoint him to lead children's church service on Friday afternoons at the church, for children are understood to need tender-hearted and patient guidance, usually from women. David and Mary are both harder edged than Solomon, though in their own unique ways. Both are slow to smile when conversing with others, unwilling, it seems, to grin until they are sure that commentary is worthy of such recognition. Yet where Mary tends to drop her head a bit when walking, not so much out of humility as frustration with the behaviors of her fellow congregants, David appears happier with life, enjoying a listening, almost spy-type posture when grouped with others. These three leaders are, I would suggest, of average height and weight, none standing out for being notably tall or short, heavy or light.

Marlon, Steve, Brian and Cary are not leaders at Tuvo Christian Church but are some of the next most trusted congregants by Sergeant. Steve assumed headship over the children's service which was lost by Solomon. Thin but not tall, Steve seems to be constantly smiling, a mix of an appreciative spirit and a low self-esteem, an "I love being here but I'm not so good at it" attitude. Marlon has become important to Sergeant and the church in the time of my research. Sergeant's acknowledgement of Marlon's input was also supported by observing that Marlon was being allowed unmitigated access to Sergeant's living space and being called on by Sergeant to "spy" on the activities of other young church goers. Marlon seemed to revel in his closeness with Sergeant and in his position as lead keyboardist for the church.

Brian is one of many congregants who have problem with Marlon ingratiating himself to Sergeant, although Brian himself is a favored local in Sergeant's eyes. Brian is introduced by Sergeant as the church gardener. Brian clearly finds pride in his gardening duties, which include arranging a flower bed between the church and residential doors of the building and overseeing the vegetable garden to the east of the church. His front teeth rotted and jagged, Brian also volunteers to clear weeds, to dig and wheelbarrow dirt when necessary, and other manual tasks. Sergeant has one of his most open relationships with Cary, a brilliant singer newly arrived from Giyani, the former capital of the Gazankulu Homeland during the apartheid era. The female version of Marlon in terms of working unashamedly to curry favor with Sergeant, Cary stops short of being his mole for information.

Then there is Dean who, to me, calls himself "The disease of the church." Tall, handsome and charismatic, Dean holds a lot of promise in Sergeant's eyes. Sergeant hopes that Dean will lead the otherwise stubborn "cool kids" to church and, by extension, to Christ. As a local male ideal among the youth and leader of the Youth Boys Service held on Mondays, Dean has tremendous, unofficial power in the church.

What Sergeant sees is Dean participating in nearly all church activities, showing off his remarkable dancing and singing abilities for the sake of Jesus. Yet a lot more is happening regarding Dean behind the scenes and Sergeant would not be happy to know about it. Dean's influence is particularly significant when understanding that he has influence over a good portion of his close and distant relatives who also attend the church.

*Coming to the projects.* Sergeant's route to his Tuvo Christian Church has deep roots, roots which he recalled during a series of formal interviews taking anywhere from one to three hours each. Sergeant's grandmother took him and his older brother, his only sibling, to a church outside of Pretoria where they lived for a few years in the early 1980s. Sergeant remembers the pastor saying, "I challenge you. Have you made your choice to God and his son Jesus?" Sergeant had been used to following the rules of the Dutch Reformed Churches he and his family attended but wasn't "saved"—until now. "That day, I stood up and committed to God. This was about 1983. I was about 15 years old. I started really understanding things." This momentous experience led Sergeant to share with his grandmother a dream: "I dreamt about all my school friends. They were in heaven with clouds—on top of the clouds. I climbed the ladder to the top. This was like I'm saved and I'll go to heaven." Thus, Sergeant had become a self-motivated Christian in his mid teens.

In addition to having inculcated a self-motivated love of Jesus, Sergeant has also embodied an ability to function independently, a trait which he sees as a key to his success as a missionary. Sergeant was not interested in dating as a teenager and, in fact, rather "liked being alone with myself. I played with myself." He recalls this comfort with himself being structured by returning straight to a relatively isolated farm home he lived in during his high school years in Stellenbosch in the Western Cape. His church-going grandmother teaching him to care for himself strengthened

Sergeant's inclination toward solitude. As if feeling guilty for the autonomous image of himself he drew, Sergeant said he did enjoy playing table tennis with others while at an earlier attended boarding school. Still, Sergeant finishes by saying, "But I was never worried about being alone." After telling me about the death of an eleventh girl with whom he was just starting to get along, Sergeant concluded, "God was preparing me to not be so dependent on friends. I must stand strong on my own."

Equipped with a self-propelled love of Christ and a naturalized sense of himself as autonomous, Sergeant was now lacking leadership experience. According to Sergeant's autobiographical memory, this was solved when, in his second year at Stellenbosch University where he studied business economics, he was asked to be a leader of a campus Christian group. This was 1990-1991, and Sergeant says "It was quite an experience. I was very nervous." Sergeant had to lead groups of 50-60 people at times and this taught him that "I must take charge of a situation. From this experience, Sergeant also recalls learning about interpersonal relationships, dress situations, and encouragement and motivation skills. Still at Stellenbosch, a Missions Conference came to the campus and challenged people to give one year of their lives to a missionary organization. Accepting the conference's challenge, Sergeant sidelined his plans to further cultivate his business aspirations by traveling through Europe. Instead, he joined Directly Translated Year for Christ, a missionary wing of the Dutch Reformed Church with which he decreasingly identified.

Directly Translated Year for Christ sent Sergeant and about 300 other, all white South Africans for a three month training course in Wellington, Western Cape in 1992. After the three months of course work, the trainees were divided into teams, some working in church settings while other, including Sergeant, visited schools spread out through much of the country. Lodging at the schools, all of which were formerly all-white schools except for one previously all-black school, Sergeant and his

team learned to use drama, sports, camping, counseling and teaching to spread the word of God. The team's aim was to save Christian novices and to re-save backsliders. Sergeant received his calling from God during this year, the message being that he would serve his Lord for the rest of his life. In 1994, Sergeant underwent training through a Hawaii-based organization called Youth with a Mission, or YWAM, designed to teach missionaries how to evangelize in areas with few or no Christians. Sergeant calls this "Super training," having learned to hear the voice of God through discipleship lessons.

Sergeant had been praying over where he should missionize when a group of YWAM trainees reported back about a trip they had taken to Iphrath Mission Station in Mines village, a village where Sergeant would end up living for seven years. Sergeant remembers: "Something stirred in my heart to go there. I decided to go for six months and see what I'll do from there." This decision altered his previous thoughts about going to Russia which he felt compelled to abandon, having heard nothing from God confirming these musings. Consciously modeling himself after Jesus who toured alone with only his prayers to his Father, Sergeant, in 1995, headed for the missionary outpost, run solely by Jape Venter and his wife. Six months turned into two years with Sergeant defining himself at the time as a jack of all trades, looking after chickens, trying to integrate into the villages through sporting activities, evangelizing at people's houses, and praying for the sick. After a fall out with the Venters in 1996, Sergeant lived, from 1997-98, on three consecutive white-owned, commercial farms in the area, his money closing in on zero after a teaching job he held at was retrenched.

With no substantial income, Sergeant relied on his Christian-based finance training and faith. Sergeant believes his faith was answered when he was one day picked up while walking along the side of a road by Jan Smitz, the then lead pastor of

a progressive evangelical church in Tzaneen called, until recently, Letaba Christian Church. Knowing of Sergeant through the latter's association with the long-established Ventors, Pastor Smitz was moved by Sergeant's recent vicissitudes and committed his church to sponsoring him. This sponsorship enabled Sergeant to stay in the area, still on one or another commercial farm. Sergeant continued serving an organization he started for youth called, The Lamps. Started in 1995 and made up of many of the young people he attracted through sports and other activities in Mines and Tuvo villages, The Lamps trained in Christianity and outreached to other families. Sergeant was thrilled with his engagement with the Lamps and satisfied that he now had sponsorship to remain in the area. But, "My heart was always to go stay with the people where I'm ministering. I didn't want to escape the villages to the town and farms. Hudson Taylor, a missionary in the 1860s, used to speak to me. Hudson Taylor went to live with the Chinese, dressed like them, and learned the language and started reaching the Chinese." Sergeant wanted to be based in the serviced communities.

Sergeant's wish was to come true. While evangelizing with other missionaries in Zambia 1997, Sergeant busied himself with reading the Bible, writing its insights, journaling his thoughts, and praying about everything having to do with living with the people being served. It was during this intense scrutiny that Sergeant heard from God that he would be moving from his current residence with a rich, elderly widow who otherwise lived alone on an enormous farm. When he returned to the widow's house from Zambia, a serious argument arose between them and Sergeant moved out. For Sergeant, this argument meant that God wanted Sergeant to leave but, as God had not yet sent a sign for Sergeant to live with the people, he crashed with other white farmers. Finally, God's confirmation came, although Sergeant did not detail the signal, and Sergeant decided to move to Mines in 1998 where he stayed at the house of Charles Pelesi, Sergeant's first and most trusted translator, Christian convert, and

member of The Lamps. From Mines, Sergeant held church services from 1998 to 2004 in a classroom at the primary school in Tuvo, attended mostly by Tuvo youth and several Mines youth. When the principal of the school asked Sergeant for rent in 2004, he and his local leadership team agreed to build a church of their own. Thus, Tuvo Christian Church, the first and still only church in the community, was born.

For their part, the majority of local congregants from Mines and neighboring communities recall being drawn to the church in 1998—the year Sergeant finally settled with the Pelesi family in Mines village. During these relatively formal interviews conducted at various times and with various numbers of interviewees, these premarital boys and girls talked about a “Jesus Film” being shown at the soccer field loosely associated with Tuvo Primary School just across the narrow, lumpy road to the north. Were it not for shabby bushes being patched here and there between the road and the field, their sandy dirt and knobby surfaces would visually fuse the two areas into one. Dean remembers Sergeant announcing over a loudspeaker from a hatchback vehicle that films would be shown that evening. That night, Sergeant was joined by Pam, whom the youth were now seeing for the first time, and “other African pastors.” The latter were probably Pastors David and Edward, an older-younger brother team converted to Christianity by Pam and now making names for themselves as pastors in the area.

Congregants, who would have ranged in age at that time from 5 to 15 years, were deeply moved by the “Jesus Film.” David, the most righteous male leader of the church, was moved by the “blood, nails, hanging and that Jesus died for our sins.” He continues that it was because of the film that “I decided to attend Sergeant’s church to see what else was happening.” David’s testimony also suggests how the numbers of local youth may have burgeoned these nights in 1998: “As unofficial leader of my friends, I led all of them there [to the film showings] too. My friends no longer attend

the church and are not strict Christians, though. Getting jobs and money to make their dreams [to become rich and famous] come true pressured them out of the church.”

Dean, now a self-proclaimed “Disease of the church,” was similarly inspired: “The film was so interesting. I never had a belief that Jesus was doing the good things I saw. It really shocked my heart to see Jesus crucified. It started to be painful.” Steve, the newly appointed, shy leader of the children’s service, Squirt, a rather uninterested church goer, and many others, including girls, told similar stories about the influence of the “Jesus Film” on their decisions to join Sergeant’s church.

Dean describes a second film which was shown the following day and which the majority of local youth said they watched and were touched by: “The next day they showed ‘Burning Hell’ at the sports ground. I went to see it. I was so scared because there was a rich person and a poor man. The poor man was Nazaro. Nazaro said, ‘Can I have some food?’ The rich man said, ‘Go away, I don’t like dirty people.’” Dean continued that the film showed the “rich man burning in hell although he was never destroyed. He looked up and saw Nazaro dressed-up in beautiful white clothes. From that day, I took Jesus Christ.” At the end of this film, Dean remembers himself and many of the young viewers willingly accepting an invitation from the pastors, led by Sergeant, to come to the front to be prayed for. It was then announced that Sergeant’s Tuvo Christian Church would be starting at Tuvo Primary School. These film showings were attended mostly by Tuvo youth but young people, such as David, from adjacent villages were also there. Congregants also testify to these films being shown at later dates in neighboring communities.

A minority of the current-day congregants came to Tuvo Christian Church by slightly or dramatically different routes. We saw, for example, that Steve and Squirt, who call each other “brother” since their mothers are sisters, attended the “Jesus Movie” and “Burning Hell” films. While they admit to being touched by these films,

Steve and Squirt were first attracted to Sergeant's ministry by a concert he held at Tuvo Primary School in 1995. Dean's older sister and only other sibling, Sue, says that Sergeant came to her house the morning of the "Jesus Movie" showing, talking about "how Jesus died for us and asking us to come and watch a video about God. I went and decided to join [Sergeant's church]." Quitting long ago, Sue now despises the church. We will find out below why she despises the church.

Untied from the movie events altogether, Cary, the choir leader, joined Tuvo's only church in 2005, the year I started my fieldwork. Having attended churches in her natal home near Giyani, the former capital of the Gazankulu Homeland, Cary tells this story: "We moved because my grandfather was witched. People were jealous that both my grandparents received [monthly government social] grants. They didn't understand why they should both get it." Continuing on, Cary details: "One day after a funeral on Saturday my grandmother found my grandfather in his room hanging from the ceiling, dead by suicide. People told my grandmother her life was in danger so they moved to Shamasulu [village blending into Tuvo]. We had family there." Cary's Shamasulu Aunty, with whom she now constantly fights, said to Cary, "Why don't you come to my church?" Cary went and liked it, her unsurpassed singing voice elevating her quickly to leader of the choir. Others, such as the recently demoted church leader, Solomon, who joined the church in 2001, entered Sergeant's house of God after the 1998 films for various reasons, such as being absent at the time or too young.

## **HEALTH DEVELOPMENT - KURISANANI**

*Objectives.* Having tinkered with just one or two economic ventures over the past decade speaks to the evangelical enterprise assumed by Sergeant. Viewing the world as a nest of sin, Sergeant largely by-passes practical work in his missionary efforts. The Catholic nature of Valerie's project is clear by contrast. While she also prays for

locals to turn wholeheartedly to Jesus, Valerie's approach is to initiate this turnabout through good works in the world. Reluctant to even mention the missionary side of her intervention, Valerie sticks to the formal description of the Kurisanani NGO under which she works when talking of her activities in South Africa—she's here to help roll-out ARVs to qualifying HIV+ locals within her assigned parish. Her selfless example should be sign enough for locals to accept the transformative power of Jesus. Whose approach—Sergeant's spiritual versus Valerie's relatively practical—if any, proves more effective will be shown below.

Referred to Kurisanani by village-based clinics or by friends, clients receive ARVs with a frequency corresponding to the magnitude of their illness. Prior to accessing an illness grant from the government, clients are also provided by Kurisanani with food parcels containing sugar, coffee, beans, rice, cooking oil, peanut butter and other widely used products. In addition to facilitating the distribution of ARVs and food parcels, Valerie oversees another Kurisanani-sponsored project called Education for Life which is designed to raise awareness of AIDS in nearby schools. As I was leaving the fieldsite, Valerie was researching what it would take to start a vegetable garden on the premises of the Bonketsi Catholic Church. The idea is that physically capable clients may turn to gardening as a way to feel and be productive as well as to feed themselves healthy foods. Lastly, Valerie makes weekly and sometimes bi-weekly visits to a Catholic-run clinic, called Holy Family, where Kurisanani clients within the Inkasi Parish consult doctors and nurses regarding their illnesses. Valerie's primary relationship to the Holy Family clinic is to drive clients to and from the remote establishment. While these activities are, on the face of it, in-the-world, Valerie does devote a day or two a week to outreach work in which she and one or two local, Catholic counterparts visit ill and elderly people in their homes to offer communion.

*Close-up look.* The center of Valerie's activities is the Catholic Church in Bonketsi. Unlike Sergeant's church in Tuvo, this church area forms part of a line of stands strewn along a dirt road. This dirt road stands perpendicularly to the main tarred road—and to the south of it as all of Bonketsi is south of the main road—running from Tzaneen to Phalaborwa, and the church yard about 150 yards from that road. The church's stand (fenced off area of residential space) is conspicuous: While typical families in Bonketsi, including the ones on either side of the Catholic Church, rush to replace traditional mud and thatch houses with modern brick and zinc structures, the Catholic Church ironically hosts three beautiful, modernized roundavals or huts, sponsored by foreign-run diocese of Tzaneen.

The stand is roughly 30x30 yards, in the center of which stands the large roundaval, where church services are held. Ten yards to the west and south of the central roundaval are two smaller ones, the first an administration area, the second a storage space for foods parceled out to Kurisanani clients. At the southwest end of the fence is a gate for pedestrians and vehicles to pass in and out. The northeast portion of the stand, behind the large roundaval, is host to a few hefty trees which provide welcome shade for people and cars on sweltering summer days. The trees also shade the pit latrines, their relative coolness vitiating the odor of human waste. At the far southern part of the yard, between the southern roundaval and the gate, is an unused, rectangular piece of land.

*Local membership patterns.* Valerie has a team of four locals working with her forming a management team for the NGO. Meeting regularly at the Catholic Church in Bonketsi village, this team's average age is 45, Valerie being the youngest apart from Bill who recently left his position as Education for Life coordinator at the NGO at age 33. While Bill is not related by blood, marriage, or even friendship to the other local staff members and was a relatively recent recruit to the project, Laura, the 48 year old

project coordinator, is sister-in-law to Gaul. Gaul is a 47 years old catechist based at the Catholic Church in Bonketsi, his village of birth, but serving all of the Catholic communities within the Inkasi parish. He is married to the younger sister of Laura. Finally there is Lateef. At 52 years of age, Lateef is the eldest component of the Kurisanani staff and a confidant of Laura's; she is also the lowest ranking manager as the Volunteer Coordinator. Except for Gaul, these local managers double as hands-on care-takers, caring for certain clients at appropriate times. Meanwhile, the average age of the four clients who participated in this research is 39. Three of the clients are female, one is male, the 37 year old male being married to one of the females who is older at 40 years of age.

*Key project actors.* Laura, Gaul, Bill and Latefe are the key local figures surrounding Valerie and her work on HIV-AIDs. Valerie, an Irish woman in her early 40s, is of average height with a touch of stoutness. Moving quickly and deliberately, Valerie begins and ends conversations succinctly; she adores Ireland, regularly speaking of green as the best of colors; she is also fiercely loyal to the Catholic Church, as when seeming to favor Catholic locals over non-Catholic locals and defiantly refusing to see any wrong in what was widely viewed as the Pope's derogatory comments against Islam in 2006. Always seeming to need to catch her breath, Valerie struggles minute-by-minute to bring out the best in her self, despite the apparent difficulty in doing so. Her Catholic orthodoxy will become a disheartening issue for Valerie's local counterparts.

Laura, the project coordinator and the face of Kurisanani, speaks with strength, knowledge, and frequently exhibits a condescending attitude toward volunteer care-workers and clients based in the parish's villages. Increasingly thin and of average height for a westerner, Laura exhibits an assertiveness towards others, including Valerie, which contrasts sharply with the self-humbling postures of the fast-moving

Gaul and the quietly seditious Lateef, Inkasi Parish's only catechist and the NGO's Volunteer Coordinator, respectively. With Laura, Bill, the recently resigned Education for Life Coordinator, commands English as a secondary language, making him quite accessible and valuable to Valerie and to the Kurisanani project. In his mid 20s, Bill's youthful buoyancy and charming smile also help make him a Valerie-favorite.

*Coming to the project.* Before Valerie would have dreamt of ever being in South Africa from her native Ireland and England, the need for self-sacrificing individuals such as herself was being established. Sister Kathy, a confidant of Sister Valerie, is an Australian nun who, for all intents and purposes, controls the logistics of the Tzaneen diocese while respecting her subservient place under the diocese's Bishop. Based at the Bishop's combined residential and spiritual quarters in Tzaneen, Sister Kathy summarized much of the ground-laying work for the Kurisanani project at a candlelight vigil ceremony attended by AIDS clients, care-workers, several Catholic Sisters, relevant doctors, and peripheral guests like me and Chobi, my translator and friend. The event was held at the Catholic Church in Bonketsi, the meeting place for Sister Valerie and her co-workers. Sister Kathy paused after each sentence or sentence fragment to have her English words translated into Tsonga.

Sister Kathy recounted how US-based Christian Relief Services or, CRS, approached the South African Bishops in 2002, asking them what it could do help the fight against HIV-AIDS. At that time, the Catholic community in South Africa had already begun transitioning from material development activities, such as starting chicken farms and brick-making businesses for locals, to health related issues, such as Home Based Care outreach to TB patients and orphaned children. The rationale for dropping the material assistance projects from the agenda was that they largely failed, with one or two exceptions, such as a chicken farm started by Father George, whom I knew and interviewed extensively, which continues on despite his extreme

unpopularity with his local beneficiaries. Sister Kathy went on, stating that “Sister Monroe—coordinator for AIDS for all South Africa—...said what we really need is ARV treatment for people who are really sick. This will help people live better quality lives for longer. That’s what they asked CRS to help them with.”

After the promise of sponsorship from CRS, the challenges of starting Kurisanani had to do with meeting officials, getting signatures, and finding personnel to implement the ARV distribution. Most pertinent to setting the stage for Sister Valerie’s inclusion in this process is the latter issue of personnel. Sister Kathy speaks to this: “We didn’t think we had people to implement the program. So it was a risky dream...but we had faith in God and there was a lot of need. God sent us to the right people.” Referring to the name of the religious order, i.e. historically established nun chapters grouped around various saints and missions, to which Sister Valerie belongs, Kathy goes on: “Sisters of Saint John of God were the first to come and help us. You have to know that because Sisters Kelly, Mary and Valerie are members of Saint John of God.” From the Tzaneen Diocese’s end, therefore, Sister Valerie came as part of teams of Sisterhoods promising to make the new Kurisanain project viable.

Sister Valerie’s road to life in SA begins in western Europe. This information was collected during a formal interview. Having grown up in Ferns, Ireland and schooling there as a young girl, Sister Valerie went to high school in Gorey, the next town over. At Gorey, she was educated by the Lorreta Sisters, at once a way of referring to the actual teachers and their religious order. Sister Valerie entered religious life after high school, at the age of 18 years in the late 1970s. Advanced schooling, working as a teacher, and time to care for her aging mother occupied much of her time in the 1980s and early 1990s. In 1995, she “went back to a teaching post in [Trowbridge] England and back to the religious community of Saint John of God

which she had entered there earlier. Her religious community comprised just three Sisters, including her self.

Sister Valerie obviously cherished her time teaching primary school full time in Trowbridge. She describes her self as having been an active member in the Parish there. As part of the liturgy committee, Sister Valerie helped to organize celebrations of Catholic worship. She also involved her self in preparing children and parents for their first communion activities. Stressing the importance of communion, Sister Valerie asserts, “When we receive the body and blood of Jesus—it’s the greatest gift he left us.” Additionally, Sister Valerie was a senior manager at the school, being on the board of governors, headed religious education, and served as Diocesan Inspector for religious education. Half wanting me to find her work praiseworthy and half wanting to be humble, Sister Valerie says that her “background in religious education is still coming in handy here [in South Africa].” Sister Valerie evoked a similarly mixed sentimentality of self-pride and humility when she emphasized that she “had a paid job, was a valuable and active member in Saint John of God, the school and the parish. Giving up these material comforts is a central self-defining moment for Sister Valerie, as we saw it was for Pastor Sergeant and will see for Ishmael.

As Sister Valerie explains, Saint John of God, to whom Sister Valerie is bound by the principles of poverty, obedience and celibacy, has always had an outreach component. Seeing one of its missions just closed in Cameroon, Kenya and South Africa were visited. Reports were written of these alternative destinations and were circulated to all Saint John of God religious communities. Sister Valerie was encouraged by the report which she remembers saying, Sisters needed to “walk alongside caregivers and to be part of the AIDS response in the diocese of Tzaneen.” When an additional letter came to Sister Valerie’s religious community asking for volunteers, she submitted her name. A long process of discernment then began in

February of 2004, checking and double-checking, at increasingly high levels of religious authority, the motivational sincerity and practical preparedness of Sister Valerie. By April, the provincial representative of the discernment process forwarded Sister Valerie's name to the central leadership. During an interview, a central leadership team member asked Sister Valerie, "What are you afraid of," to which Sister Valerie answered, "Frogs and snakes." The interviewer asked this question to see if Sister Valerie would express fear of people, a new mission or AIDS. Thoughts such as these could have defined Sister Valerie's missionary aspirations as a false calling. That she showed no signs of disliking people made Sister Valerie especially pleased with her self. Next, the interviewer asked Sister Valerie if she would go to South Africa but said she must go home "and do something over night" before answering. Unwilling to share with me what that "something" was, Sister Valerie continued that she came back the next day and said, "Yes, I will go."

Sister Valerie left Trowbridge in July of 2004, leaving behind her "a lot of people crying in schools and in the parish at large." After a summer holiday, Sister Valerie met with three other Sisters in Ireland on September 3<sup>rd</sup>. Two of these Saint John of God Sisters, Sisters Mary and Kelly, still live and work in South Africa while a third Sister left the mission early. After a month together in Ireland, the four Sisters left for the Tzaneen Diocese in South Africa's Limpopo Province on the 27<sup>th</sup> of September, 2004. The four Sisters were first sent to Ave Maria, a major center for Catholic activities in the diocese, to undergo a six month discernment process. Sister Valerie states: "Within a short time we knew that wasn't the place. People's expectations were [for us] to work in schools and opening up clinics. Who are we to come into somebody's country as visitors..." her facial expression concluding the statement prematurely and voice trailing off as if I would obviously know what she means.

Valerie continued that, “We said ‘No!’ People were probably angry. Now we were four people left in limbo. We had to go more deeply to look for a proper congregation.” Describing her self as somewhat disenchanted with her mission situation, Valerie applauds Sister Kathy, lead Sister of the Tzaneen Diocese, and the Bishop for their understanding during this period: “The support we got from Sister Kathy was unbelievably great. When we said “No,” Bishop kept calm and said, “Go and find what you want to do.” In November, the four Sisters of Saint John of God were called to a meeting to discuss their possible participation in the Kurisanani, ARV distribution project, the project they had expected to enter when they were in Europe. As roles were parceled out to the Sisters, Valerie was given the role of Mary’s driver since, as Sister Valerie says, “They thought I was a particularly good driver and had no nursing background.” With little time elapsing after the meeting, the Sisters found themselves visiting clients and taking them to clinics in the Modjadji area north of Tzaneen. Valerie spoke pointedly about having brought actual clients to ARV clinics and sitting under trees with them while they wait. Emphasizing the word, “My,” teary, she twice in a row said, “This is my experience.” It was an experience that was too much for the unnamed Sister among the four to handle. Valerie describes the pressure: “We were white women visiting [black] communities. People wondered what the white women were doing. Jealousy and fear of taking clients off of [other careworker] people” were palpably and uncomfortably felt by the Sisters.

By the early months of 2005, Sister Kathy was finally able to transfer Sister Valerie and her Sisters from Ave-Maria to Tzaneen, where they stayed together in two rented houses which stood side by side. Seeing Sister Valerie as an asset beyond her then current responsibilities, Sister Kathy asked her if she would assume responsibility over the Kurisanani project in the Inkasi Parish. The facts that this project was diocese-wide and that she would head operations in the Inkasi Parish were two things

that made Valerie hesitant regarding the suggested offer. Anticipating the scheduled arrival of leadership representatives of the Saint John of God congregation from Europe, Sister Valerie answered, “No,” that she would at least want to talk through this proposition with the coming leadership. She was subsequently interviewed three times by her congregation’s leadership team and three times she declined the suggestion to manage the Inkasi Parish’s Kurisanani project. Her rationale was that, “I just wanted to be a driver—it’s easier. Inkasi would be challenging.” Without Valerie knowing it at the time, one of the overseas representatives met with the Bishop. Days later, this representative sent Valerie a text message asking, “Are you ready to come to your new place?” Sister Valerie replied by text message, “Yes.” On the scheduled day, Sister Valerie pulled up the blue bus to Bishop’s headquarters in Tzaneen to pick up Sister Kathy and the representative. “I saw Bishop walking. I asked, ‘Is Bishop really going?’” He was coming, along with the Sisters and “then I saw a slender man coming—it was Gaul [Inkasi catechist]. Next thing I knew I pulled up the blue bus to where we are now [at Bonketsi].” A religious experience for Sister Valerie, her eyes lit up as she said, “This was the first day I touched the earth of Africa. I touched it with my hands. There was something in my spirit that said, ‘This is it, your place. This is where you make your mistakes, where you’re going to learn.’” Interesting that some of her colleagues say Valerie is incapable of learning, as will be fleshed out below. Similar remarks by locals were made of Sergeant and Ishmael.

Turning to Valerie’s local team members, let’s start with Laura, the project coordinator. At 57 years old, Laura was born to parents who followed traditional ways. In 1964, however, her mother and grandmother started trekking off with her to a Catholic Church in 1964. Remembering sitting under a big tree where Holy Family now stands, these women would walk over 40km nearly every Sunday to listen to the “White Fathers” from far off places, such as Ireland. Laura’s father and other male

family members did not normally make these journeys because they, like so many working age African men, had migrated to work in urban settings like Johannesburg. Following the examples of her female role models, coming to appreciate the solemnity of Catholic prayer and, no doubt, reveling in her proximity to white people, this is how Laura came to identify strongly with Catholicism.

Much of Laura's fiery tenacity would have come from her own educational path. Laura did not start formal schooling until 1972, when she was already 14 years of age. Caught up in the throes of a family which was forcibly removed from its freely chosen residence into the tightly organized Pedi villages of Shikhwani and then Hoveni in the mid 1960s, Laura had no time for school. Thanks to her Hahani, or father's sister, who taught her to read, Laura took formal education by storm when she finally got her chance, regularly attaining position one in primary school and being accelerated past grades where she easily grasped the material. But Laura's educational path dried up again in 1977 when she got married, marriage being perhaps the only life course which trumped education in young Laura's mind at the time. Bearing children and working as a laborer on nearby white commercial farms took Laura to 1990, when she and her husband decided she should return to school, seeing how so many farm laboring jobs, including hers, were being retrenched.

Excelling through her high school courses, Laura next breezed through the academic side of Tivumbeni Teaching College in Nkowankowa, graduating in 1996. But funding was a problem. Being the eldest sibling of three, Laura's two younger siblings as well her husband, Nathan, helped finance the first two of three years of her tertiary education. The final year was paid for by a Catholic Church bursary to which Laura had applied. Laura graduated from Tivumbeni in 1996, one year into marriage problems relating to issues of infidelity and jealousy. With no local teaching posts available, Laura was determined to learn to drive, a skill which would facilitate her

finding jobs farther afield. Having maintained contact with the Catholic Church through church attendance and the bursary, Laura found the Irishman, Father Smith, eager to give her personal driving lessons. It was during these lessons when Father Smith learned of Laura's marital woes. Laura shared her husband's words with Father Smith, to wit: "You need to go because I have another wife and she's scared to come with you here. I'll kill you so she can come."

Home-based care, or HBC, has become a thriving, low-paying form of employment in rural Limpopo since apartheid's official end in 1994. Teaching posts an unrealistic option, Laura, in 1999, joined Choice, a Tzaneen-based HBC organization providing hands-on relief to TB-patients. Choice was the only such institution in the area at that time. Laura roots her enthusiasm and wherewithal for helping sick people to her grandmother and the Catholic Church, both of which taught her how to care for old people when she was a young girl. In concert with her education background, Laura showed great leadership ability at Choice and quickly became a lead care-giver there. Meanwhile, in 2000, Father Smith and a fellow Irish Priest, Father Thomas, knew Laura was working with Choice but continued visiting her, once asking her what the Catholic Church can do to assist communities where she was working as a Choice volunteer. Laura, who understands the Fathers' interest in her stemming from heartfelt concern for her marriage situation, recommended a treatment center. In 2003, as the Catholic Church phased out its material development schemes in favor of the related-plans of Kurisanani, it already knew to whom to turn locally to head its Inkasi Parish chapter—Laura. This is how Laura tells of her indoctrination into the Kurisanani project.

Lateef, the current Volunteer Coordinator, has known Laura since their time together at Choice as care-givers. Referring to Laura as a "renowned caregiver," Lateef explains in broken English that, "I wanted to help people because my father

was TB patient when I was girl. He looked very bad, sometimes he stayed at hospital for six months. I remember my sick father when I see them [sick people].” When Choice representatives came in the late 1990s to the clinic in the Pedi village of Malati, they intended to ask the Nduna or headman for the names of women who may be interested in becoming grassroots caregivers for TB patients. However, the people at Malati clinic sent the representatives straight to Lateef, knowing she was just the person for such a job. Working at Choice from that time until 2005, Lateef remembers her self and other Choice volunteers based in neighboring villages being sent to the Catholic Church in Bonketsi where they would start their own HBC organization. Why Bonketsi? Lateef has no idea. It is likely that Laura had an influential hand in choosing Bonketsi as a center for Inkasi Parish’s Kurisanani project, seeing how much trust the Catholic Church has in her and that her brother-in-law, Gaul, with whom Laura has excellent relations, bases his catechist activities out of this church. It is only Bill who has no history with healthcare or with his former local team members at the Kurisanani project in Inkasi Parish. Bill has little to say about his emergence onto the Kurisanani scene, though Laura and Lateef separately suggest that it was Bill’s staunch Catholicism, perfect English and youthful buoyancy that attracted the attention of the Catholic leadership in Tzaneen.

### **EDUCATIONAL DEVELOPMENT – PEACE CORPS**

*Objectives.* As a part of his PC-SA project, Ishmael assists three primary schools; he is a facilitator of school improvement, not a teacher. Two of the schools, one an upper and the other a lower primary school, are situated in Pensi Village, on opposite sides of one of the long parallel dirt roads. The third school—a lower primary school—sits across the tarred road connecting Riteli and Bonketsi in a village called Nenge. Concerned about palpable in-fighting among teachers at the upper-primary school in

Pemsi, Ishmael has focused most of his attention on Pemsi's lower primary school, Pfukani, and the Nenge primary school, Huko. My research focuses on Ishmael's development focus, attending to the dynamics at Pfukani and Huko Primary Schools.

Ishmael's primary concern is to teach educators critical thinking skills, which he contrasts with the rote memorizing practices which he sees them using and which he traces to a combination of Bantu Education and traditional culture. Ishmael attempts to do this through various activities, such as workshops on corporeal punishment, grant writing seminars, and fundraising committee meetings. Ishmael got much of his inspiration for fundraising from Dennis, a PCV from the previous group of volunteers. Dennis became an evangelical missionary after his PC stint, seeing little difference between the two outreach roles. Visiting the two schools in turn, Ishmael was hoping, as I left the field, to instill a love of reading into the students. In accordance with this wish, Ishmael converted a classroom block into a library and regularly reads Tsonga and English books to students.

*Close-up look.* Ishmael works in two lower primary schools, Pfukani and Huko, located in the adjacent villages of Pemsi and Nenge respectively. Rural primary schools in the Limpopo Province share certain characteristics in common. Therefore, Pfukani will be described now, with Huko's variations mentioned along the way. Pfukani stands on a large, rectangular tract of land, some 100x70 yards. With a chain-linked fence and a northern situated gate for pedestrians and vehicles, Pfukani is centrally located within Pemsi village, along the middle of the three long dirt roads structuring this community. Though it comprises a sizeable area, it conforms perfectly to the perpendicular configuration of the Pemsi as a whole. Here's why: Imagine walking down a dirt road, houses lined up in rough squares on either side of you. Turn and face the houses on either your left or right side. Walk through the gate of one of the yards and keep going until you reach a back fence. If you look over the fence you

will be seeing the back side of another yard, whose front faces another earthen road on the other side. Pfukani occupies about four yards, two across and two deep—this is why it is so large without altering the blockishness of Pemsu's patterning. Huko's size is just as considerable as Pfukani's but hangs on the slope of a small mountain away from residential Nenge.

Not being cemented over, the base of Pfukani's land is dirt, the same reddish-brown earth as the roads. Cement blocks are laid out, however, at the gate entrance for vehicles to have traction during the often slippery terrain of the rainy months of summer. There are three relatively new red-bricked, zinc-roofed school blocks in the center of the land. The blocks may be compared to long shoeboxes to get a sense of their shapes. The one that faces north toward the school's gate houses a teacher's lounge, a favorite place for Ishmael to sit alone, as we will see later in the dissertation. The other two buildings are positioned side by side, across from and facing the first block. About 20 yards separate the opposing buildings. Each block holds about four classrooms, two of the 16 or so overall classrooms being predictably used as a library and an office. Between the interfacing blocks is an impressive flower garden, its 25x15 yard size being interrupted discretely and separated by a couple of well-spaced, cement foot paths.

Two older, rotting school blocks sit 10 to 15 yards east of the new blocks. At once embarrassments, reminders of both apartheid and progress, and useful for special occasions, these decrepit buildings are made of mud and clay bricks, the white color darkening and fading away, revealing ant holes and other blows at their integrity. At Huko, the old building resembles a log cabin. In the same way that older school blocks shadow newer ones, older and newer pit latrines face off at rural primary schools as well. A red-brick building about a quarter of the size of the school blocks houses Pfukani's new flush toilet. It sits at the western end of the school block rows, facing in

toward the garden. From the rising sun's perspective in the east, the modern school blocks and toilet form an upside-down "u," though cornered instead of rounded at the turns. Unable to work because of the school's lack of running water, the modern toilet has at its back, to the west, the old-style pit latrines. Behind these dated toilets and running up against the fence at its westernmost end is sizeable land used for growing edibles such as spinach. Pfukani's garden space is larger than Huko's. However, boasting of larger school grounds, Huko additionally has a soccer field—rough, uneven ground with tufts of grass here and there. Finally, an open-walled, pole-supported zinc-roofed structure serves as a kitchen where female volunteers from the community make government-sponsored lunches for students and educators.

*Local membership patterns.* Ishmael interfaces mostly with teachers at Pfukani and Huko Primary Schools. There are currently 13 teachers working at Pfukani, two having been recently and disappointedly transferred about one year into my research. Huko, the smaller of the schools, hosts 8 teachers, one being retrenched but replaced by another also roughly one year into my fieldwork. Pfukani has an older staff than Huko's, average ages being 60 and 40, respectively. The majority of the teachers at both schools are female, Pfukani being all female and Huko employing two male teachers. Each school similarly plays host to a pre-school teacher, employed by the government on a volunteer instead of salaried basis. Administratively distinct from their fellow teachers, these pre-school teachers are nevertheless made to feel part of the school's respective staffs. Finally, there is a high incidence of blood and marriage relations among the educators within each of these respective schools as well as between the schools which is described below.

First, Pfukani: Mrs. Malumelele's father and Mrs. Bayana's father-in-law are blood brothers, making these two teachers sisters-in-law or, locally, "squeezers." Mrs. Malamulele and Mrs. Bayana are understood as unqualified squeezers because Mrs.

Malamulele and Mrs. Bayana's husband are considered categorically blood sister and brother, not cousins; Mrs. Malamulele's paternal grandfather-in-law and Mrs. Ngobeni's maternal grandfather-in-law are blood brothers, leaving them as cousins, even though they only married into the same family and have zero blood relation; Mrs. Malamulele and Mrs. Shikibana, a teacher transferred to another school during my fieldwork, are full blood sisters, Mrs. Shikibana also being Ishmael's host mother in Pensi village; Mrs. Gubama's father and Mrs. Shikibana's father-in-law are classificatory brothers, rendering Mrs. Gubama and Mrs. Shikibana's husband sister and brother in local terms; finally, Mrs. Mushwana's mother-in-law is the sister of Mrs. Gubama's mother-in-law, leaving the two teachers flexibly sisters or cousins.

Now let us look at Huko: Evelyn Petenenge, the current Head of Department or second in command, and the recently retrenched Linton Petenenge are full blood sister and brother; William Chauke's father's second wife's brother, whom William calls malume or mother's brother, is the Petenenge's paternal grandfather. Hence, the Petenenge's are structurally mother and father to William, the youngest teacher at Huko at 32 years of age; lastly, Mrs. Baloyi having been once married to Mrs. Nkuna's blood brother, Mrs. Baloyi and Mrs. Nkuna are ex-squeezers or sisters-in-law. There are additionally relations among teachers of the two schools: Mrs. Mushwana of Pfukani's paternal grandfather and the paternal grandfather-in-law of Huko's principal, a different but related Bayana from Pfukani's, are brothers of the same father but different mothers. Since Mushwana's father-in-law was the older brother to Bayana's father-in-law, Mushwana is respected by Bayana as a mother or grandmother figure; the maternal grandmother of Pfukani's Gubama and the paternal grandfather-in-law of Huko's Mr. Gugunyana, a new staff member transferred from a school in a neighboring village, are sister and brother, making Gubama and Gugunyana cousins; finally, the grandfather of Huko's Mr. Gugunyana was married to

the sister of Pfukani's Gubama's father-in-law, thus classifying Gugunyana as a son figure to Gubama.

Knowing that primary schools in rural South Africa may be so suffused with family relations is an interesting historical fact in itself. We will see in subsequent chapters how some of these relationships interface with Ishmael's work as a PCV.

*Key project actors.* All of the Ishmael's co-working educators participated in this research. The ones being introduced now have been chosen to represent school leadership, gender, and teachers working more and less closely with Ishmael. With a firm leadership style smoothed over by a jolly demeanor, Principal Rhandzo of Pfukani Primary School is a heavysset woman of retiring age. She is, in PC language, Ishmael's "Key school principal." Mrs. Rhandzo is the principal who would have applied at the local department of education office in Nkowankowa to receive a PCV; she is primarily responsible for Ishmael's welfare, facilitating his integration into the schools, communities, and his host family. Also of retirement age but more fit, Principal Bayana of Huko Primary School is more careful than Mrs. Rhandzo to please her colleagues, helping to characterize her leadership style as relatively indecisive.

Mrs. Gubama and Mrs. Gugunyana of Pfukani and Huko Primary Schools, respectively, work most closely with Ishmael. Physically opposites, Mrs. Gubama is a fast speaking, fast moving woman with enormous hips while Mrs. Gugunyana is soft spoken and short. Ishmael regularly visits the classrooms of both teachers, showing them through his example how to conduct math and English lessons. Mr. Chauke of Huko Primary School is only slightly less involved with Ishmael's work than Mrs. Gubama and Mrs. Gugunyana. It is difficult to choose which teachers are most distant from Ishmael since there are many and since their detachment materializes in various ways. Granting some arbitrariness, then, the recently discharged, 30-something teacher

of Huko Primary School, Mr. Petenenge, is seen by Ishmael as someone deliberately undercutting his volunteer efforts. By contrast, Ishmael would not guess that Mhani Stella and Mrs. Malamulele of Pfukani Primary School harbored any resentment toward him, for they swallowed their animosity, keeping it quiet behind “normal” demeanor.

*Coming to the project.* One of four children of a Lebanese-born Muslim father and a white American convert to Islam, Ishmael was accelerated through grade school for his outstanding academic prowess. Since being accelerated meant completing some college courses while still in high school, Ishmael ended up finishing his college courses at the relatively early age of 20. A naturalized citizen of the US who knew the rags of Lebanon and, thus, preferred the newfound riches he found in America as a top level engineer for a major car company, Ishmael’s father wanted Ishmael to study subjects, such as chemistry and engineering, likely to lead to lucrative paying jobs. Perhaps taking for granted his middle class upbringing, however, Ishmael chose to study art. This was a slap in the face of his father. It was a double slap, then, that Ishmael decided to join to the Peace Corps. Why are you wasting your time and what are you going to learn there were questions Ishmael’s father would ask of Ishmael. The background concern of Ishmael’s father was why he should have worked so hard to lift his family to economic security only for his son to choose a life of poverty and uncertainty.

Ishmael is conscious of joining the PC in order to challenge himself, to put himself in an uncomfortable situation where he would be forced to learn new things and grow as a person. He would have known at some level as well that this choice put him at odds with his father, an opposition Ishmael seemed to regret and need concomitantly. Ishmael theorizes that if his father had practiced Islam more routinely, Ishmael would have been more influenced by him and would have been more likely to

heed his father's requests. As it stands, however, Ishmael identifies himself as "searching," saying if he had to say he is anything he would say most often that he is Muslim, sometimes white. Proud of having befriended people of diverse races and ages through his Islamic schooling, Ishmael had desired to serve as a PCV in an Islamic country. But thinking this was a selfish motive, Ishmael checked, "No Preference," on the PC application where it asked which region of the world the applicant would like to serve. Ishmael became a member of the 14<sup>th</sup> PC group of South Africa. This group's three-month in-country training program began in June 2005. The volunteers were sent to their official two years sites later that year in September.

To get an impression of how the educators of Pfukani and Huko Primary Schools came to assume their teaching posts, let us outline the professionalizing biographies of six teachers representing the two schools. The seven teachers include Mrs. Nwanga, Gubama and Ngobeni of Pfukani and Mrs. Bayana and Baloyi and Mr. Chauke from Huko. To a person, the teachers did not originally want to be teachers. Four of the five women just named wanted to be nurses because they either liked the idea of helping people or wearing the uniforms worn by these nurturers of the sick. Realizing the difficulty of the work, its relatively low pay, and having parental figures simply declare, "No. It's too difficult," were reasons these teachers gave for shifting away from nursing. The fifth teacher dreamed of being a "shorthand," i.e. a stenographer. The lone male among the considered teachers, Mr. Chauke, hoped to go into business.

All six of the sampled teachers, standing in with precision for all current Pfukani and Huko educators, ended up in the hosting villages of Pemsi and Nenge through one or another kind of social tie to the area. After independence in 1994 saw her husband's radio broadcasting job move from Giyani, the former capital of the "Tsonga's" Gazankulu Homeland, to the capital of the newly unified Limpopo or,

then, Northern Province, Mrs. Bayana, in 1998, left her teaching post in Giyani and moved to Pemsi where she would be principal of Huko, closer to her husband, and neighbors with her in-laws. Mrs. Baloyi, returned by her unsatisfied husband to her natal family in a village five minutes by car east of Pemsi and Nenge called, Frankfurt, applied for a nearby teaching job and became one of three founding teachers of Huko, first called Rhugelani, in 1995. Mr. Chauke is from Frankfort like Mrs. Baloyi. Unmarried at 33 years of age and unable since completing his teaching courses in 1997 to find steady employment, Mr. Chauke has based himself at his parents' house Frankfort. Hearing of an advertised post for a primary school teacher at Huko, Mr. Chauke applied, was interviewed and finally called by Principal Bayana in early 2004 to be awarded the job.

Stories are similar for Pfukani teachers. Mrs. Gubama married a Pemsi man and, therefore, moved to Pemsi to be with him and her in-laws. When he died in a car accident, Mrs. Gubama, devoted to her husband in death as while alive, determined to live the remainder of her life with her in-laws as opposed to returning to her blood relations as a wife of a failed marriage would likely do. Hired for three months by Pfukani and then released for want of appropriate qualifications, Mrs. Gubama enrolled in teaching school outside of the province; accepted employment at a primary school back in the province in Nwamitwa, denoting a different chiefdom within the Gazankulu Homeland; and thankfully, for her, secured re-employment at Pfukani in her married home of Pemsi. That was 1979. For her part, Mrs. Ngobeni settled in with her Pemsian in-laws after falling ill living in Cape Town with her husband. After working at Pfukani for one year in 1981, Mrs. Ngobeni, duly comforted by rest and her in-laws, shifted to Johannesburg where her husband had been redeployed by his employing factory. Mrs. Ngobeni moved in with her in-laws in Pemsi once again when the factory sent her husband to relatively near Giyani. This second redeployment

of Mrs. Ngobeni's husband happened in 1987, the same year Mrs. Ngobeni was re-hired by Pfukani where she has worked to this day. Finally, Mrs. Nwanga left Muhlava Head Kraal, the village where the chief lives, about 12 miles southwest of Pemsi, to be married in Pemsi in 1974. When Mrs. Nwanga began teaching at Pfukani in 1977, "There was one classroom and three teachers," she says.

We have seen how Ishmael became a member of the 14<sup>th</sup> PC group in South Africa and how the teachers who have become his colleagues ended up at Pfukanin and Huko Primary Schools. But what do we know about the PC choosing these schools as site to be served, thus bringing Ishmael and these particular teachers together? Ishmael has serious doubts about the PC coming to inspect these villages as suitable hosts for a PCV. The teachers all say they learned about a volunteer coming via their respective principals. Given that, after a year with Ishmael, the teachers have little and, for some teachers, no idea about why he is here, it may be that the PC communicated at some distance its intentions to send a PCV to this area. If a PC representative or two did visit the site and perhaps spoke only to the principals, then these envoys do not seem to have communicated their message clearly. Teachers speaking forthrightly said they expected the in-coming American to help build classrooms, computer labs, libraries and other "stadium projects," as Ishmael would often begrudgingly put it. Feeling a need to be extra cautious, other teachers said they expected Ishmael to help teachers find alternatives to corporeal punishment and to fundraise—so exactly what Ishmael ended up doing as to be unbelievable. Even Ishmael did know what he would be doing. It may also be the case that the PC people did describe the future PCV's work lucidly but that the teachers' expectations of what they would have assumed was a rich, white American were over-determining in their consciousnesses.

## CONCLUSIONS

This chapter has described three grassroots endeavors undertaken by a Cape Townian missionary, an Irish Catholic Nun, and a US Peace Corps Volunteer in rural areas of South Africa's Limpopo Province. This description was laid out along several axes, from project locations and objectives to key actors and membership patterns. At face value, these descriptive data will give posterity a picture of three of many similar interventions "foreigners" are making in this northerly region of post-apartheid South Africa. Who thought they could do what for which people and why, as well as what rural Limpopo looked like in the early 2000s are questions answered here.

It would be safe to accept the above moments of autobiography and outlook by the various participants as true. The three change-agents, as a matter of principle, put significant energy into ensuring that what they would say would be accurate. As we will see, locals participating in these projects could mislead others easily and without guilty feelings, but they would have little reason for these maneuvers when giving the kinds of relatively innocuous information seen above. As important, if not more so, as the accuracy of the testimonies included within this chapter, however, are the sentiments with which stories were told. Recalling history inevitably mentions certain events and evaluations and silences others (Trouillot 1995), leaving us with a rather conspicuous list of the narrator's likes and dislikes, what he or she feels is significant and insignificant.

From the foregoing, we see that the two missionaries and the PCV had not even an inkling of a sense about their hosting communities. This is true as much for the obvious foreigners, Valerie and Ishmael from Ireland and the US, respectively, as for the internal "foreigner," Sergeant from Cape Town. Sergeant speaks of living wholly separate from black South Africans throughout his life; thus, he felt the need for a sort of reconnaissance trip to Limpopo to come to terms with what he too tidily

calls, “Their culture.” Valerie and Ishmael were equally content to observe their surroundings upon arrival, Valerie from her vehicle and Ishmael from the teachers’ lounge at Pfukani Primary School in Pemsi village.

But the evidence suggests that something more than simply accident of geographic separation was at play in the change-agents’ ignorance of the life of Limpopo. Sergeant, Valerie and Ishmael *had* to not know, they would have it no other way. In recounting their biographical trajectories toward their work in rural Limpopo, Sergeant and Valerie took pains to prove they had absolutely no power over where they would go, what they do, or who they would help. It was all God’s doing, a calling which, by definition, effaces any specter of conscious choice. Defining himself as religiously “searching,” Ishmael would have loved to have served as a PCV in the Middle East, given his Muslim background. However, Ishmael checked, “No geographic preference,” on the PC application, a moral high road in his eyes since the choice structurally rebuffs connections to personal identity in favor of identifying as one human being among others. Varying in details, their stories say, in essence, “I’m supposed to be here precisely because I had no say in the matter.” Or, said secularly, “Can I be of any help? I’m volunteering.”

Helpers from the Western cultural poles of Cape Town, Ireland and the US caring scantily about their destinations contrasts sharply with local images of strong ties to historicity. Sergeant’s young congregants were drawn to his ministry because they attended and were moved by the “Jesus” and “Burning Hell” movies. Those who would have missed the films were dragged to them by friends and family members. These same family and friendships account for the make-up of membership at Tuvo Christian Church. Loners dared not attend the church before linking up with distant relatives or new friends. At Kurisanani, we have seen that Laura is likely to have found a way to include her brother-in-law, Gaul, in the project; we will see later that

she was able to do the same for a friend. Not fitting in to the Kurisanani circle of relationships was a major factor chasing Bill from the project. For the teachers at Pfukani and Huko, it is no wonder that most of them are related: The host villages of Pensi and Nenge comprise a few sets of interrelated families. Most of the educators are women who have married into these families, a pattern based on patrilocality. It is unlikely that Ishmael would become an educator in the US and find himself working almost exclusively with his own family members, yet that is what he has happened to walk into in South Africa.

At this point, the relationality of the locals participating in these three aid projects is not meant to suggest “goodness” or “purity.” We are in descriptive mode and Sergeant, Valerie and Ishmael are grappling with real concerns, this by their own admission and that of the South African government and of many locals living in rural Limpopo themselves. Free-floating between their discredited elders and democratic laws they do not understand, young people are quite unencumbered by disciplinary mechanisms. Rampant premarital sex, excessive consumption of alcohol, and unaccustomed direct confrontation with guardian-figures has become thinkable for a subset of youngsters. Sergeant is trying to combat these trends. Given the dilemmas dealt with by Sergeant, it is little wonder that close to 5 million black South Africans are HIV+, a number equaling the total population of Tsonga-speakers and almost doubling the number of Venda-speakers in the country. Valerie can cry to think of people dying from this preventable disease. Meanwhile, teachers generally know little about HIV-AIDS and many, shadowing President Mbeki who only recently acknowledged the disease as real, may even doubt its existence. Ishmael faces an education system woefully unprepared for the dreams and problems of post-apartheid South Africa. In 1997, I remember Nelson Mandela referring to the Limpopo Province

as an “Educational Disaster Area” as a way of preparing our PC group for our then forthcoming task.

Indeed, we should make no mistake about it—Sergeant, Valerie and Ishmael are well intentioned people. You may enjoy ordinary chats with one, two or all of them. Self-sacrificing and concerned with the welfare of others, they believe in honesty and hard work, even as they have distinct personalities. Straight-lined stiff, willfully cheerful, and humbly pensive, Sergeant, Valerie and Ishmael, respectively, have turned in their sparkling futures in modernized oases for walking along dusty roads with their darker skinned, poorer brethren. Recall that Sergeant has come to save people’s souls, and that Valerie proudly loves all people, and that Ishmael would rather sublimate his interest in serving in the Middle East in favor of availing his talents to whomever might be chosen and you will understand that these three change-agents are well intentioned cherishers of humanity. If our children could hold dear to these ideals, what a better world we would live in—right?

Simultaneously, we must also attend to the hints at disenchantment that some locals are having within the purview of these projects: Dean calls himself the “Disease of [Sergeant’s] church”; Lateef hides resentment; and Linton Petenenge of Huko Primary School is a presumed nemesis of Ishmael. Are these isolated incidents at each of the project sites or are they just the tip of the iceberg; are these and other possible problems ones that would be faced in any sort of work environment? Let us pursue these questions below, stating for now that perhaps the most valuable point to make about the aforesaid data is that Sergeant, Valerie, and Ishmael know precious little about any of it relating to their respective local counterparts. Who’s related to who and how, as well as what objections, if any, their colleagues may have to parts or all of the projects are barely in view for the change-agents. Would they like to know even if they knew they could know? Let’s see.

## **PART II – THE PROBLEM OF DIFFERENCE**

**Chapter Three: “Development and Residence”**

**Chapter Four: “Development and Friendship”**

**Chapter Five: “Yes-Bodies and No-Bodies”**

## CHAPTER THREE

### DEVELOPMENT AND RESIDENCE

On the one hand, we are told that we live in an era of grassroots development (Ekins 1992). Colonial and state interventionist paradigms represented top-down welfare strategies (Bongartz 1992: ii). At best, these paradigms failed to account for the ideas and preferences of their beneficiaries (Rahnema 1992); at worst, they bore an intrinsic pension for corruption by entrusting too many resources to too few hands. With the rise of a globalized civil society (Ekins 1992, Ghils 1992) or a globalized social movement, by comparison, private international and internationally-linked domestic agencies, cryptically shorthanded as NGOs (Fisher 1997), presumably bypass inefficient and corrupt states in order to provide social welfare directly to the needy (Chambers 1995, Forbes 1995, Carroll 1992, Clarke 1991).

On the other hand, the Anthropology of Development (Escobar 1995, Sachs 1992, Ferguson 1990) and many development practitioners themselves (Bornstein 2005: 130-1) conclude that development is half-succeeding at best (Gereffi et. al. 2001, Peters 1996) and failing at worst in achieving its stated objectives. Directly challenging the popular idea of NGOs developing people relatively efficiently and directly, Maxine Weisgrau finds the NGO phenomenon actually “shifts many of the unresolved questions and contradictions of [top-down] development to the level of local program” (1997: 1). Development Anthropology has tended to unravel the mystery of development’s “failure” by either observing that development discourse unintentionally enables states to politicize the delivery of aid (Ferguson 1990, Escobar 1995) or by noting that change-agents and beneficiaries manipulate an array of often interrelated exogenous and local discourses for reasons not always conducive to the expressed aims of NGO work (Hilhorst 2001).

But if the NGO-isation (Hearn 1998) of social services creates the “change-agent” category (Rahnema 1992: 123) and, further, ushers these change-agents to the doorsteps of local beneficiaries, why not “move in” with grassroots workers to see if their living situations and efforts at friendship have anything to do with development’s failure? Momentarily putting aside their use for a phenomenological study of development, the present and following chapters contribute to the anthropological study of development by attending to the analytic intersections of “development and residence” and “development and friendship,” respectively. Grassroots workers do not just “go and help” but must also “live somewhere.” Furthermore, these change-agents will interact with people. Anticipating that change-agents establish better and worse relations as well as more and less strategic ones with various social actors, it is reasonable to inquire about the role of friendships, and possibly romances, in implementing development.

The current chapters record “the facts” as understood by participants of the three development initiatives. Who moved where and befriended who? Who explained these residential and friendship activities and how did they explain them? How did participants feel about the housing and companionship situations upon reflection? These questions elicit objectified information about cultural subjects and objects in their fully constituted forms, thus encoding for post-perceptual but still integral moments of human experience. As cultural phenomenology argues, articulated instances of human experience are perceived into wholeness by bodily-based intersubjectivity (Csordas 1990). There is definitive correspondence between factual residential and friendship moves and rationales, on the one hand, and fragmentary body perceptions (chapter five) of the individuals participating in the development projects, on the other.

## **RESIDENCE IN DEVELOPMENT ANTHROPOLOGY**

Before exploring development in terms of interpersonal relationships through the lens of residential life, let us look more closely at how certain literatures facilitate or not the exploration. A number of anthropology and anthropology-friendly scholars have called for “up-close” investigations of the “micropolitics” of NGOs (Fisher 1997) and of the interpersonal dynamics of change-agents and beneficiaries therein (van Haren 2003). At least Maxine Weisgrau (1997), Dorthea Hilhorst (2001), and Erica Bornstein (2005) have responded to the call, providing valuable descriptions of the articulating and often contradictory views of NGO personnel and their local colleagues and beneficiaries. Yet attention to the everyday, grittier side of development work has not yet led scholars to include or acknowledge the importance of change-agents’ residential situations in implementing foreign aid. These problematics share a focus on the intersection of Western change-agents and “indigenous” targets of change. Domesticity studies within African contexts deal predominantly with domesticity as ideology (Hansen 1992). Here, missionaries, governments, and locals debate the relevance of Christian notions of housewifery (Musisi 1992), childcare (Hunt 1992, Musisi 1992), hygiene (Hunt 1992), marriage (Hunt 1992, Musisi 1992), or Islamic expectations of women (Mack 1992) within specific political-economic contexts of the colonial era. “Home” in these studies of African domesticity is an ideal to be cultivated, usually along the lines of Christian ideals, not a place where grassroots pioneers settle down and live with colonial subjects in real time.

Investigations of colonial encounters in Africa elaborate on the European background of colonial evangelists (Comaroff & Comaroff 1991/v1/ch2, Mitchell 1991/ch1, Beidelman 1974, 1982), images of colonial “others” (Comaroff & Comaroff 1991/v1/ch3), resonance of images of “others” in and out of the European metropole (Comaroff 1992), life cycle of mission societies (Greene 2002, Meyer 1999, Harries

1989), the establishment of mission stations among “natives” (Kirkaldy 2005), consistencies and contradictions between missionary and indigenous worldviews (Comaroff & Comaroff 1991/v1/ch5, Meyer 1999), linguistics and translation (Simmons 2000, Meyer 1999, Harries 1988, 1981), and missionary facilitation of markets and labor (Comaroff & Comaroff 1991/v2/ch4). The nearest these accounts come to observing missionaries and Africans interacting in domestic spaces is to describe the modernity of the missionaries’ residential organization, notably personal gardens, perimeter fences (Hunt 1992) and cubic housing structures internally dissected into blockish rooms (Harries 1981). By the time these mission station accounts depict interaction, the scenes have moved outside of missionary living quarters, usually to early work locations (Comaroff & Comaroff 1992). It is precisely this analytic stress on Western change-agents and local counterparts together *at work* that distracts our attention from them being together *at home*.

There are cases that blur the distinction between anthropologists and missionaries. In Southern Africa, for example, while missionaries such as Henri Junod engaged in voluminous, pre-modern anthropological fieldwork (Junod 2003[1926]), anthropologists such as Max Gluckman broke away from his mold as an objective scientist in order to represent the interests of colonized people against the oppressive South African state (Kapferer). These two figures represent the array of interrelated interests shared by anthropologists and missionaries. In addition to their probable compatibility, most anthropological scholars and international missionaries also share (1) the structural position of being agents hailing from Western cultural milieus working among people on the periphery of modern institutions and discourses and (2) the expressed practice of living close to and, therefore, “really knowing” the targets of their interventions.

Although anthropological reflections on fieldwork refer to the analytical topic of “human interactions at residential sites,” the information is scarce and cursory. How anthropologists obtained their living situations in host communities is another relevant but rarely mentioned “residential” phenomenon (Farrer 1992: 81). However, there are a few collections of “anthropological reflections” whose information, though still brief, more squarely resonates with the living situations of Sergeant, Valerie, and Ishmael—the change-agents of this study. These anthologies speak to some of the residence-related discomforts experienced by anthropologists while engaging in fieldwork as well as some of their reactions to these discomforts. A discussion of the roles and perspectives of local hosts is lacking as are analyses of how residential dynamics may or may not impact the success of fieldwork.

For example, “Cindy Hull feared being dragged too deeply into the lives of her Mexican hosts. Briggs latched onto her tent as a personal haven. An unnamed graduate student feared imposing personal values on the Algonquin natives. Colfer felt claustrophobic in a group of Minang-speaking Muslims.”

The themes of (1) fearing complete social inclusion or “going native” in anthropology-speak, (2) trying to balance the need to appear social-enough with the distance required to maintain one’s identity as a change-agent, and (3) feeling closed in and disturbed are the defining features of the residential dynamics explored below. Sergeant, Valerie, and Ishmael characterize their quest for personal space as a quest for freedom. Memoirs of anthropologists give us some sense of how fieldworkers have sought freedom, to break away. We have already seen that sleeping can be used by fieldworkers, at least by novices anyway, as a form of escape. Retreating into one’s designated and independent living quarters has similarly provided anthropologists who are doing fieldwork with a sense of comfort. Describing her horror at receiving the news from her host father that she was to re-accommodate herself from her own tent to

the family tent, Briggs protested: “My tent had become a refuge, into which I withdrew every evening...to repair ravages to my spirit with the help of bannock and peanut butter. So reviving were those hours of self-indulgence that I dreaded their loss” (Wintrob 1969: 66).

The dearth of data on residence renders this engagement with anthropological reflections on fieldwork brief; still, it generally reveals that encountering “the other” causes some discomfort if not outright anxiety for fieldworkers, especially novices. What do the above accounts say, if only indirectly, about bodies in residential settings? In the face of disconcerting pressure to abandon senses of autonomy for fuller social inclusion, the persons of the fieldworkers, from an objective view, ended-up retreating to domestic enclaves used and perhaps designed for personal space. When personal space could not be secured at home, fieldworkers might drive away into people-less spaces.

How does a body spontaneously but still socially react just before the conscious need to separate? How is a body socialized to seek comfort either in or away from socially integrated environments? These questions are fundamental to this study. The above accounts further point to various mind-body contradictions. While the corporeality of fieldworkers sought distance from the bodies of “others,” the fieldworkers consciously struggled over the appropriateness of such distancing. How might we explain these mind-body contradictions and are they universal? In a study of development as interpersonal encounter, we want to ask, “What sorts of residential actions were made by the grassroots agents who participated in this study and how did they and their respective South African counterparts understand these actions?”

## **GOOD INTENTIONS OF THE AID-GIVERS**

It should not be simplistically imagined that the improvement programs considered here are doomed to stumble because their benefactors are backward colonial actors bent on the oppression of local people. Many colonial-era missionaries in fact sided with their African converts against the state. The Transvaal authorities, for example, detained two Swiss missionaries, Creux and Bertoud, without formal charges for weeks in the 1880s, believing these two, like their French missionary brethren to the south in Lesotho, helped African subjects organize militarily against the government (Mathebula 1989: 3). Considering selflessness, recall that Sergeant was trained by Youth with a Mission to “gain victory over finances. We must be able to trust the Lord to provide financially.” These teachings have cultivated in Sergeant a determination to bypass the many material comforts that his family and educational background had promised him. Summing up the years between ditching his business plans which he dreamed up around Cape Town and helping several locals, led by Solomon, to start a small-scale brick-making operation, Sergeant says, “God is preventing me from starting my own business but maybe he wants me to use my knowledge” to help these young villagers start their own. And he feels no sense of resentment or confusion about his new path.

We will also remember that one of Valerie’s three Saint John of God vows is poverty. Like Sergeant, Valerie feels a great need to leave the comforts of modernity behind, which she literally did when she said “goodbye” to her good paying job and her well-established reputation in England. Sister Kathy, the Catholic Church’s logistical leader for the Tzaneen Diocese and Valerie’s dear Australian-born friend, stresses to Valerie the crucial, if difficult, task of sacrificing the self. During an informal interview with Sister Kathy, she says, “New missionaries are too intent on doing good that warning signs don’t sink in. They need to learn on their own so that

they can empty themselves of themselves by learning the hard way.” Sister Kathy suspects that Valerie is currently enduring this challenging self-expunging. Indeed, Valerie says she is currently, as she has before, modeling herself on the behavior of the patron saint of missionaries who “gave with everything of herself.” Like his two grassroots working comrades whom he does not know, Ishmael condemns the acquisition of material things: “I want to be the man who has only one set of clothes, and that has over 80 patches because he gave everything else to his people. I want to give someone the shirt off my back. How do you do this back in the States? I’ll tell you. Trust in God.” Ishmael wrote these words in a journal I asked him to keep for me. In their sense of self-sacrifice, Sergeant, Valerie, and Ishmael resemble 19<sup>th</sup> century Swiss missionaries (Bill 1965: 101-2) and early U.S. PCVs (Alverson 1977: 276).

One day at my home in Poolo village, while Ishmael and I discussed our freedom fighting future together, Ishmael talked about the centrality of morals in any efforts at change: “Morals would be essential and unavoidable.” For example, “Talking about how they’re feeding us [identifying here with black Americans] alcohol on every corner would bring up—‘Don’t do alcohol, they’re just killing us.’” Ishmael went on to stress that developing and living by a “moral code is so important and that we, as leaders, would have to establish some basic moral rules to follow in the organization.” For Sergeant, God is the only truth, a point which establishes the importance of human beings being godly by always being honest. While riding with Sergeant through a neighboring village one morning in his white pick-up truck, he showed that he felt betrayed by what he sees as the conscious dishonesty of many locals. Sergeant said, “Someone who’s honest will build a good reputation. But the liar will have to pay someday.” “Lying natives” have frustrated many Westerners overseas, including PCVs (Alverson 1977: 278). Feeling the need put Kurisanani’s volunteer careworkers first, Valerie had this to say of me and other “special guests” at

a trimonthly meeting: “Now, I don’t mean to undermine the importance of our guests when I say this—and they’ll understand—they are not the most important people here... We are here for you, it’s your day.”

Contrary to the often simplistic image of conceited colonial agents seeing no value in colonized people, Sergeant, Valerie and Ishmael do, indeed, mean to be sensitive to local people’s lifestyles. Regarding the beliefs of the members of his host communities, Sergeant, remembering he is a middle-aged Afrikaner male with no prior associations with South Africa’s oppressed, for example, elevates blacks above whites, saying, “There is a spiritual world and Africans understand that better than Afrikaners and English people. When Africans take Christ, they take it deeply and transformation is radical.” Sergeant also compliments “African culture” for its homogenous feeling, low level of individuality, hospitality and “loving your neighbor as yourself.” On a less grand scale, Ishmael reveals his empathy with locals when he tries, for instance, to keep Flora, my host sister in Poolo village, from washing his clothes, dripping wet with fresh sweat from his jog from his house to mine. Ishmael, with me joining in at times, pleaded, “No, don’t wash the clothes. Sit and rest Sister Flora.”

Evidence shows, too, that these feelings of empathy are acted upon by their expressers. Valerie and Ishmael have both, for instance, offered me and my family money when they learned of our financial hardship during a stage of the research. Valerie is known to provide cash to some of her co-workers to help them finish constructing houses or finance driving school, for example. Ishmael has offered me his water bottle when I mentioned I was parched, shared with me and my family his coveted chocolate powdered drink which was sent to him from his family in the US, and made a much appreciated photo album for his host mother for Christmas. Meanwhile, without knowing he forms part of a long history of Africans viewing all

whites, even “unqualified” ones, as medical experts (Baker 1939: 252-3, Nelson 1973[1878]: 215), Sergeant is often praised locally for driving sick people to the hospital without charge.

Sergeant, Valerie and Ishmael feel these ways and make these efforts because they hold out great hope for this historically beleaguered and violent (xxxx) country and many of its people. Sergeant wants “healthy families, not dysfunctional ones” based on the “babies out of wedlock, alcoholism and crime” [that we see today]. Sergeant hopes to concretize this vision, in part, by ingraining “Biblical business principles.” He explains:

“People want to put their hands in the business so quickly; they don’t want to save. The culture says, ‘Eat today and worry about tomorrow.’ No! Plan to succeed. Don’t live for yourself but for your family and country.” If he could suddenly secure undo influence over the teachers, Ishmael would tell them to “stand up and don’t take s\_\_t! Stand up and fight for your rights! Stand up and fight for education!”

For her part, Valerie believes, among other things, that AIDS will someday lose its stigma in rural Limpopo, enabling its carriers to lead dignified lives. Now we turn our attention to the respective residential dynamics of Sergeant, Valerie, and Ishmael; and we pay special attention to immanent tensions between the interrelated social values of autonomy and relatedness.

### **SERGEANT’S SPECIAL FORK AND KNIFE**

Starting with Sergeant and his evangelical mission, let us now “move in” with several development workers as a way of understanding international aid in terms of intimate relationality. Dennis became saved as a PCV in the group that came just before Ishmael’s and, indeed, similarities between secular PCVs and religious missionaries

have been duly noted (Roach 1985: 13-4, Rice 1985). He entered missionary service after his two year PC stint in the Nkowankowa township looking at Tzaneen to the west and villages to its east. His contacts with the local Christian community, particularly its white members, were extensive. Understanding my research interests, Dennis told me of Letaba Christian Church in Tzaneen which sponsors several local missionaries, and he gave me the phone number of its pastors. Pastor Scott suggested I phone a “real nice” missionary living closely with the people of Modjadji. That “nice missionary” was Sergeant.

The Pelesi household included Mhani (i.e. Mother) Pelesi, her three children, Charles (24), Mary (17) and Comfort (12), and Mhani Pelesi’s mother. A person would be hard-pressed to find a residential space occupied strictly by members of a nuclear family. Looking for such a case, I found only one in Poolo and even this case needs qualification: It has been assumed that the youngest son, instead of establishing his own household as elder sons are expected to do, will live at his natal home with his parents until their deaths and beyond to his own. Upon marriage, the wife, following the practice of patrilocality, will move in with this youngest son and his parents. This is a kind of social security for elders, relatively scarce in Western societies (Slater 1970). Mr. Hlongwe, former principal of Poolo Primary School where I and other PCVs were trained in the Tsonga language in 1997, moved with his wife and three children into his parents’ house in the 1990s. Mr. Hlongwe explains that the youngest brother was not a responsible person so Mr. Hlongwe, seeing his parents aging, decided to keep them company. He, his wife, and now just one of their children live together as a nuclear-looking family only because Mr. Hlongwe’s parents have now died. Mr. and Mrs. Hlongwe’s youngest son, or a youngest son replacement, will undoubtedly bring his future wife home to keep his parents company in their old age.

The dearth of nuclear family arrangements is predictably prevalent in Valerie and Ishmael's host communities as well as among their respective colleagues themselves. Laura of Kurisanani, for example, is divorced, living sporadically with one of her grown daughters and with an orphan she met and "felt for" during her work as a care-worker. This sort of matrifocal household has been a historical force in South Africa for decades (Dubb 1974, Hellman 1974, Preston-Whyte 1978). Also from Kurisanani, Gaul lives with his wife and his wife's niece. This arrangement began years ago as a way for the younger sister to focus on her schooling, an education sponsored in part by Gaul and his wife. At Pensi, Mrs. Bayana, principal of Huko Primary School in the adjacent village of Nenge, lives with her deceased sister's son. The boy's mother died in a car accident and Mrs. Bayana took him in. This arrangement helped her as well since her husband who lived in Polokwane as a radio broadcaster with their children, except for the last born who attended a boarding school in Nkowankowa, leaving his mother in a locally unwelcome state, alone. As Alverson observes of neighboring Botswana, "There are few situations in Twana life where solitude is either sought or prescribed. Where it is, it reflects usually serious problems or crises" (1977: 279). Mrs. Bayana now has the company of her sister's son, whom she would refer to as her son, as opposed to her nephew as he would be called in English. Anthropology has so far neglected the importance of these sorts of social facts in relation to development work. We will now see what has been missed.

So Sergeant lived with the Pelesi family, satisfying his wish to live among the people he was serving. Once while strolling down the Mines portion of the three mile main road, Sergeant met Charles Pelesi, Mhani Pelesi's oldest child and the young man who would become Sergeant's first translator. Sergeant was impressed by Charles' English ability, raw cleverness, and enthusiasm for Christianity or what Sergeant simply calls, "The Word." Sergeant, encouraged by Charles, moved in with

the Pelesis in 1998. Looking back Charles said, “We had a lot of time to study Sergeant’s behavior and we know how he is....A person first appears free and nice and only shows his true colors later on. We’ve now learned what to expect from him and accept him like that.” Here, Charles is referring to a falling out between the Pelesis, particularly Charles and his mother, and Sergeant.

This “falling out” is understood as such, however, by Charles and his mother only. Sergeant thinks everything is fine with the Pelesis, that they hold him dear without reservations. As observed in other African settings, such as Botswana (Alverson 1977: 278), it is rare in rural Limpopo to find a person openly disliking another person, particularly when speaking “up” generations or “up” statuses. When the person is an outsider and, especially a white outsider of God, direct confrontation, even in the form of humbly expressing one’s feelings to someone who’s hurt you, is inexcusable. In rural Limpopo, no matter the language, sentences do not start with, “You know we’re good friends and I like you very much, but something you did hurt me and I want to discuss...” This is considered a deliberate attempt to hurt another person’s feelings.

Once, however, when an interpreter-friend of mine, Peter, accompanied me to the house of the woman known for starting block-funeral-payments in my host community of Poolo, the woman’s husband asked us to leave. It happened this way: Wanting to interview the woman, Peter and I asked her permission the day before. She said, with her husband absent from the house that day, “Come tomorrow morning at eleven.” We came, sat on some white, wired chairs under a mango tree and greeted her husband who had been absent the day before. He toyed with me, saying in Tsonga, “I say ‘How are you’ first, not you,” and “I don’t greet you first; I greet Peter.” The air thick with tension, I followed his beckoning wife to the other side of the yard and began interviewing her. Peter came with us.

After five minutes, the husband called Peter back under the mango tree where they spoke quietly for five minutes. Peter returned to us saying he had gotten a phone call from his home saying there were visitors who needed attending, the upshot being that we would have to go now. The wife accepted this excuse without inquiry. A former ANC freedom fighter turned committed Christian, Peter was fuming as we walked home. He told me he had lied. He had no guests at home. The husband “chased us away” having said to Peter, “I am the man of the house and you didn’t ask my permission to speak to my wife.” This was the first and only instance in which I had ever been, as locals tend to put it, “harshly” denied a request during my research.irate as he walked me home, Peter found every opportunity to talk about “What kind of person wouldn’t help someone” and “What if he needs our help someday.” Clearly trying to make sure my feelings were not hurt and embarrassed by the husband’s behavior, Peter explained the man’s attitude. Peter asked me if I noticed that the husband was washing sheets. I answered, “Yes,” and so Peter pushed, “A man doesn’t wash sheets here unless he has trouble with his wife.” In Limpopo (Krige and Krige 1943) as elsewhere in Africa [and pretty much everywhere else in the world, n’est ce pas?], villagers socialize children for definitive gender roles. According to Peter, while the husband was away in Johannesburg as a migrant laborer for his entire working age years, his wife would routinely cheat on him with other men. The husband discovered this a while back but only recently learned that one of his children belonged to another man. After a public fight between the marital couple, sex had stopped between them and the man refused to let the woman wash his clothes and sheets. These acts served to undermine the very womanhood of the wife. His refusal to grant my interview served the same passive-aggressive purpose.

So Charles related his and his mother’s frustration with Sergeant confidentially to me, never to Sergeant. Charles found it strange that Sergeant, like PCVs abroad

(Alverson 1977: 279), sequestered himself from the Pelesi family even as he lived with them. “If he didn’t want to be with us, why did he come here?” Charles demanded. Charles spoke of Sergeant securing the three room building set aside for him within the Pelesi yard. The new door and extra door locks were understandable to the Pelesi family since Sergeant had a computer to protect. But why Sergeant would stay inside nearly all day on many occasions when the family was outside was incomprehensible and annoying to them. Was Sergeant ill? The family hoped so in a way because the alternative was that he was angry at them or did not like them. If Sergeant was doing then what he tells me he does now, Sergeant was centering himself, pulling wandering attention in toward a purer focus on God and his son, Jesus. As Sergeant once told me, “It’s important to have quiet time or alone time because you get spiritual direction. You get strengthened at that time. You prepare yourself for the day or situation.” Legitimizing this claim, Sergeant continued, “Jesus often went alone and prayed to his father while he was busy healing people during the day.” While Sergeant experienced autonomy as relief from social contingencies, for Charles and the family, Sergeant’s aloofness was a first, depressing indication that they may have warmed up to a “cold person.”

For the Pelesis, Sergeant coming from Cape Town to live in poverty with them was analogous to him eating with the family—it at first looked promising but soon became disappointing. According to Charles, Sergeant, when he first came to the Pelesi family, “could eat with others in the family and even from the same plate [with his hands].” Upon closer inspection, however, the family noticed, “Sergeant would eat porridge [corn-based staple food] only to the point somewhere in the middle and stop. He never touched the other person’s side of the porridge.” Charles made this statement with disgust and disbelief, encapsulating the feelings of many Africans across space and time that sharing food is a cherished, if relatively immanent ideal (Junod 1905:

254, Nelson 1973: 196). Charles assigned Sergeant an “Apartheid heart.” Pounding home this point, Charles seemed anxious to divulge little known information, asking me if I “really know an Afrikaner man.” When I responded, “Actually, no,” Charles described how Sergeant would color- and size-coordinate cups to ensure no one used his cup. “If someone used Sergeant’s cup,” Charles pointed out, “It meant [to Sergeant] that you wanted to buy him another cup or that you wanted him to buy another cup.” In short, Sergeant worked to reinforce his sense of autonomy “on a plate” and “in a cup.”

Charles mentioned how Sergeant would cook his own food and wash his own clothes, showing “he doesn’t have love in his heart.” Individuals, as is understood in Limpopo, should seek social integration and family-feelings with others. Calling non-blood relations “brother,” “sister,” “uncle,” or “aunty” is one way of transforming potential signs of autonomy into social interdependencies. But also cooking for someone or washing his or her clothes is another way of being a mother or sister, since it is young women, married or unwed, who perform these tasks. Accepting these offerings says, in essence, “Thank you Mother” or “Thank you, Sister.” When Sergeant insists on cooking and cleaning for himself, he is structurally saying to Charles’ mother, “I do not love you. I do not accept you as my mother”; he was repressing sociality on behalf of autonomy. Charles’ mother was constantly hurt by Sergeant’s refusals, according to Charles. She was also upset when Sergeant finally left their house for Tuvo “without saying goodbye to her or anyone. “Everyone was hurt by this,” she says, “but got over it quickly because we love Sergeant—even me.” Alverson notes the perfunctory or optional nature of greetings for PCVs compared to their serious social import for Tswana (1977: 277-8). Limpopo villagers take leave-takings as seriously as they and the Tswana take greetings. [However, if they “got over it quickly,” isn’t this clumsy leave-taking a minor and easily dismissed social

faux pas rather than a futile leap across an unbridgeable cultural chasm?] Unaware of the dynamics going on around him, Sergeant tells me privately that he simply likes his food better than the locals' food.

I owe it to my PC experience for first opening my eyes to the significance of something as mundane as eating to the success of something as consequential as international development. I remember myself and nearly all, if not all, of my fellow PCVs (1997-1999) struggling to eat porridge with our hands and from the same plate as other people. We talked about this hesitation in terms of not being used to eating this way and not wanting to get dirty or sick from other people's germs. Early in my fieldwork, Sergeant, Pam, and some of Pam's converts-turned pastors, organized a "social day" at Sergeant's church. During lunch time, my wife came to me, surprised that Sergeant had been demanding, with a humor-covered consternation, his special fork and knife. At first, I understood Sergeant's insistent search for a certain set of silverware as a kind of attachment to "something special," such as teddy bear for a baby or a pair of jeans for an adult, shared by many people. Months later, however, at an unveiling of tombstone celebration, I gained purchase on what Sergeant's relationship with this cutlery meant for him.

At lunch time, all of the celebration's guests, including Sergeant and a dozen or so of his congregants, dished out our food and were sitting to eat it under a large tent. Sergeant asked me if I would watch his food while he went to his car. It seemed Sergeant felt he could trust me because I was "not black," or at least not the "kind of blacks" living in these villages. I said, "Of course." Sergeant came back from his pickup truck with a fork and knife, telling me as he sat down with a smile, "I always keep these in my car for such occasions." Sergeant could not bring himself to trust the hygienic state of locals' dishes, including cutlery, though he stomached using them when necessary. Sergeant knew how villagers washed their tableware, in reused basin

water instead of under running water, and feared their inevitable contagion (Douglass). Sergeant proved most sensitive to eating utensils because “they go right in the mouth,” according to Sergeant.

That Sergeant wanted to be clean was understood differently by Cary, the choir leader, with whom he believed he had an unproblematic relationship. When Sergeant ventured out of the tent, Cary observed, “He doesn’t eat with anyone. I think he’s afraid of us.” A case of fictive kinship (Blacking 1978) shows Southern African children learning early on to associate proper sociality with spontaneous food sharing. At a Catholic boarding school in Natal, children organized themselves into various groups, such as kinship and eating groups. In one eating group, eat-mates expelled one of their members for hiding food she did not want to share. A deeply ingrained practice therefore surrounds and judges Sergeant’s behavior. During one of our interviews in his minivan taxi, Charles, corroborating what Dean and others had said, told me Sergeant no longer eats with people as he used to. Perhaps Sergeant feels his use for sharing food is finished, for he told me confidentially and straightforwardly how he used to strategically accept offers of food from people he would visit because it made them open up to him and, most importantly for Sergeant, The Word. Earlier missionaries used to learn local languages with the same goal in mind (Bill 1965: 99, Kirkaldy 2005). Although he did not understand it in the following terms, Sergeant, perhaps like his missionary predecessors, was manipulating his autonomous sensibilities to present himself as properly social in locals’ eyes. Since he became a household name in the area, he has recoiled into his usual comfort zone, eating and, as we will see below, also cooking and washing, by himself. His truer affinity for autonomy has been laid bare.

As previously mentioned, no one lives alone in Tuvo or any other of the many Limpopo village I have come to know; no one, that is, except for Sergeant. At the

same time, no one *wants* to live alone. Tuvo community members ask specifically of Sergeant, “What if he gets sick? There’s no one to help him.” They also decide, “Sergeant is stingy because he keeps all of his money to himself.” These comments about Sergeant are echoed by people speaking about why everyone in these communities lives with at least one other person. A person living alone is perceived as unloved, unable to love, anti-social, and witch-like. There are situations, however, which more or less force certain locals to reside singly but even these would-be loners still manage to find company.

Having helped Sergeant piece together some of his cabinets, bed, and book shelves, and also having sat with him many times in his living room, I am well aware of his living situation at the church at Tuvo. In a way, Sergeant’s house, looking like a shoe-boxed village school and modest inside, would not impress a middle class family in most places, including in South Africa. Its total of seven rooms includes an average sized bedroom, small living room, storage, toilet and shower areas, a roomy study and a long, spacious kitchen. How fascinating that early 20<sup>th</sup> century mission stations (Haley 1926: 18) and late 20<sup>th</sup> century middle-class American homes share descriptive resonance with Sergeant’s 21<sup>st</sup> century mission house? They all encode for a so-called “American” wish to “minimize, circumvent, or deny the interdependence upon which all human societies are based” (Slater 1970: 7). Sergeant’s seven room set-up is large by most Tuvo standards, but it is Sergeant’s flushing toilet, working shower and sinks, modern stove, refrigerator, roomy icebox, and cable TV which make him “successful” in the eyes of locals. Being successful would not be a problem if Sergeant were not perceived as being stingy and discriminatory. But Sergeant set up his living space as a self-sufficient headquarters and, so, he is considered just this, secretly, by nearly all of his followers who he thinks are in step with his Christian teachings. What the Kriges said decades ago of the Lovedu holds true today: “He who has and doesn’t give is the

offender” (1943: 54). Two of Sergeant’s followers who deride Sergeant’s residential lifestyle are Ema and Denny, whom I met through Dean, “the disease of the church.”

Dean, the self-defined “Disease of the church,” became, first, my friend, and then a regular facilitator of my research in Tuvo. He took me to meet Ema and Denny, two congregants in their early 20s, to discuss church-related issues. We met at Denny’s home, Dean knowing that his presence would elicit more candid responses from the premarital boys than if I tried to talk with them alone. Indeed, in sharp contradiction to the self-perceptions of grassroots workers as self-sufficient, African mediators have proven and still prove vital in facilitating the movements and missions of Westerns, from 19<sup>th</sup> century evangelists (Kirkaldy 2005) to current day anthropologists. At Denny’s house, there is a short dirt driveway coming off of a pitifully small road to the north of TCC, a mud hut with a thatched roof to one side of the driveway, a brick structure on the other side, and an older, two-roomed sleeping structure at the driveway’s end. With banana and mango trees around the perimeter, this stand belongs to his father, living and working most of his days in Johannesburg as a driver. Consequently, Denny and his younger siblings and a cousin stay home with his mother, who is a follower of the ways of ancestors.

On one late morning, Dean stopped me from asking questions of Ema and Denny. Motioning with his eyes to Denny’s mother who was sweeping the ground behind us, Dean indicated our conversation should not be heard by this elder, in accordance with the practice of recognizing, respecting, and responding to social distinctions of age and gender (Alverson 1977: 278). This local methodological approach to conversations happened routinely, with young men and me talking quietly while waiting for sisters and mothers to move out of earshot before we discussed anything from Sergeant to sex. No one ever asked the bystanders to excuse us. “Can you give us a few minutes, Mom,” could not have been said. While we may

tend to see such a request as innocent and open, for locals, it is rude to tell another person, for any reason, that he or she is not included or wanted in a social interaction. Of this, Alverson, in his essay on PCVs in Botswana, writes, “In their society candor has little value; face-to-face relations must be smooth, pleasant and unharried. Candor which entails rudeness, abrasiveness, or even open defiance cannot be condoned simply by being honest or telling the truth” (1977: 278). It is in this sense we understand the Limpopo methodological approach to “excusing a person” as oriented toward sociality. When coming to talk with girls, my informant-friends and I would always explain ourselves to guardian figures, getting their permission before continuing on. While waiting, I asked Dean, for example, if I should explain my presence here to Denny’s mother. Dean said, “You can if you want but you don’t have to because we’re here to see a guy, not a girl. Just go ahead and tell her.”

When Denny’s mother swept herself into the distance, we fellows began talking. It was not long before Denny complained, “Sergeant is discriminating. He doesn’t trust the young ones.” Denny pointed to Sergeant sometimes “locking his double doors [on his house] in the middle of the day, even when there’s a lot of [friendly, known] people around.” Dean matched Denny’s grumbling, first lamenting and then ridiculing, “Even Sergeant is doing bad things while he tries to be good. He has the love of the people. But to be honest, I hate someone who ignores other people and privileges others. He must treat everyone equally.” Sergeant has company when it comes to Africans accusing missionaries of favoritism. In mid 19<sup>th</sup> century Vendale, Kirkaldy reports of a convert, Solomon, experiencing “hurt and bitterness” toward German missionaries for unjustly replacing him as an interpreter in favor of Joseph, another convert (2005: 60). For feeling cast aside, Solomon partially backslid from his strict Christianity and married a second wife. In Sergeant’s case, Dean was referring to a particular grievance of the youth, particularly the boys. They say that Sergeant lets

some people into his house but not others, themselves included among the latter. At Dean's house on a different occasion, Dean and his cousin Teres discussed this situation until they agreed, "Sergeant's house is a blessed place and only blessed people can get in there."

A situation occurred which made me realize Sergeant has a conscious policy related to entering his abode, although it is doubtful he would call this "favoritism.". Sergeant would think of who enters and does not enter his home simply as his choice, not as bias. Making a surprise visit to Sergeant's house one morning, I said, "Coo-coo," a verbal form of knocking on a door here. Recognizing my voice, Sergeant called back, "Come in!". Doing this first verbal knock to see if Sergeant was around, I told him I would be right back as I had to relieve myself. When I returned, I found Sergeant had set a chair for me in his kitchen as a "Let's sit and talk" gesture. That seemed very thoughtful to me. A few minutes later, Steve came to Sergeant's door, timidly saying, "Coo-coo." With a firm voice, Sergeant said, "Steve, I'll be with you." We could see Steve from our position in Sergeant's house. Perhaps Sergeant also recognized his voice. As Steve said, "Okay," and walked toward my car, Sergeant told me, as if I would understand and concur, which I did on both counts, "That's how I do it. When someone comes, they must wait 'til I'm finished with what I'm doing." After a pause in our conversation Sergeant added, "They do it differently but in my home I do it my way." This may seem reasonable enough—a person defining what he or she will do in his or her own private home (Rose 1984), right? Yet this parceling of conversations and people into autonomous parts was far from reasonable to most locals.

After Steve finally got the chance to talk with Sergeant, Steve and I walked together to Dean's house where we rehashed with Teres and Dean what had happened at Sergeant's. They both thought it was ridiculous that Sergeant would have Steve or

anyone wait outside for so long. Teres walked to Dean's gate asked us to imagine if he had said, "Coo-coo," and then had to stay at the gate waiting for some kind of gatekeeper to say, "You may now come in." On his way back he was shaking his head shamefully while he said, "Only the blessed ones are allowed in Sergeant's place." That comment triggered in me the memory of Marlon, the church keyboard player who pleases Sergeant and irritates most everyone else, who so often would slip freely in and out of Sergeant's house like it was his own. When I mentioned Marlon's name aloud, Dean said, "He's one of the blessed ones." Surprisingly, David, the well known righteous Christian and the church's key local leader, is not a blessed one. While I visited him at his house one day, David mused that he has almost never stepped foot in Sergeant's home and, when he has, he has always needed an almost formal permission from Sergeant.

Receiving people happens quite differently at the homes of the vast majority of villagers. When someone says, "Coo-coo," at a typical village home, someone, whether he or she knows you or not and almost no matter the age, will say, "Ahee," or offer some other acknowledgement. Thereafter, a chair will be brought to the visitor and greetings will begin. Having said, "Coo-coo," which is like saying, "I'm here," it is up to the representative of the house to speak next, saying the equivalent of, "Good morning," or whatever is appropriate in Tsonga or Pedi. The exchange continues with the visitor saying, "Ahee"; the house representative saying, "How are you"; the visitor saying, "I'm fine. How are you"; and the house representative ending by saying, "I'm fine." Now the visitor may explain his or her purpose of the visit. It would have to be an extreme circumstance which would keep a household member from going straight to the visitor. Sleep, work, cooking, cleaning, attending to someone else, everything, halts at the sound of "Coo-coo." As PCVs struggled to understand in Botswana, "One does not turn away a caller" (Alverson 1977: 281). I have heard this reception of

visitors explained in two ways. One is that the caller may be bringing urgent news, perhaps of a death, and news can be brought by any aged or gendered person. Therefore, attend to the person. The other explanation was made as a question asked of me by the principal of Pfukani Primary School, Mrs. Rhanzdo. She asked, “Would you tell your own mother or child to wait outside?” As we saw with the Pelesis, then, what is happening here is that Sergeant does not see his house as a family-making space. Like many middle-class Americans whose history leads them to experience their homes as corporate or private forms (Rose 1984), it is simply Sergeant’s own and he finds it normal to run it in how own way. His approach, which contrasts with locals’ felt-need to socialize and re-socialize relations between individuals, hurts his congregants.

Normally as shy as he is short, Brian, the church gardener, once challenged Sergeant’s perceived partiality. Sergeant was in the habit of taking groups of his congregants on nearby adventures in his pickup truck. One Monday during their “Servants of the Lord” assembly, the older boys expressed their discontent among themselves over Sergeant always taking young girls on his adventures but never the boys. They sent Brian, drunk but hiding it, to ask Sergeant why this was the case. After an awkward smile, Sergeant said, “You’re right. I have to also take you.” Then Sergeant went inside his house and closed himself in by locking both doors. It seems he bathed, and Brian later told me he stayed in the house the rest of the day and night, “probably biting his angry lip” from being called on the “fault” uncovered by Brian and company. Here, Sergeant’s house is an autonomy-reviving machine, a retreat, a safe place to be alone—no locals, no wife or offspring to worry him.

There is no one in Tuvo or Mines who understands how Sergeant can be nearly forty years old and have no wife or children living with him. Marlon’s mother, Mhani Selope, a Pedi-speaker who spoke in Tsonga for me to understand, said, “It’s not

natural to me and it's not like other whites I know." Mhani Sathekga, mother of Bapela and Ipona and wife of the deceased man who formally gave Sergeant the land for the church, said in Pedi, "An elder black man Sergeant's age who's single and childless is seen as crazy and scares people." Holding her newborn baby whose Pedi name means, "Plenty more," twenty-three year old Bapela retold a generally accepted belief in rural Limpopo: "Blood can clot in a person's head like that," i.e. being middle aged, single, and childless. This popular understanding goes on to say that the blood clotting makes the host person irritable, impatient, and prone to wicked behavior. This belief encodes for a nature-to-social schema in that blood clotting and irritability (natural states) are believed to diminish with the sexual and family socialization (social states) of the ailing individual. Nearly 150 years ago, a German missionary named Beuster married his way out of such local scrutiny. An "overjoyed" Venda convert, Johannes, exclaimed, "That is good Mynheer. You will then have a totally different standing in the eyes of my people" (Kirkaldy 2005: 56).

Meanwhile, youth typically ask me, "Doesn't Sergeant have [sexual] feelings?" Some insist Sergeant must have a hidden girlfriend to whom he turns to satisfy what they assume must be a natural sexual passion in him as a human being. Youth feel sorry for Sergeant due to his lack of a family life and seem driven more than they might otherwise to ensure they do not end up alone like him. A mystery to all concerned, Francis and Teeky's mother, Mhani Ramatsoma, ventures an explanation of Sergeant's singular behavior: "Sergeant likes controlling things and people. Maybe that's why he doesn't want to be married—he'd have to negotiate with someone and he doesn't want that." Though using non-academic words, Mhani Ramatsoma understands Sergeant as man motivated toward autonomous selfhood and away from others; i.e. in denial of the "inter-" part of his "subjectivity." For his part,

Sergeant sees himself as leading a Christian life, abstaining from the sin of premarital sex until he finds a wife.

### **VALERIE'S LIFESAVING VEHICLE**

Sergeant's case far from exhausts the interpersonal dissonance surrounding the residential lives of development workers. As with Sergeant, Valerie, let us recall, has expressed her love of all people and was, in fact, proud of herself for this sentiment. Yet while Sergeant acted on his pronounced embrace of all people by moving in with a family but then into a place of his own, Valerie has never attempted to live with or around the local black population. In this, she may be said to more straightforwardly reflect the "modern man" (Jung 1933), lonely American (Slater 1970), and Botswana PCV (Alverson 1977) in her. The Tzaneen Diocese placed Valerie and her three Saint John of God sisters at Ave Maria, a multipurpose center for the diocese. As this center was relatively grassroots, hosting care-worker trainees for weeks and sometimes months at a time, we might interpret Valerie and her sisters' fight to move out of Ave Maria and into a place of their own in Tzaneen as one among many ways of escaping the indigenous locals. Valerie never offered this sort of an explanation to me relating specifically to this change in residence, but then Victor Turner (citation) and others have sensibly asked us not to put all of our eggs in the self-interpretations of those in our research basket. Many other bits of evidence would make a "retreat from the local" a certain factor among others in Valerie's jump to Tzaneen. Let us examine some of the data relating, then, to Valerie's living situation.

First of all, Valerie never invited me to her home. She never invited anyone to her house, or at least not any of her local counterparts in Kurisanani. Only Laura has seen where Valerie lives and that was a visit by accident, not by Valerie's choice. Laura related the experience of driving with Valerie in Valerie's white pickup truck

heading for an outlying village when Valerie said that she had forgotten something important at her house. Thus, for what Laura remembers being just a few minutes, Valerie had let a local person into her domicile. In Tuvo, Laura would not even be a “blessed person,” for her access to the foreign benefactor to whom she was attached was a fortuitous “first and only,” hardly regular. This particular breaching of Valerie’s privatized space was not a strategic manipulating of her wish for independence, like Sergeant’s was, to win the favor of her Limpopo co-workers. We might call it an accidental expression of social inclusion of a local in her residential life. Valerie has said to me that she lives with her Saint John of God sisters in an apartment in town.

Locals of course find it odd the way Valerie seals up her home life so completely from them, and especially from her own colleagues. Thomas and Hope, for example, a husband and wife who are both clients of Kurisanani living in Bonketsi, offered this story: Speaking on both of their behalves, and in Tsonga, Hope said, “We first met Valerie at Holy Family. When she came later to our house, Valerie said, ‘I’m happy to know where you stay.’ Valerie lives in Tzaneen and never invited us but we want to be invited.” Thomas added, “Valerie’s purpose is to help other people like Laura but we know Laura better because sometimes she invites us to her house.” Valerie has visited Bill’s house many times in Mosane village, Bill being her favorite co-worker, according to Kurisanani workers. Yet Bill has never set eyes on Valerie’s place, shrugging his shoulders and asking rhetorically, “If you’re not invited, what can you do?” Bill’s shrugging shoulders represent an instance of bodily perception. Calling into question the notion of “free choice,” Bill’s statement, “If you’re not invited, what can you do?” seems to take direction, though not necessarily detail, from a body socialized to feel hurt by the idea and practice of socially-free living. So appalled at the thought of not being welcomed into Valerie’s house after having known her for two years, Gaul does not even want to see her residence anymore.

Katrina, a client of Kurisanani living in Cresdon village, was careful, like Thomas above, to not totally discredit Valerie, for “She and her organization saved my life.” This was prelude to Katrina griping, “Valerie knows my place, my house. But Valerie has never gotten out of her car to come into my yard and sit down,” as Chobi and I were doing during this exchange. Continuing on, Katrina said, “She doesn’t know me at all and I don’t know her.” These associates of Valerie clearly feel unvalued by her. Emanating from the local importance of “real” and “fictive” kinship” (Blacking 1978), their structural question is, “Wouldn’t you invite your brothers and sisters to your house,” and Valerie’s immanent answer is, “Of course, but you’re not them.” Instead of domesticating her living space, Valerie works to ensure its sense of autonomy.

In a one-on-one chat at Bonketsi’s Catholic Church, Valerie articulated the following: “Home space is very important. It’s the place where I can relax, get on with others, make contacts with friends who are not here. Mondays—I sleep; I go very gently; take adequate rest.” Scheduling alone time is significant in itself, for this exercise is non-existent in rural Limpopo and would certainly seem strange to local residents (Alverson 1977: 279). Further striking is Valerie’s comment about getting “on with others.” “Getting on” means having what she considers a proper conversation and Valerie clearly indicates what her lifestyle daily verifies—she cannot get a decent dialogue going with local people. Being outside of her home is a challenge; being at home is a reprieve. Valerie demonstrated this many times, including when she beamed, “I had a good week last week. I just stayed home. I completed a lot of administrative work and sorted out things that needed to be sorted out. I was happy to be off the road. Quite good.”

In addition to her practical life, Valerie also, and more emphatically according to her, “sorts out” her spiritual life, experiencing an ontological distinction between sacred and profane worlds not shared by her hosts (Comaroff and Comaroff 1991):

“My relationship with God is where I get strength. When you take time out [at home] to reflect on His Word—he’s the one who brought hope. The cross looks like defeat but it’s hope.” On a different occasion, Valerie spoke of her spiritual strength in relation to her home in more detail: “I wake up each morning and give myself space to re-group and re-focus on my vows and my relationship to God and the world. This space is what I need to make it through the day.” Besides her home, Valerie, like some anthropological fieldworkers (Colfer 1992: 90), uses her vehicle as an autonomy-strengthening mechanism to bowl through and over the distressing sociality of the day. One day while at the remotely located Holy Family clinic, I asked Valerie if she would have time to talk with me. She said, “Yes.” Observing her passing me repeatedly as she marched from a nurse’s office to a lounging room, Thomas and his wife, Hope, and another client, Stella, knowing Valerie’s behavior and my aim that day, agreed, “She’s avoiding you.” Feeling I was being unfairly treated, they urged me to seek out Valerie again before she eluded me. Waiting for her worked, however, and my three HIV+ friends patted me on the back and wished me well as I responded to Valerie calling me with a faint voice from her pickup truck which was pointing toward the exit. Valerie said she would be back in forty minutes and would talk with me then. An hour and a half later, Valerie returned and assertively hailed me, “Marcus, it’s your time [to talk]!” It was during this conversation that Valerie spoke of her car: “A veteran nun advised me that even being in the car is an opportunity to re-focus; it’s a safe place to know one’s self again.” Then Valerie confessed that she took that ride in part to re-focus her self, which it is probably why she called me to talk with a reinvigorated energy. Though she is Irish, Valerie nevertheless experiences her car like many middle-class Americans, as a surrogate home, privacy on wheels (Slater 1970: 7)—this may have something to do with why Valerie has never stepped out of her car to enter Katrina’s and many other people’s places.

Valerie furthermore stays in her car because while there is life in the car, death lurks outside. This assumption bled through in a conversation I had with Valerie on the last day I would ever see her. Contradicting earlier pronouncements, Valerie said, “I’m not into people.” I asked, “Why are you in this people-centered atmosphere if you’re not into people.” She answered, “It’s a challenge.” I asked, “Why don’t you just run a marathon and get the challenge over with quickly.” “No. Life is a challenge,” Valerie said as she spaced out the words. I asked her how life is a challenge worth mentioning since we are all in it without having chosen to be. Then Valerie slipped, “Everyone’s not living. People who are just lounging about are not living.” Overseas Westerners frequently interpret African socializing or “leisure time” as a “waste of time,” where empty chatter and laziness rule to the moment (Alverson 1977: 278). What these foreigners fail to perceive is that for Limpopo villagers and other Africans, “The sum of greetings and taking-of-the news during the day is a structural analogy to our reading of the daily newspaper. It’s an aspect of being informed—knowing what’s going on” (Alverson 1977: 278). It is becoming less surprising that news travels for villagers via people and by the abstraction of autonomous-looking texts for “us.” Due to my further prompting, Valerie defined living as “Getting out there and making a difference, challenging yourself.” For Valerie, home is living, Godly, and comfortable; the Limpopo world outside is dead, evil, and depressing. She hopes to bring life to the world without extinguishing the life she has built up within her self at home. We concluded with Valerie seeing the irony in being “not into people” while serving so many people. “I’m a mystery, I know. I’m a mystery even to myself,” are the last words she spoke in our formal interview.

Having divulged the importance of her alone-time with only me, Valerie’s co-workers view her self-imposed isolation with contempt, their views of course being made known to me, not Valerie. For example, a perturbed Gaul grudgingly said, “A

[mere] gardener at the Catholic Church in Johannesburg is making R1700 a month [\$240/month]. That's reasonable." The point being that he, as a valuable catechist for the Catholic Church, is compensated poorly by comparison to a gardener. Gaul forwarded a stereotyped conversation he says he has with people he knows in the surrounding villages: They ask, "Gaul, how many years are you working there?" Gaul gulps in embarrassment as he softly answers, "Twenty years." "Twenty years and you haven't improved at all!" Gaul said the church tells people, "Don't work for the money," making him shocked then that "They live alone in eight bedroom palaces while people here are eight people in two bedrooms." In a different case, Laura, in response to Valerie scolding her for missing a Sunday church service to attend a family funeral, said, "My corpse won't wake up and take care of my [funeral] things." Funerals are central to life in rural Limpopo. How many and what caliber people attend your funeral testifies to your sociability while alive. People know that if you do not help and attend other funerals, no one will take of you when you die. Laura ended by saying, "But Sister Valerie and the other sisters like to keep us in the church; meanwhile, they're living simply in town with no one to care for—that's why they can stay in the church all day long chit-chatting with locals." The argument threading through these stories, as well as similar stories told by Lateef and Bill, is that Valerie and the other sisters, in retreating behind the walls of the town dwellings, have assured their ignorance of the lives of the people they purport not only to work with and help but also to love. Undoubtedly, Valerie wishes the best for her local counterparts but, when it comes to her stance on compensation, she, like Sergeant above and Ishmael below, looks strikingly similar to her missionary predecessors of colonial times.

Valerie's living druthers also sparks gossip among her local counterparts related to her sex and eating life. Laura doubts that Valerie has "Those [sexual] feelings." Laura recalled that during a Sunday mass, a villager helping with the

proceedings held up a condom and advised the listeners to use them if necessary. “The Bishop stopped the person, saying, ‘No!’ it encourages sex. Abstinence is the only way.” Ridiculing the Bishop and the nuns after the fact for expecting everyone to abstain from intercourse, Laura said, “I’m not a sister,” meaning that she feels she needs sex. Both she and Lateef, who was also present during this conversation at Bonketsi’s Catholic Church, said they could abstain if necessary. Lateef continued, “Valerie could be lying about not having sex because many of the priests are having babies with black women here—even in Cresdon.” Like living alone without mate and sex, eating alone is seen as preposterous, that is, if there is an alternative. Stella, a Kurisanani client, was compelled to talk about eating when asked questions about Valerie’s residential life. Finding it difficult to swallow, Stella asked, “So Valerie is eating all her food by herself? Doesn’t she like people?” Anticipating a full discussion of the role of body perceptions in development work (Chapter 5), notice that Stella’s conscious questioning of Valerie’s “stingy” behavior was perceived into possibility by a body that choked-up at the thought of autonomous existence. This is how people experience life, spontaneous, sentimental gesturing *before* full senses of subjectivity and objectivity. Stella next compared consuming food by oneself to someone who wipes someone’s saliva mark off of a glass before drinking, saying the wiper “doesn’t like people or sharing. That person has apartheid.” In this context, “apartheid” is bad from a rural Limpopo perspective even if it means separating oneself from potentially harmful bacteria.

### **ISHMAEL’S RENT CALCULATION**

Every grassroots worker I met and came to know in rural Limpopo struggled residentially because of interpersonal miscommunication. For the sake of a sense of succinctness and richness, the current chapter will detail the living situation of just one

more aid worker, Ishmael—the PCV involved in educational improvement work. Ishmael lives in a one and a half room, cave-like nook situated at the back of his host family's garage. Opening up the garage from the north, you would see no evidence of this little alcove, for it is closed except for a door on the east of the garage and for crevices under the door and at the intersection of the ceiling and walls. Rats combing through these fissures in search of food and, perhaps, warmth, were a rather constant nuisance for Ishmael. It is rectangular from east to west, with an internal wall leaving a door frame connecting a tiny back area and an even smaller front area. Entering the door, there is the smaller room at about 3 x 3 yards. It is used as a kitchen area by Ishmael. He uses the back space as an amalgamated bedroom, bathroom, and clothes-hanging area. In the “kitchen” are a hotplate, shelves of spices, and some readily cooked foods such as pasta. The bathroom is only a toilet which his Shikibana hosts had installed for Ishmael's convenience. The toilet sits unshielded against the north wall, about a yard and half east of Ishmael's bed, which is shoved up against the far west wall. A clothes line hangs overhead. A self-sufficient set-up, indeed.

Yet, like Sergeant and Valerie, Ishmael once lived elsewhere, closer to locals, specifically about fifteen yards away inside the main house of his Shikibana host family. This main house is, by local standards, fairly large, red bricked and, thus, modern. It has spacious dining, living and kitchen room areas and, it seems, at least three bedrooms and a bathroom area down a fairly long hallway. It mimics the American ideal for a house in appearance (Rose 1984) but its inclusion of multiple generations gives it a decidedly local feel. Ishmael had lived in one of the bedrooms in the main house upon his arrival. It is unclear to me whether the Shikibana family, comprising a grandmother, a husband and wife, their four daughters and “little kids,” as Ishmael described it, intended for Ishmael to live in the big house for his entire two years of service or if they had always been preparing the garage alcove for him. The

fact that Mint, the former PCV living in Poolo, Tony, a contemporary PCV and closest friend to Ishmael and the vast majority of other PCVs were placed within the homes of locals in South Africa is instructive. It is one indication that the Shikibanas probably wanted their foreigner to live with them in the house. Locals typically provide space within main houses as a measure of protection for their esteemed guests. It would also be most unwelcoming for locals to effectively say, “Come. Our home is your home. Now go stay outside.” As a PCV in the late 1990s, I gritted my teeth and tolerated living in the big house with my host family. Mint, Tony and every other PCV I met during my research, except for one, fought for separate living quarters. Their victories precipitated irreparable damage to relations with their hosts. Let us examine this with regard to Ishmael.

In a letter written home during his first month of service, Ishmael speaks of his original living situation. “I officially became a volunteer on October 13 of 2005... That same day we all went to our final sites. I was looking forward to being able to finally settle, to unpacking my bags, to finally not living out of my bags and all that. But it didn’t work out. My ‘room,’ which is a small building about the size of a one bedroom apartment (one of the economy ones that has a main room, a room off the side, and no bathroom) is not done yet. I am staying in a room in the main house.” Offering some conscious reasons he would like to leave the main house, Ishmael continued, “It’s not too bad. Obviously I want my space. I also want to unpack my bags, mainly because there’s stuff like paint that I want to pull out so I can work with it... Being able to open my bags will be kinda like a holiday, there are so many things in there I haven’t seen in ages.” Living with the Shikibanas prevents Ishmael from opening up his bags, from getting comfortable, from feeling like he is on a holiday. “Obviously” wanting his space, Ishmael accepts not being able to live fully until he is on his own, even if this space is just a few steps away. He is sentimentally bearing living socially until he can

realize an autonomy headquarters of his own. If the Shikibana's home, with its dense population, represents, if you will for a moment, the city, Ishmael's, like Sergeant and Valerie's, was a part of the "flight to the suburb and do-it-yourself movement of 1960s America (Slater 1970: 9). Both activities "attempt to deny human interdependence and pursue the unrealistic fantasy of self-sufficiency" (ibid).

An even earlier letter home describes some of Ishmael's frustrations with living in the main house: "Being here has given me a much better understanding of what dad has been through, both in terms of being an immigrant and in terms of being raised in a very patriarchal society. Like, if I didn't want to, I wouldn't have to do any household chores. I had to fight (by clutching my dirty clothes tightly to my chest) to be able to do my laundry. It's been hard to figure out how anything works cause they just do it for me." As if wanting his comments to appear objective and not wholly negative to his readers, Ishmael went on, "In some ways I don't mind because I have 4 host sisters + mom + grandma + and little kids and there's only 2 guys (me and the dad)." Shifting back to frustration, Ishmael wrote, "Also, since these people are really dust conscious...I'm not 'allowed' to wear my pants for more than one day cause they get dusty when I go for a walk." Also intrusive for Ishmael are situations like this one: "The other day I came into my room and couldn't find my shoes. When I asked them about it, turned out that one of my host sisters had taken them, washed, polished and hung the shoelaces outside to dry. Considering that by the time I've walked 20 feet my shoes are just as dusty as they were, I consider it a kind but futile gesture." Ishmael sees himself as a good guy, bucking patriarchy and defending women. Emphasizing the word "allowed" and interpreting being helped as stealing his ability to learn shows that Ishmael assumes human action should function unhinged from the burden of being in any way dependent on others.

In a journal entry he wrote for me nearly a year into his PC service, Ishmael makes it clear what living alone has meant for him. After venting frustration at the perceived lack of motivation on the part of the Pfukani and Huko teachers, Ishmael takes stock, writing, “So anyhow, we left school at 11, the excuse being that memorial service [that he knows I know about]. I cleaned all evening. Swept my room, did my laundry, mopped my floor, all that good stuff. I have 2 admit it was, in its own way, relaxing. Here’s a simple task that can be done. No one will argue with me about it (except to say u phuntile), no one will try 2 foil my plans. Just me cleaning and listening 2 music...I could tell I accomplished something—my room was clean. Wish I could say something similar about the schools.” Here, feeling good lines up with being alone (Alverson 1977, Slater 1970) and being self-convinced that “I” did “something” or “subject” did “object.” Feeling good was something for which Ishmael, understandably, was willing to fight, even if locals interpreted his “feeling good activities” as “u phuntile” or, “you’re stupid.” These activities were locally stupid not because he is a man who could have relied on his host mother and sisters to do the work. Rather, it was “phuntile” because he had failed to integrate into the family in a way that would have led to those women assisting him as a son and brother. It was the locally perceived anti-social posturing that was fundamentally at issue for his hosts, not an ability to exploit women.

Ishmael arrived at his PC site in September of 2005. By November, a conflict between him and his host family had come to a head. A meeting ensued which included a PC/SA representative from the head office in Pretoria, principals Bayana and Rhandzo of Pfukani and Huko Primary schools, respectively, and Ishmael and his host parents. Without Ishmael’s knowledge, what happened at this meeting has become legend among the teachers and many, if not most of the community members in the two villages of Pensi and Nenge. I was privy to the information as a confidant

of the teachers. Ishmael mentioned the event but gave me few details. Surprisingly, I had lived with my host family in Poolo, which is ten miles away from Pemsu, for a year before we realized we all had known what happened at the Shikibana household that day in November. My host family had heard the news from Mr. Mhlangwe, the principal of Poolo Primary School when I was a PCV. Mr. Mhlangwe is related to Mr. Shikibana, Ishmael's host father and brother to Mr. Shikibana's long deceased father. This exemplifies how "local chattering" facilitates the transfer of information discussed above by Alverson (1977: 278).

The discussed problem was that the Shikibanas were asking Ishmael for money to help pay for certain household expenses. Drawing on a PC statement saying rent paid to host families is optional and feeling the family's request was a con for money, Ishmael resisted giving the Shikibanas money. As Ishmael knows, I felt similarly badgered for cash by my hosts back in 1997 but proved weaker than Ishmael, opting to give them R200/month. At the meeting, and according to Principal Bayana of Huko, the Shikibanas asked if Ishmael could contribute money for food and electricity every month. The PC representative apparently tried to make the Shikibanas understand that they had taken on a volunteer in the spirit of volunteerism and that PCVs like Ishmael were not in a financial position to pay rent or other expenses. Ishmael then cynically acquiesced, saying, "He'd pay for food and electricity but would calculate his share by dividing the total cost [of these respective expenses] by the number of people in the house, including all the little kids," exclaimed Mrs. Bayana to me privately. Mrs. Bayana detailed Ishmael's arguments further, recalling that he said he was hardly an expense on the family, eating just "this much" food and using "this much" electricity. Following Ishmael's insistence, a "test month" was finally agreed upon in which Ishmael would account for all of his food and electricity consumption, forming the basis of how much he would contribute to the Shikibana household per month.

Ishmael estimated that he would end up paying about R30/month, a far cry from the R200/month asked for by his hosts. With Mrs. Bayana brokenhearted over the poor relationship she has with her guest, Mr. Bayana has seemed fully supportive of Ishmael the whole time. The famous missionary-ethnographer, Henri Junod, observed long ago what remains true in principle today. In this area of Southern Africa, “When you give some food to one of them [an African] he will at once share it with his companion” (1905: 254). In his calculated self-defense, Ishmael brazenly refuted forms of social and verbal exchange which, for his hosts, are key indicators of morality.

It would be too easy at this point to ask, “Would Ishmael have hesitated to help his own mother and father,” and come up with the answer, “Probably not.” Ishmael himself demonstrated his approach to feeling familial when he said much later in his service, “My host mother and I seem 2B making some efforts 2B kind to each other. I can see us at some distant point in the future in which we do have decent relationship—sort of nephew-aunt, or mom’s friend kinda thing.” For Ishmael, and in contrast with rural Limpopo norms, becoming sentimentally “family” is not assumed; in fact, it is assumed *not* to exist until time tested and approved. For now, let us hear what Ishmael’s colleagues thought about this meeting and the issues related to it, for villagers’ concern with interpersonal intimacies was inextricably linked with their devotion to development.

A teacher at Pfukani popularly called Mhani Stella skirted around answering any question I had regarding her views of Ishmael. After ten minutes of dodging and gaining confidence in me, tears came to Mhani Stella’s eyes as she fumed in Tsonga, “He doesn’t help his host family at all. I’m friends with the family and they’re suffering. He doesn’t buy food for the family—not even once. He takes food from the [main house’s] fridge as he pleases but never puts anything back in there. The family

offered to wash his clothes if only he'd buy the soap powder. He refused to buy. His host parents are not at all happy." Coming to her main point, Mhani Stella whimpered,

"Ishmael has not integrated in his family; he's not a brother or son or anything. He's backed himself into an outside room and won't let anyone in his life. If I were him for a day, I'd get to know people in the school and community."

Mrs. Petenenge concurred, though independently, with Mhani Stella, less dramatically stating in English that she is "disappointed in Ishmael's home situation. He won't even buy toilet paper." Mrs. Petenenge is referring to the situation wherein the Shikibanas installed the toilet in Ishmael's garage apartment. Their idea was that it was not safe for a white and, therefore, assumed to be rich man walking at night to the main house to relieve himself. Thus, Ishmael should have his own toilet. But instead of buying toilet paper, Mrs. Petenenge and others note, Ishmael actually walks to the main house in the dark to get it from the family's bathroom and comes back with it to his toilet. For this, Mrs. Petenenge called Ishmael, "Stingy." Mhani Stella and Mrs. Petenenge reason that Ishmael's stinginess comes from him being young and immature.

On a different occasion, Mrs. Petenenge's brother and Ishmael's self-perceived nemesis, Linton Petenenge, a teacher at Huko Primary School, related this story in a mix of English and Tsonga about Ishmael's living trials: "When the host father's [I believe] younger brother came from Johannesburg where he lives and works and saw Ishmael eating by himself away from the family, he was very upset. He said it's no good for a person from far away to come to our place and not be part of the family." Continuing, Linton Petenenge said, "The younger brother said that he swears he won't eat [in Johannesburg] if he finds out or even senses that Ishmael isn't eating with the family." As if expecting his next comment to be his last, Linton said, "You see,

Ishmael's behavior is tearing apart a family." But Linton continued after a thoughtful pause, "See Ishmael's dress? It's so dirty. The family offered to wash his clothes but he refused, showing he's not connecting with the family." Eating and drinking independently, when there was a choice for doing so with others, was experienced as a socially destructive force by local hosts.

Ishmael wrote, "My host mother brought a little muteki (bride) for me. A little 3 year old who says she wants to marry me and cook vuswa [staple food] for me. Vuswa, the ultimate display of love. I said, yes, in case you were wondering."

This is more than just a cute scene, for a little girl has already learned what it means to be a good wife in rural Limpopo. The little one did not say she will comfort Ishmael, stay chaste, be honest, or tattoo his name to her back. She simply wanted to cook for him. Cooking food, along with washing clothes, is a key activity transforming biological women into social mothers, sisters, and wives, into meaningful human beings from the perspective of rural Limpopo lifestyles. In these villages, women from late teens to grandparent age normally cook and leave the food in a central location for all household members to partake (Krige and Krige 1943). Attending to work on local farms and in town stores, schooling, and migrant labor activities keep many members of many families from eating together, but the available food is made sure to be for everyone—whenever they might return. With respect to washing clothes, an elder woman can be expected to buy laundry detergent with her monthly social grant money. Everyone's laundry is mixed together and young unwed or recently married women do the cleaning. Men are expected to go out and work, bringing proceeds home and certainly not staying home to do women's work. That first names are often unknown by even close relatives shows how central social titles, such as mother, father, sister, and brother are to people in these communities. When Ishmael squirmed away from eating with the Shikibanas and drew back his dirty

laundry from them, he was, in their eyes, saying they were not good enough to be his family members. His wishes and practices of autonomy represented their understanding of a lack of proper sociality.

For Ishmael, however, his garage apartment was his own cozy nook, his primary place of escape (Alverson 1977, Slater 1970) from a family and world in which he felt he did not quite fit. Like Malinowski above, Ishmael most liked to read books, for they took him far away from the surrounding humanity. That he read books which circulated among dozens of PCVs points to the generality of Ishmael's dilemmas among PCVs. In a text message to me in which he truncated words to save money, Ishmael showed that he and other PCVs read books such as "Guns, Germs and Steal," [that book written by an RPCV], and the "Life of Pi." About these kinds of books, Ishmael once responded by text message to an inquiry I made, "Oryx + Crake. Then Life of Pi after this. Fictional stuff on abt life—Just think pple here cant even imagine the ideas in these books." Physically burrowing himself in his room and imagining himself somewhere local people could scarcely go, Ishmael twice removed himself from his hosts and all others; he twice safe-guarded his sense of autonomous selfhood. Within this same complicated person, however, was a romantic notion of village life. In a journal entry in which he reported on his venture with other PCVs to the small town of Modjadji, Ishmael described Modjadji's modern developments and said, "In some ways that's nice, I guess, I'm not really interested in most of that. It was nosier, more crowded, more intrusive—not my little Mafarana." At first seeming to contradict the frustrations he has with his living situation, we realize that it really is quieter and less intrusive in Pensi, at least for Ishmael, for, by stealing away into solitude, he made sure it would be so.

Meeting with other PCVs for weekends at backpackers' places, the residences of some of the PCVs, and far off places was, indeed, a regular form of relief for

Ishmael, as it has been for other PCVs. About socializing once with other PCVs away from Pemsí, Ishmael wrote, “Like I said, overall it was fun. However, a few things I noticed. I’m not as ‘into’ the social gatherings as I once was [when he first arrived in SA]. I get bored with the conversation, the drinking. It seems like the same old actions recycled. My focus these days seems 2B on other things—religion, history, life. I wanted good conversation [about those things] but found little of that.” Giving us a window into the experiences of his fellow PCVs, Ishmael continues, “I think some of the other volunteers feel similar. Are we bored? Do we feel trapped b/c we never really have ‘alone’ time. Even though we’re all in one room together, we seem 2 form couples, isolate ourselves as much as possible.” It is as if their living situations have so led them to recoil into themselves, as Jung says of “modern man in search of a soul,” through reading and contemplating, that they have trouble climbing back up to the conversational capacity they once had. They would really like to talk about all of the brilliantly abstract thoughts rushing in their heads, a rush precipitated by the twin movements of rebuffing conversation with locals around and sequestering themselves in isolated spaces. The extraordinary growth that comes with this opportunity for unrivaled introspection is a documented phenomenon for PCVs (Sorti 1990), including for myself. But now we can see that it comes at the cost of rebuffing locals’ expectations of sociality in order to maximize senses of autonomy.

Visiting me was another means of flight from Pemsí and the Shikibanas for Ishmael. Being a good friend of mine, my family and I simply enjoyed Ishmael’s company. It was only through the journal writing he did for me and copied letters he sent home that I realized what coming to my place in Poolo meant to him. He wrote, “Evening now. Good day. Went running in the morning. Visited Marcus/family. After a lot of good food. I feel much more relaxed. I feel tired, too, but in a good way, like I did something to make me tired instead of just feeling run down.” He went on to say,

“Good conversation in a language that comes easily to me is important. Being in a comfortable setting. Not feeling caged, being able to move around freely, getting out of the village. [Again, it’s all about the possibility of movement. A common theme in Western literature, pop culture, and ideology.] All that helps me relax, feel better, feel more hopeful about the schools (we’ll see how long that lasts).” In an earlier letter home, Ishmael gives some indication about what he did at my house that made him feel relieved: “I’m at someone else’s house, a former volunteer who’s come back to do research for his Ph.D. He’s an interesting guy. I’m also drinking milo [a chocolate drink]...out of a wine glass...It’s strange being at this house. I’m still in a ‘village,’ but inside this house is a whole ‘nother world. Its ‘American’ in here. Mainly cause this guys family. I haven’t been able 2 interact with a family in this way in so long. I sat around and colored w/ the kids for over an hour and then just wrestled and played with them till they went to sleep. I’ve tried playing w/ kids here but it’s harder 2 bond with them.” Actually, Ishmael visiting was a kind of escape for me too, except I loathed feeling this way because it reminded me that I was not as African as I would have liked to be.

## **CONCLUSION**

This chapter has described the residential situations of three change-agents and some members of their occasionally interlinking social networks in South Africa’s Limpopo Province. What is at stake is (1) the emergence of wholly new, ethnographic data sets responsive to the fact that Western change-agents do not simply “go overseas and help” but also “live somewhere,” (2) a heightened attention to the significance of bodies in understanding human interactions, (3) an anthropological discipline further sensitized to some of its biases, such as making too hard a line between public and

private spheres of life, and (4) the compelling resonance between agents of change and anthropologists conducting fieldwork.

I suggest that the forgoing exploration of “development and residence” lays bare a social conundrum peculiar to our historical era: The missionary, nun, and PCV instantiate the paradigm shift from supposedly inefficient top-down development strategies to apparently efficient grassroots development approaches. Yet all three change-agents were, together with their fellow activists, unmistakably uncomfortable “living with the people.” Finding ways to distance themselves from local hosts may have seemed to Sergeant, Valerie, and Ishmael like their own unique responses to grassroots living, and there are undeniable and expected idiosyncrasies in their residential maneuvers. However, they shared, along with every other change-agent whom I knew well, a desire and need for autonomous space. This obtained despite their respective organizational mandates and various national, ideological, familial, and gendered backgrounds. Pertinent questions arise: Why bother “going grassroots” only to micro-separate yourself within a local family; why keep working after experiencing so much discomfort; does moving what Maxine Weisgrau calls the “unresolved questions and contradictions of [top-down] development” (1997:1) closer to aid-beneficiaries produce unintended consequences and, if so, who benefits and who stresses?

Sergeant, Valerie and Ishmael all professed their love of people and, by consequence, their desire to live with the people they were helping. Sergeant acted on his stated commitment to live with the people he was serving, as Jesus had done; Valerie prided herself on naturally having no fear of any kind of human being; and Ishmael was structured by the PC to live with a local host family but additionally found his own pleasure in his “little Pemi.” Despite cherishing all the world’s inhabitants, these three change-agents could not bear to live with people. Sergeant

settled in with the Pelesis only to push away from them, finally shifting to his church where he lived alone; Valerie moved with her spiritual sisters from Ave Maria, a rustic living space, to Tzaneen, and wanted no locals visiting her; and Ishmael, less diplomatically than the others, argued his way out of his host family's main house to live by himself in a sliver of an apartment in their garage. Far from unique experiences, the vast majority of PCVs in SA maneuver around their given residential circumstances and the Catholic Church leadership understands the discomfort their priests and nuns feel in the rural communities as inevitable. Meanwhile, Pastor Nancy and the husband-wife evangelical team of Tim and Tammy live plush and firmly apart from local life.

There was thought, consideration, and reasoning that went into these shifts in living spaces. But a definitive undercurrent of emotional charge is indisputable, making the change-agents' relocations of residence feel like "escapes." Sergeant and Valerie both speak of the importance of alone time at their respective homes. Using slightly different language, Sergeant and Valerie talk respectively of "strengthening the self" and "re-grouping" as essential home activities. Apart from a sanctuary of healing power, the home is, for Valerie and Ishmael, also mentioned as a place for rebuilding a sense of hope, an idea which Sergeant would surely accept as indicative of his own relationship to his abode. All three change-agents also established alternative home spaces, such as a motorcycle, car and my house for Sergeant, Valerie and Ishmael, respectively. Sharing with their physical homes at least an effective separation from local life, these substitute homes, in two cases on wheels, brought with them relief from stress and increased optimism for the grassroots workers, who understood themselves as self-sacrificers.

What was so threatening? Being cooked for and having their laundry done by members of their host families were resolutely avoided by Sergeant and Ishmael. They

had their rationalizations, Sergeant saying he preferred his own food and Ishmael relating that he did not want to contribute to the patriarchy of the society. Valerie did not put herself in a position to have her food or clothing cared for by anyone other than herself and her Catholic sisters from Ireland. Eating and drinking with their hosts also proved problematic to the grassroots change-agents. Sergeant could not eat or drink of food and beverage touched by locals, and perhaps by anyone; Ishmael's initial refusal to dine with the Shikibanas was rationalized by him feeling that the family unjustly wanted far more money from him for the food and drinks than the products would actually cost; and Valerie would eat around locals and even with her hands but without actually swapping the consumables. Finally, the aid-givers had difficulty incorporating themselves into local family roles. Sergeant and Ishmael maneuvered around the locally understood responsibilities of a son or brother while Valerie would not open up to her local female counterparts as a sister.

Their local counterparts interpreted the living styles and choices of their benefactors largely in moral terms. This was clear when they would translate refusals to receive physical assistance, such as being cooked for and having their dirty clothes washed, as refusals to be seen, and to see, locals as brothers, sisters, sons and daughters. This understanding of the relevant locals brought them to states of incredulity, sometimes even to tears. Exemplifying their frustrations was when local collaborators of Sergeant, Valerie and Ishmael pronounced, independently of each other, that these well-intentioned assistors "have apartheid" in their hearts. Less obviously moral, other locals would deduce "immaturity" as the force behind the "apartheid behaviors" driving the residential druthers of the change-agents. Thus, Ishmael was still young while it was insinuated that Sergeant and Valerie have bouts of the madness, which locals believe comes with being a sexually inactive adult.

“They’re just children” was, thus, the moral sentiment expressed about Sergeant, Valerie, and Ishmael by the locals.

Ethical considerations kept locals from directly confronting their esteemed guests regarding the living choices of the latter. The “No” Sergeant, Valerie and Ishmael could say to getting things done for them was the “No” that pained the locals so much. It is also the same “No” that the vast majority of rural Limpopo residents cannot bear to use openly against others, especially against foreign guests. The locally regretted consequence of “turning something down” is to hurt another person’s feelings and to be viewed and feared as harsh toward others, just as Sergeant, Valerie and Ishmael are viewed by their respective hosts. Hurt by their benefactors’ behaviors yet unable to express this pain to them has led to two interrelated phenomena: First, even in their discomfort, locals behave normally, i.e. act respectfully toward the foreigners, talking about giving them chances, about not totally writing them off; second, waiting for growth in the aid-givers who see themselves as doing nothing wrong has led to a communication freeze, with locals hiding their resentments and the change-agents remaining quiet for seeing nothing necessarily wrong. In short, the change-agents fought for what locals most detest—living alone.

Leaving aside for a moment the question of isolated bodily expressions, gestures, and perceptions, what does the data in the chapter illuminate about bodies or “the body” as we follow them as wholes moving over space and time? First, the bodies of Sergeant, Valerie and Ishmael moved from the respective, faraway places of Cape Town, Ireland, and the U.S. to the area of South Africa’s Limpopo Province outside of Tzaneen. Besides the wrinkle in which Sergeant’s body at first moved closer to locals as part of an ideological effort to “walk with the people” as Jesus had done, all three change-agent bodies found relative solace by moving into rather isolating habitations. In addition to definitive shifts toward isolation in issues of accommodation, the bodies

of the change-agents could also be seen, on daily bases, piercing into people-less [i.e. local people] space on various vehicles and in the homes of similarly dispositioned foreigners. Finally, Sergeant, Valerie, and Ishmael's bodies sped toward dirty laundry and food preparation materials before the bodies of their village hosts, preempting potential conversational and emotional entanglements around these issues. According to phenomenology, these aggregate body movements occur late in human experience because they are fully accomplished. The phenomenological relevance of these objective physical patterns is that they resonate entirely with the change-agents' fragmentary bodily perceptions (Chapter 5) as manifested spontaneously during quotidian interactions with villagers.

Studying development in terms of the residential dynamics of change-agents and their hosts brings a wealth of new data to bear on the Anthropology of Development; it also helps further and plainly to problematize some of Development Anthropology's lingering Eurocentrisms. First, anthropological studies of change and development emphasize encounters between grassroots personnel and local beneficiaries of aid as encounters of discourses and ideologies. The Comaroffs call colonial meeting of British missionaries and Tsidis of Southern Africa a "long conversation" (Comaroff and Comaroff 1991, Ngwane 2001) These meditations typically and, no doubt, fruitfully depict bodies as objects of discursive confrontation and subjectification along Foucaultian lines of theoretical intervention. The discussion of "development and residence" represents the beginning of a more enriching conversation about bodies as powerful subjects and agents of historical action as well as truer sources and sites of discourse and ideology.

Second, in finding so much socially significant data in the supposedly private domain of residential life, this chapter's examination of the analytic intersection of development and residence further implores Development Anthropology to objectify

its assumptions on public versus private information. To date, the griddiest ethnographies of development (e.g. Bornstein, Weisgrau) orient our gaze deep into grassroots “work” situations but overlook “living” situations. The assumption seems to be that while “work” is a public event and, therefore, a worthy object of scientific attention, “residential life” is a purely private, subjective affair of little social import. If the common sense assertion that people are social beings has not convinced us that private moments must always be accompanied by social moments, disciplined philosophies from phenomenology to Foucault and Marx’s expositions should certainly have done so. What this research found is precisely not that public/private distinctions are natural or ought to be assumed but rather that there are certain cultural subjects, in this case change-agents, who worked to implement such ideal distinctions against the grain of Limpopo villagers who experienced the distillation of private space from social space as an abhorrent exercise in practical apartheid in an officially post-apartheid era.

It is significant in itself to observe a culturally specific, public / private dichotomy passing as a human universal in anthropological studies of development. But the critique gets more personal still. What does it mean that anthropologists doing fieldwork apparently try to implement the same public / private binary just as urgently as development workers in both colonial and post-colonial eras? In perfect concert with Sergeant, Valerie, Ishmael and other change-agents with whom I became intimately familiar, anthropologists, according to their own accounts of fieldwork, distressed over intimate social contact with “indigenous” individuals and found comfort, in part, in isolating themselves in privatized domestic spaces and surrogate spaces of autonomy, such as in vehicles. Do we proudly descend to the grassroots only to self-segregate from locals? Does our proximity to those who participate in our research hone our distancing skills so that we become increasingly better at being

*among* but not actually *with* history's colonial subjects? Are we colonial subjects and do our aggregate body movements and discrete bodily perceptions during fieldwork give us away as such? The significance of viewing development as residence can hardly be overstated.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### DEVELOPMENT AND FRIENDSHIP

*The Afrikaner missionary told me during an interview, “God is preparing me to not be so dependent on friends. I must stand on my own. It’s getting harder because I’m feeling lonely because there’s no one to share feelings with.”*

*“I don’t know what they eat for breakfast; I don’t know when they sleep at night; I don’t know what they like to watch on TV,” said Valerie, the nun. “And you don’t want to know?” I asked. Valerie replied, “I don’t need to know everything, especially about people I work with.”*

*Ishmael, the PCV, lamented, “People who accept you as a friend do so for who you are not. First, you’re ‘crazy outsider.’ Then you’re accepted as ‘crazy outsider.’ Some aren’t willing to accept and just still see you as ‘the white guy.’ ...I can’t bring myself to care that much because they keep me at arms length. It’s when they know me that it shows they don’t care about me.”*

*“People think I know him best but I only know him about sixty-percent,” said Collin of Sergeant who has been pastor of Tuvo Christian Church in Tuvo Village for nearly ten years.*

### FRIENDSHIP, FIELDWORK, AND DEVELOPMENT

Friendship has been analyzed tangentially for most of anthropology’s history. In many cases, while friendship could be inferred from anthropological texts, it is not usually elaborated upon. This is ironic since anthropologists depend so much on friendship, or at least friendship-like relations, with locals as informants and translators to conduct fieldwork. Robert Paine captures this irony: “Although social anthropologists themselves live lives in which friendship is probably just as important as kinship, and a good deal more problematic to handle, in our professional writings we dwell at length upon kinship and have much less to say about friendship” (1969). How could

we have failed to understand the social significance of friendship given its centrality to our own professional activities as ethnographers? In general, the current chapter foregrounds the issue of friendship as part of the dissertation's overall aim of illuminating how development is fundamentally about interpersonal contact between and among individuals.

Specifically, this chapter, first, critically acknowledges anthropological work that has focused explicitly on friendship; second, analyzes data dealing with friendship and friendship-like relations within anthropological reflections on fieldwork; and, third, documents and discusses the friendship dynamics between Sergeant, Valerie, and Ishmael, on the one hand, and their respective Limpopo interactants, on the other hand. The dynamics of friendship between these change-agents and their Limpopo interactants resonate uncannily with the residential dynamics documented in the previous chapter. The same values of autonomy and relatedness that oriented the residential choices and movements of the grassroots workers and villagers respectively also motivated their approaches to friendship. This helps to explain why, ultimately, they could not be friends. What does it mean that anthropological fieldworkers appear to share the same sentimentally-based attraction to autonomy and discomfort with relatedness as grassroots development workers from Western modernity?

### **ANTHROPOLOGICAL STUDIES OF FRIENDSHIP**

There are some exceptions to anthropology's sidelining of friendship as an analytic focus of investigation. E.E. Evans-Pritchard (1933) and J.H. Driberg's (1935) respective discussions of "blood-brotherhood" among Azande and "best friend" among the Didinga are two cases in point. In both cases, friendship is found to be established publicly, expected to be long-term, and strikes a balance between the qualities of obligation and affect. While these essays address friendship directly, they

were not part of an “anthropology of friendship” per se but rather were isolated, though important instances of attention to interpersonal relations outside of kinship structures. It may be said that Robert Paine’s attempt to assess middle-class friendships in terms of certain universal precepts (1969) initiated the momentum in anthropology toward studying friendship as a legitimate object of social, as opposed to just psychological scrutiny.

A regularly occurring and perhaps foundational criticism of anthropological approaches to friendship is that anthropologists, in their almost fanatical attention to formal kinship structures, relegate friendships, or what Paine calls “institutionalized non-institution[s]” (1969: 514), to the status of being left-over or residual human relations (Bell and Coleman 1999, Aguilar 1999, Durrenberger and Palsson 1999, Paine 1969). Several scholars make it a point to show the primacy of friendship in certain contexts (Aguilar 1999, Durrenberger and Palsson 1999, Gilmore 1975, Reed-Danahay 1999). (1999). For these scholars, it is not just that friendship should be unearthed from the smothering cover of kinship but also that the two kinds of relationships, while perhaps culturally distinct in many empirical cases, should not be automatically opposed to each other in absolute, irreconcilable terms. In Tanzania, for instance, friendship has been found transforming into kinship (Bell and Coleman 1999: 6, Gulliver 1971) while, in central France, kinship relations were found to transform into friendship relations (Reed-Danahay 1999). The two forms of relating are not mutually exclusive but are capable of interpenetrating.

Anthropologists studying friendship further aim what might be called a sub-series of criticisms specifically at Eurocentric conceptualizations of friendship. Studies of friendship have been criticized, for instance, for assuming “Western” notions of friendship as being voluntary, affective, other-oriented, equitable, and private are not universal (Bell and Coleman 1999: 23, Smart 1999). The assumption debunked by

anthropologists cited above that friendship is a psychological-affective phenomenon opposed to the social-logical domain of kinship counts as another Eurocentric ideal that has been criticized in anthropological friendship studies. While Western friendship ideals have been found to be practiced in certain, particularly middle-class settings (Rezende 1999, Carrier 1999), these ideals are not wholly applicable throughout Western locales (Abrahams 1999). Alongside assumptions about friendship being a “free-choice” associations are nuanced observations about how class, ethnic, age, gender, and physical proximity significantly constrain such voluntarism (Allan 1996), and about how gifts are expected to be indirectly reciprocated for gifts given or work done (Abrahams 1999).

It is because Western ideals of friendship such as the ones just now de-centered are shown to be culturally particular that the anthropology of friendship declines attempts to generalize about friendship relations. The editors of *The Anthropology of Friendship* thus warn, “Our approach is comparative and frankly skeptical of generic claims to characterize ‘global’ realities” (Bell and Coleman 1999: 1).

Uncovering the autonomous, self-motivating subject of Western liberal thought beneath the surface of everyday and scholarly notions of friendship, anthropologists find it necessary to analyze issues of subjectivity before embarking on their various discussions of friendship (Bell and Coleman 1999: 2, Reed-Danahay 1999: 145, Paine 1999). It has been considered especially important to objectify the self-motivating subject into light since this subject, in its presumed spontaneous and unconstrained affection for others, is also taken to be morally good (Carrier 1999: 25). Sergeant, Valerie, and Ishmael assumed this moral-voluntarism equation, as we will see below, but we must situate their approach as an object of inquiry rather than as a standard of proper conduct. For relational selves, where individuals experience “themselves as containing those who produced them” (Carrier 1999), friendship in Western ideal

appears nonexistent. Resonating with the perceptions of Limpopo villagers, Melanesians experience affection in relationships but are not likely to understand this affection in terms of friendship; they are further unlikely to speak about close relationships “in terms of sentiments or distinct personal attributes, but in terms of a common situation or structure of relationships that encompasses the people involved” (Carrier 1999: 31). Carrier wants us to understand differences between ideal Western selves and Melanesian selves as more than just semantic. Melanesians are not hiding Western selves and friendship ideals behind the language of relationality; rather they have been holistically socialized to have no experience of themselves as discretely autonomous individuals.

Carrier’s ideas reflect a wider pattern in anthropological studies of friendship: While these studies present an array of ways in which friendship is practiced, these variations nevertheless center on one of two basic forms of subjectivity, one autonomous and one relational. Some scholars, such as Carrier and Paine (1999), explicitly and others implicitly (Aguilar 1999, Rezende 1999) associate two fundamental forms of individuality with experiences of friendship, for example, by implying a distinction between non-kin social interactions of Western origin versus kinship relations of African origin. I have likewise found two qualitatively distinct approaches to friendship being practiced, on the one hand, by Limpopo villagers and, on the other hand, by their foreign benefactors. A theoretical, and perhaps moral predicament, explored below, comes with this finding.

## **FIELDWORK FRIENDSHIPS**

What do formal anthropological studies of friendship do for the current focus on friendship relations in contexts of foreign assistance in South Africa’s Limpopo Province? Anthropological studies of friendship have (1) verified that friendship is not

just a residual, private, and psychological aspect of human behavior but is always socially implicated; (2) shown that friendship is only simplistically understood as “non-kin relations” because friendship and kinship associations intersect in diverse ways; and (3) expressed or intimated the existence and persistence of two broad experiences with friendship, one definitively culturally Western in origins and the other an ill-defined form of amicable relations understood negatively as “non”-European. In short, it is permissible to include friendship analyses in formal anthropological writings but we ought to be wary to discern between our Western assumptions of friendship and others’ legitimate experiences with it. In the theoretical language of this dissertation, idea-value and social-value subjectivities correspond precisely with agencies oriented toward autonomy and relatedness. This observation further confirms Fajans’ insights regarding the ubiquitous interplay of these values in various societies as well as in diverse social practices, now including friendship.

What these friendship investigations have not yet focused on is friendship in contexts of post-colonial, international development. Consequently, what we have are studies of friendship that sit side by side, some detailing Western friendship practices and others describing amicable relations in traditional, non-Western settings. Studies in Communicative Research prove equally inadequate, for they compare and contrast cross-cultural friendship using quantitative research findings and are, therefore, not empirically based. What the current dissertation research does is to focus on a phenomenon, international aid, which enables characters from the adjacent studies to come together in space and time, on one ethnographic floor. Sergeant, Valerie, and Ishmael, on the one hand, and their respective village hosts, on the other hand, made different and usually conflicting assumptions about the nature of friendship and social relations generally. How did friendships between them develop, articulate, and ultimately fall short of everyone’s expectations of companionship?

Anthropological reflections on fieldwork, some formal and others informal, offer information that best resonates with the friendship circumstances of the grassroots activists and Limpopo villagers who participated in this research. But do anthropological memoirs have a place in formal anthropological writing? Aren't these memoirs what are "left-over" after more authentic, scientifically-valid data has been squeezed out of field experience? According to Paul Rabinow (1977), anthropologists myopically disarticulate fieldwork experiences from objectified representations of societies. He writes sarcastically about this problem: "One can let off steam by writing memoirs or anecdotal accounts of suffering, but under no circumstances is there any direct relation between field activity and the theories which lie at the core of the discipline" (4-5). Two decades later, Philip R. DeVita (1992) confirms the continued practice in anthropology of separating theory and fieldwork. But whereas Rabinow was fundamentally opposed to the dichotomy, DeVita seems to validate it within an overall effort to extol the novelty of the volume on fieldwork which he edited. DeVita writes, "This section is made of tales of anthropological fieldwork, but none will be found within the pages of the traditional dissertation" (viii). For his part, Rabinow explains his fundamental objection to the theory-fieldwork dichotomy:

"At the risk of violating the clan [of anthropology] taboos, I argue that all cultural activity is experiential, that fieldwork is a distinctive type of cultural activity, and that it is this activity which defines the discipline. But what should therefore be the very strength of anthropology—its experiential, reflective, and critical activity—has been eliminated as a valid area of inquiry by an attachment to a positivistic view of science, which I find radically inappropriate in a field which claims to study humanity" (5).

Given his apparent acceptance of anthropology's tendency to silence fieldwork activities in formal writing, it might be expected that DeVita's edited volume is

residual to theoretical concerns. The word “tales” in the title of the volume, *Naked Anthropologist: Tales from around the World*, indicates the bounded, subjective nature of the volume’s fieldwork information. More surprising is the irony that, despite his strong denunciation of the theory-fieldwork dichotomy, even Rabinow’s criticism occurred well outside of formal anthropological writings. Rabinow’s disapproval of separating-out fieldwork reflections from anthropology’s “scholarly” writings was expressed in precisely the kind of private, diary-type of format that he rejects. Hence, the word “reflections” in the title of his memoir, *Reflections on Fieldwork in Morocco*, is a clear sign of the segregated nature of Rabinow’s fieldwork commentary.

The current dissertation can be viewed as implementing what Rabinow only criticized by bringing fieldwork reflections directly to bear on the analytic and theoretical frameworks pertaining to the data of this research. All fieldwork reflections do not reference friendship and related dynamics with research counterparts, so only those that do are included in the following discussion. Furthermore, the memoirs of anthropologists that do report information relevant to a discussion of friendship are too many to be practically integrated into this essay. Therefore, a selection representing modernist and post-modernist historical eras, diverse research topics and fieldsites, and both genders will be commented upon. The specific fieldworkers selected for this discussion include the following: Bronislaw Malinowski, Hortense Powdermaker, Laura Nader, Hazel Weidman, Paul Rabinow, Peggy Golde, Douglass Raybeck, and Philip DeVita.

The friendship dynamics reflected on in these fieldwork diaries are representative of all critical recollections of friendship / relationship dynamics expressed by fieldworkers of whose work I am familiar; further, the friendship dynamics correspond to those that occurred between the grassroots developers and Limpopo villagers who participated in this study. In both cases, Western visitors and

hosts value friendship differently, corresponding precisely to the opposing experiences of subjectivity explicitly and implicitly acknowledged in formal anthropological studies of friendship. The fundamental importance of finally attending to friendship dynamics across the “development line” rests in the empirical observation which concludes, “They can’t be friends.” Ironically, then, this chapter on friendship, when driven as it is by data, ends-up being not about consummated friendships but rather about wishes for friendship, at best, and the seeming impossibility of friendship, at worst. We are discussing social relations that might have been friendships. The centrality of friendship in development work should no longer be doubted. The following discussion of fieldwork experiences will demonstrate the importance of friendship to theoretical objectifications in anthropological writings.

*The Problem of “True” Friendships.* Before perusing anthropological reflections on fieldwork for patterns of friendship, which will help us understand the role of friendship in development contexts, let us clarify what kinds of information we are *not* considering relevant to the discussion. There are times in the “fieldwork reflection” literature in which anthropologists actually use the word friend or a related word in self-assured ways. For example, Hortense Powdermaker (1966) uses phrases such as “My good friend Pulong” (116), “We became friends” (71), and “She and I became friends” (69); Bronislaw Malinowski (1967) writes of Sixpence and Janus “who later became my friends” (51); Laura Nader (1970) says, “My only friend just passed out” (102); and Hazel Weidman uses expressions such as “My friend was attached to the university” (246). In Nader’s case, her “only friend” was a sarcastic expression since the intoxicated friend was her Mexican host father who had been the loudest voice of opposition against Nader’s presence in the community. Here, it is relatively easy to understand Nader’s use of “friend” as a superficial mirror into deeper fieldworker-host relations.

Sarcasm was absent from the other uses of “friendship” above, but these applications of the friendship term also prove cursory. When anthropologists, such as Powdermaker, Malinowski, and Weidman, refer to individual locals as friends, they use the term loosely, idiomatically, and “in passing” as opposed to systematically or in definable ways. There is perhaps a study to be done regarding anthropologists’ desire to cast the contingencies of fieldwork-friendships as tidier than they actually are. But such an investigation lies outside of this dissertation’s framework. We can sum up the immediate point by illustrating that alternative phrases such as “steady companion” (Rabinow 1977: 46, 58), “closest associate” (ibid: 101), “friendly contacts” (Powdermaker 1966: 67), “easy going” relationship (ibid: 72), “friend-informants” (Golde 1970: 72), and “closest approximation to friendship” (ibid: 84) more realistically depict the friendship dynamics between fieldworkers and their hosts, as well as between Sergeant, Valerie, and Ishmael and their respective Limpopo interactants.

Fieldwork “diaries” speak with one voice in confessing that friendships between fieldworkers and locals are never and can never be “true” friendships. Rabinow summarizes, “However much one moves in the direction of participation, it is always the case that one is still both an outsider and an observer. That one is an outsider is incessantly apparent” (1977: 79). Anticipating the objection that friendships develop over time, Rabinow adds, “Interpersonal malaise was all too frequently the dominant mood, even after many months when some of the grossest differences had been bridged by repetition and habit” (ibid). Rabinow speaks of once having convinced himself of consummating a true friendship with his closest Moroccan informant, Malik, only to be reawakened to reality by the “infuriating irrationality of his [Malik’s] comment” about Rabinow being drunk for wanting to take a walk by himself. Rabinow faces reality: “I must have been deceiving myself; a vast gulf lay

between us and could never be bridged” (ibid: 114). The phenomenon in question is, then, less one of absolute miscommunication as of a hauntingly persistent interpersonal slippage between fieldworkers and informants—despite efforts they have made toward bridging their communication gap.

Less straightforwardly than Rabinow, Powdermaker makes it clear that true friendships, for her, would have to be maintained with other Westerners and decidedly not with Melanesians: “There were indeed, times when, totally fed up with my life and with native life, I longed to be only a participant, to stop taking notes, and to communicate freely with a few close [European] friends who had the same basic assumptions” (1966: 100). Later in her memoir, Powdermaker speaks more forthrightly about an unbridgeable difference she perceives between herself and her local “friends,” despite her deepest desire to fit in seamlessly: “While I did fit, to a considerable degree, within the Melanesian social system, small incidents sometimes brought out a sense of my difference” (ibid: 115). The first “small incident” she cites is this: “When I admired the beauty of the night, my friends looked at me as if I were quite strange. They appeared to take the scenery for granted, and I never heard them comment on its beauty” (ibid). There are Westerners of course who may also not appreciate the beauty of the night sky, reminding us that we are attending not to “Westerns” and “Others” writ large but to the select kinds of Westerners who become anthropological fieldworkers and specific individuals from host societies with whom they interface. After relating a few more “small incidents,” Powdermaker sums up by lamenting, “I knew that no matter how intimate and friendly I was with the natives, I was never truly a part of their lives” (ibid: 116).

In one of his many fits of depression during his fieldwork, Malinowski, like Powdermaker above, fervently desired a satisfactory, i.e. non-Trobriand outlet for amenable friendship and found it in reading Machiavelli: “I read Machiavelli. Many

statements impressed me extraordinarily; moreover, he is very like me in many respects. An Englishman with an entirely European mentality and European problems” (1967: 78). Citing her own correspondence to a mental health doctor from whom she was hoping to receive advice about overcoming her depression, Weidman, clearly feeling a need to appear balanced and objective, writes, “The people [of Burma] themselves seem warm and wonderful, but many of their values are diametrically opposed to ours—and in the areas which hurt most when one hasn’t a lifetime to spend here” (1970: 244). In a chapter titled, “Friendship,” Rabinow understands his friendship-making dilemma with his local hosts in terms of an Aristotilian sentiment, which effectively captures the quandary for anthropological fieldworkers generally: “A wish for friendship may arise quickly but friendship does not” (1977: 142). Now let us delve deeper and see what fieldworkers and their respective hosts expected from friendships, for differences in their assumptions of amicable relations will help to explain the tenuous nature of their friendships, as well as those involving Sergeant, Valerie, Ishmael, and their interacting Limopopo villagers.

*Wishing for Alone Time.* Fieldwork reflections are littered with evidence suggesting that anthropological fieldworkers expected their wish for “alone time” under conditions of stress to be respected by their various Third World hosts. Rabinow reported an incident, for example, in which he was furious at his Moroccan friend-informant, Ali, for failing to respond to Rabinow’s clearly stated wish to stay only for a short time at a wedding party. Rabinow finally expressed to Ali his intention to leave the party immediately, “regardless of the consequences” (1977: 44). Ali insisted on the ride home that Rabinow’s unhappiness spoiled Ali’s happiness, and that he would get out of the car and walk home unless Rabinow retracted his negative opinion of the night. For his linking his happiness with the mood of his foreign guest, Ali was said to be “acting like a baby” by Rabinow (ibid: 45). For Rabinow, relief was tied to

recoiling into himself; Ali's efforts at tying the fieldworker's comfort to his own evoked a disturbing dependency thought of as babyish to Rabinow. Malik, who Rabinow considered his best informant, was well liked by the fieldworker in large part because, unlike Ali, he kept adequate personal distance from Rabinow (110). But even this proved too good to be true for Rabinow: After feeling edgy about an incident in which a woman he reluctantly drove to the hospital died, Rabinow sought relief in taking a long walk alone. "The Moroccans never really understood why anyone would want to take a walk by himself" (ibid: 114), and so Malik followed Rabinow, querying him about the state of his emotions. Rabinow comments:

"I had reached the limits of my endurance and could no longer maintain a good front. Malik persisted and persisted and so did I, until I finally turned to him and said slowly, firmly, and emphatically that I was not angry at him, that I was tired and wanted to be by myself" (ibid).

Hurt by Rabinow's comments, Malik asked his fieldworker-friend if he was drunk. Rabinow then writes, "The infuriating irrationality of his comment threw me into a deeper depression" (ibid). For Rabinow, relieving stress through being alone was normal while agitating against this therapeutic method is considered, for him, childlike and irrational.

Rabinow was far from the only fieldworker to wish for "some breathing space." Having difficulty finding the New Orleans Gypsies she hoped would participate in her research, Kent recalls a sense of relief just beneath the surface of her disappointment: "I also had very private, unacknowledged feelings of relief: If I couldn't find Gypsies I wouldn't have to talk to them, I wouldn't have to justify my inquiring presence, beg their acceptance of me" (1992: 20). Nader also remembers her hesitation in speaking to her Mexican hosts. Nader writes, "I made myself go out to

talk to the people” (1986: 103). Before the reader simplistically concludes that it was her bout with hepatitis that kept Nader from physically confronting her hosts, Nader clarifies that it was her psychological depression about not being warmly welcomed by community members that was the main culprit. Upon entering the doctor’s office, “I burst into tears and said, ‘I don’t care about being sick, but I want to know why I’m so depressed” (ibid). Here we garner clues to what fieldworkers such as Kent and Nader expect from social relations, including friendship: the encouragement of feelings of independence.

*Wish for Social Neutrality / Objectivity.* Weidman and Golde reveal their desire for maintaining social space when they independently recall wanting to remain neutral social actors while at their respective fieldsites. In the context of discussing how her Mexican hosts viewed her unrestricted friendships across gender boundaries as a sign of her “looseness,” Golde speaks about the lesson she learned:

“If I had needed it, this event would have served as a reminder of the inadvisability of intimate involvements on my part. Even if the professional and ethical norms of restraint hadn’t been communicated to me as a graduate student, with the warning that intimate relations could result in the loss of the capacity for objectivity, and by presenting the ideal stance of the field worker as that of noninterference with the ongoing life of the community, my very inability to predict the short- and long-term repercussions of such relations, either for myself or for the people, would have acted to brake any impulses I might have had to move closer” (1986: 85).

While Weidman reports, “Prior to my departure, it seems that I had truly become an adopted daughter of the [Burmese] village” (255), she confesses her original intention for how she planned to relate to her hosts: “I fully intended that my role should be a neutral one, for I wished to relate to persons of both sexes and of all ages” (ibid).

Malinowski shared this wish to pull back into himself and away from social intimacies with Trobriand Islanders. In the context of feeling overwhelmingly depressed by finding no Islanders whom he could truly befriend, Malinowski coached himself, “I should clearly and distinctly feel *myself*, apart from the present conditions of my life” (1967: 112, original emphasis). Feeling wholly himself meant, for Malinowski, a cleansing of his internal self or what Muslims might call an internal or greater jihad. Here he is struggling with what he earlier in his diary calls “fetters of sensual pleasure” (ibid: 83): “I must collect myself, go back to writing the diary, I must deepen myself. My health is good. Time to collect my strength and be myself. Overcome significant failures and petty losses, etc. and be yourself!” (ibid: 120 – original emphasis). A consistently remarked petty activity from which Malinowski wanted to pull away was “chasing skirts” or pursuing romances with random women of European origin. Let us look at how Malinowski sought to cleanse himself of what he experienced as incessant sensuous attachments to the world through an internal battle for disciplined monogamy. Talking to himself, he writes:

“You must not let yourself go under, taking the line of least resistance. You have spoiled enough of the most beautiful love of your life. Now you must concentrate on it. Eliminate potential lechery from my intercourse with women, stop treating them like *special pals*. Nothing will come of it anyway—in fact it would be disastrous for you if something did. Stop chasing skirts. If she behaved this way, it would be a disaster for me” (ibid: 122).

In contrast to fieldworkers who found pulling-back from social life and into themselves as psychosocially therapeutic, members of host communities clearly intended the full domestication or socialization of their foreign guests into their lives. Recall how Rabinow’s informant, Ali, threatened to exit the fieldworker’s car and walk home if Rabinow continued to insist he was unhappy. Ali felt there was or

should be an indispensable interdependence in friendship that could be manipulated by the partners to influence each other. Seeing amicable relations structured in such a way was immature for Rabinow. He simply quit or, more importantly, was able to quit the friendship of mutual influence. Although Rabinow demonstrates their differences in personalities, histories, and usefulness, Malik nevertheless shared with Ali the assumption that friends are supposed to turn toward each other, not away from each other in times of stress. For Malik, a person must be drunk to want to walk off alone as Rabinow had done. Ali and Malik might have given Rabinow the advice that a Malaysian informant named Hussein gave to Raybeck. Advising Raybeck by offering a personal experience instead of the more offensive practice of direct confrontation, Hussein advises,

“I was not born here [in the studied village] and I do not have my relatives here. I have to be careful of my behavior. When you go to live in a place where you weren't born, you behave like a hen, not like a rooster. This is proper. In my own kampong I can behave more importantly, but here I must be careful not to give offense” (1992: 11).

Ali, Malik, and Hussein seem to share a collective voice in saying to fieldworkers, “Try to fit-in, not fit-out; run to us, not away from us; self-domesticate, not self-separate.” This is certainly what informants named Yusof and Mat were saying to Raybeck when they sneaked him into a bar for alcohol and sex in what was supposed to be an alcohol-free Muslim society. Raybeck understood that to be “true” friends in this part of Malaysia meant one needed to prove one's trustworthiness not simply by giving one's word but rather by demonstrating full participation and complicity in the most secret and locally-reprehensible of social activities. Rayback reflects, “I learned later that Yusof and Mat were very interested in compromising me as soon as possible and were somewhat disappointed that I hadn't taken the waitress upstairs [for sex]”

(1992: 13). From Raybeck's point of view, Yusof and Mat were interested in "compromising" him. A pattern is emerging, however, that suggests what they wanted was incontrovertible proof of Raybeck's trustworthiness toward a full, mutually-constitutive and socialized friendship.

Clearly, friendship for members of the host communities under consideration here is not just a voluntary association. Friendship requires the same kind of longevity as is expected with kinship relations. In fact, informants and other fieldworker hosts appear to anticipate that friendships will transform into fictive kin relations, such as "brothers" and "sisters," or legal unions through marriage. Powdermaker comments on this pattern: "My Lesu friends must have known I would leave sooner or later, but they were shocked when I told them I was going after another 'moon' had passed. Pulong came over and urged me to marry and settle with a husband in Lesu" (1966: 121). While the sentiment of locals' expressed here has to do with keeping Powdermaker in the village, it should also be concomitantly seen as a last effort to socialize the fieldworker for her own good. Throughout her fieldwork, Powdermaker noticed, "They were not curious about my culture" (ibid: 62). Rather, "Where my husband was was the big question" (ibid). At one point, her Melanesian counterparts must have been thrilled at the prospect of Powdermaker's apparent intention to fully domesticate herself into their community. After several nights of watching Lesu women practicing their dance for an up-coming celebration of the initiation rites for eight boys, Powdermaker finally overcame her "self-conscious" (ibid: 111) and accepted the many invitations to join in the dancing. However, when the day of the official performance finally came,

"Pulong and several other women came over and presented me with a shell arm band and a *kepkep*, a tortoise-shell breast ornament, and asked that I wear their favorite dress—a pink and white striped cotton. I

gulped, and said I was not going to dance; I would just observe. But why, they asked in astonishment, had I been practicing every night? I could not explain that I started because I was bored” (ibid).

Powdermaker finally participated in the official dance because “refusal would now be a rejection” (ibid) and a “rejection,” the implication goes, would mean turning locals into unwilling participants in her research. In contrast to the hope of her hosts that she would finally submit to their way of life, Powdermaker had no such intention, and perhaps carried this feeling with her as a secret from her counterparts for her entire fieldwork and life thereafter.

*Voluntarism versus Social Submission.* The fieldworkers’ recurrent desire for social distance may be seen as an outgrowth of a conflict between their and their hosts’ respective expectations that relationships, including friendships, should be based on volunteerism and social submission. Rabinow reflected wisely on his own expectation that Moroccans should have assumed the best of him or given him the benefit of the doubt regarding his proposal to live and study in their communities: “To think that these rural countrymen should have accepted my proposal at face value and graciously granted it in the spirit of mutual respect between cultures is absurd” (1977: 77). Where Rabinow’s expectation of volunteerism embodied an a-historical form of cooperation, he explains the historical, situated nature of the Moroccans’ response:

“Why, the villagers asked, should a rich American want to move into a poor rural village and live by himself in a mud house when he could be living in a villa in Sefrou? Why us? Why get ourselves into a situation where the government holds us jointly responsible for this stranger? (ibid).

In a different situation, Rabinow describes his affront at villagers’ discussions about “who would get my furniture” (ibid: 110) when he finally left the country. Although

Rabinow realized upon reflection that Moroccans experience relationships both materially and ideally, he was initially offended at the thought that he would be valued for anything more or less than who he felt he was as a person.

Nader and Golde's respective senses of volunteerism in relationships were upset by demands for reciprocity made by their research participants. Nader used to try to explain the work of an anthropologist to her Mexican counterparts, expecting they would take her motivation for being there at face value. But her hosts were thoroughly unimpressed by Nader's expectation that they should accept her presence "just because" and pressed her for how she would help them in return. Nader expresses the sentiment of her hosts: "What good are you to us? Why should we allow you to stay here [when you are not a functioning member of society]? And just why, although you are very *simpatica* (likeable), should we answer your questions?" (1986: 100). Underlining her hosts' unfamiliarity with voluntary or "free" relationships, Nader writes, "The Zapotec seemed never to care to give something unless he was sure of getting something in return" (ibid). Golde was similarly frustrated by her inability to establish relationships with Mexicans based on unrestricted or contingent-free transactions. Golde explains her angst: "When the Indians were too busy or didn't need money at a given moment, they would not work. This was not only personally frustrating; it could also drastically affect my daily life and, consequently, my work" (1986: 76). Reacting to a Trobriand Islander named English warmed up to Malinowski only after being offered help by the fieldworker, Malinowski grumbled self-reflectively about despicable nature of relationships based on conditions: "A typical character (like me)—he won't do anything disinterestedly, he recognizes and appreciates people only to the extent he needs them at the moment" (1967: 81-2).

*Expecting Honesty.* Fieldworkers expected honesty, in particular, to be voluntarily exchanged between people, and they struggled to endure it when their

research subjects even made this noble principle a slave to contingencies. Golde testifies, “I would like to be able to report that this situation was only transitory and that with time the people came to love and trust me completely, helped me sympathetically when I needed it, and freely opened their hearts and minds; the truth is far from that rosy ideal” (1986: 75). For Golde to pull honesty out of her informants, “I carefully had to calculate a strategy for almost every piece of information I gleaned, and I bartered, cajoled, and wheedled or bluffed knowledge I didn’t have in order to get more” (ibid). Decades earlier, Malinowski was as disturbed as Golde by any unwillingness to spontaneously share information and was relieved when honesty was forthcoming. Associating unprompted spewing forth of information with acumen, Malinowski chronicles, “Then I went to the village and collected material. Very intelligent natives. They hid nothing from me, no lies” (1967: 33). Meanwhile, testimony from Rabinow shows just how upset a fieldworker can become when confronted with lies and deceit. Overburdened by villagers endlessly requesting that Rabinow take them to town in his car, the fieldworker was ready to refuse any more requests. Just then, a man came to Rabinow, pleading with him to take his sick wife to the hospital in town. Rabinow recalls, “The man persisted, undaunted, in a tone of such distress and sincerity that I began to wonder if there wasn’t a true emergency. I broke down and agreed” (1977:115). Upon entering town, the elderly couple asked Rabinow to bypass the hospital momentarily in order for them to do some shopping. Rabinow was furious: “I let them out and returned to the village [without them] knowing that that bridge had been crossed. I steadfastly refused after that incident. My anger was openly expressed on several occasions” (ibid). Fieldworkers agree across decades and historical circumstances that truth and information is bargained for only by the most unrefined (or perhaps uncivilized?) of people.

The two subjectivities of the literature on friendship are palpable in this perusal of friendship/relationship dynamics in fieldwork memoirs. Fieldworkers acted on the basis of an idealized or principled subjectivity. Malinowski spoke unabashedly about a pure self distinguishable from and valued over a self compromised by worldly things: “Loss of subjectivism [i.e. sense of pure self] and deprivation of the will (blood flowing away from the brain), living only by the five senses and the body (through impressions) causes direct merging with the surroundings” (1967: 33). Later generations of fieldworkers do not (and perhaps dare not?) formally acknowledge their belief in or experience of self-certain subjectivity. However, in their (1) uniform withdrawal from overtaxing calls for social submission, (2) assumptions about the voluntarily nature of consummating and ending non-kin relationships, and (3) expectation of honesty being freely exchanged without historical or material contingencies, even these later-day anthropologists reveal their psycho-social dependency on the principle of the autonomous self.

By contrast, and according to the testimonies of fieldworkers themselves, traditional subjects of anthropological inquiry seem to pivot on the assumption that intersubjectivity, and the mutual influence this entails, is an irreducible aspect of human action. This observation sheds light on the friendship difficulties experienced by fieldworkers and even their most amicable hosts. We have abstracted these two subjectivities from fieldwork testimonies for academic purposes. When we re-imagine them back into the context of friendship from whence they were drawn, we can see how they would structure discord into wishes for friendship on the part of fieldworkers and locals alike. While fieldworkers want friends who recognize, respect, and reinforce their sense of autonomy, their research subjects paradoxically keep on trying to pull the researchers into inextricable relation to them to show how much they

truly care. This is why they, like the grassroots developers and their Limpopo beneficiaries, could not be friends.

*The Role of “Outsider Insiders.”* Resistant toward pressures to overly submit their sense of authentic selfhood to local social identities and roles, fieldworkers consistently aligned themselves most closely with the least socially-invested, most alienated and marginal members of host communities. Speaking of his Moroccan informant-friend, Ali, Rabinow reflects, “Ali, like several other people with whom I worked, was a marginal character in his own social world” (1977: 73). Calling Ali “An insider’s outsider” (ibid: 157), Rabinow further details that Ali “rejected village life,” “would mock the bonds of social control by flaunting his freedom” (ibid: 73), and that “Any friend of Ali’s was no friend of theirs [i.e. other villagers]” (ibid: 76). Regarding a different informant-friend named Rashid, Rabinow informs us that he “was on the fringe of community control,” “clung to the joys and adventures of youth,” and maintained a “spirited rebelliousness” (ibid: 99). Meanwhile, Rabinow’s best informant-friend, Malik, was “someone close enough to the group to know its intimate antagonisms but also independent enough not to care much about protecting the sensibilities of the community” (ibid: 130). Seeing these alignments strictly as methodological strategies used by fieldworkers to access anthropological information is too simplistic an understanding, for there was emotion involved here. Thoroughly discomfited by pressures to submit permanently to local social networks, these informants truly became “informant-*friends*,” providing relief and distance, however imperfect, from those community members who were more unambiguously entrenched in hegemonic social life.

Like Rabinow, Golde’s “friendship” with a marginal family in Mexico speaks to an inextricable connection between the values of emotional comfort and the scientific quest for data. Golde recounts:

“The closest approximation to friendship, as I conceived it, that I was able to create was with the members of the most acculturated family in the village. It was to them I turned for the kind of deeper emotional reward that accompanies being like and valued for one’s personal qualities rather than for possible material benefit. We could talk to each other in more truly human terms because they felt themselves to be outsiders by virtue of the mother’s having been born in Mexico City, her experience and education. She, her husband, and the children could understand what I was feeling at confronting the newness of life in the village since she had once been a stranger too. I learned from them by seeing things from their perspective—being part of the life, yet removed enough to be objective about it—and in truth, they were the best teachers I could have had” (1986: 84).

Like many other fieldworkers, as well as PCVs I have come to know, Golde also found a source of comfort in children who, by definition, are some of the least socialized, more wild members of any society. After speaking of her feelings of isolation, oppression, and of the “village’s closing in on me” (ibid: 90), Golde recalls the few things that made her laugh during those times: “The way a child would squeal with delight—screwing up his face and crying, ‘Ah, senorita,’ as I lifted and twirled him—isn’t amusing unless it’s experienced” (ibid: 90-1); and “A little boy playing at grinding corn on a makeshift stone, looking like a miniature replica of his mother as he reproduced the body movements and facial expressions that he probably didn’t even know he had learned, made me giggle with recognition” (ibid: 91).

Golde and Nader were also put at ease by another kind of socially marginal character, the hopeless drunk. Referring to one of her fondest fieldwork experiences, Golde writes, “Watching two drunks propping each other up as they weaved and stumbled along the street, totally engaged in what to them was obviously a deadly earnest, world-shakingly important conversation, reminded me of Charlie Chaplin at this best” (Golde 1986: 91). The “out of control” drunk hardly represents the thick

middle of a social system, yet Nader, like Golde, reports finding a point of interpersonal attachment to an intoxicated person. Once when Nader went to town accompanied by a twelve year old girl, the fieldworker remembers, “The atmosphere was not only unfriendly, but also electrified” (Nader 1986: 102). Nader continues, “Since no one would talk to me, I began mapping the town. Finally a drunk Yaeen came up to me and said, ‘How do you do?’ in English” (ibid). Nader thought it was unwise to accept the drunk man’s invitation to go to his home, but she decided to go anyway, explaining, “Drunk as he was, I went because he was the only person to have talked to me during what was a very long morning. When we arrived at his mud-brick house, the women scampered into a corner as he offered me some mescal” (ibid). Making friend-contacts with the kinds of people from whom women central to society might scamper is a recurring theme in fieldwork memoirs. Yet there is a resonance between the relative independence of these marginal characters and the “breathing space” required by fieldworkers. It is as if the fieldworkers have unconsciously sought out *themselves* to fulfill their concomitantly-felt needs for informants and comforters.

There are at least two indications that the friendships fieldworkers establish with individual locals were destined for impermanence, despite the wishes of local interactants: The first is that, as we have seen, informant-friends, such as Ali and Malik, continued to expect to permanetize their friendships with fieldworkers despite their own marginal status within their communities. It will be useful to explore the possibility of how “marginal figures” embody similar subjective motivations as “central figures” but become “marginal” because they transport their activities to non-traditional, postcolonial spaces of engagement. The second indication of the tenuous nature of fieldworker-informant friendships is that locals’ status as informant always takes precedent over their status as friend, from the vantage of fieldworkers. Rabinow has commented lucidly on this issue. Speaking of fieldwork as a dialectic process in

which neither the fieldworker-subject nor informant-object “remain static,” Rabinow concludes that fieldwork “is governed for the anthropologist by his professional concerns. Ultimately, this constitutes his commitment; this is why he is here” (1977: 39). Making the same point in reference to the popular anthropological concept of participant-observation, Rabinow states with candor, “No matter how far ‘participation’ may push the anthropologist in the direction of Not-Otherness, the context is still ultimately dictated by ‘observation’ and externality” (ibid: 79). Deepening his analysis, Rabinow continues, “In the dialectic between the poles of observation and participation, participation changes the anthropologist and leads him to new observation, whereupon new observation changes how he participates” (ibid: 79-80). While Rabinow acknowledges participation and its influence on the anthropologist’s experience of self, he refuses to romanticize the concept: “But this dialectic spiral is governed in its motion by the starting point, which is observation” (ibid: 80). The dominance of observation over participation is how Rabinow explains that the “mutually constructed grounded of experience and understanding” between fieldworkers and informants is always a “realm of *tenuous* common sense” (ibid: 39 – my emphasis).

*Informants or Friends or Both?* There are voluminous examples within Rabinow’s accounts of fieldwork of how Rabinow valued, when pressed to choose, “informant” over “friend” in the informant-friend identity hyphenation. When Rabinow allowed his Moroccan informant, Ali, to exit the car and walk home alone at night, the fieldworker “went to sleep immediately, but woke up from a fitful night saying to myself that I had probably made a grave professional mistake, because the informant is always right” (1977: 45). Leaving no doubt that his concern for his fieldwork wholly trumped the friendly relationship he had with Ali, Rabinow curtly writes, “Otherwise I was unrepentant” (ibid). Confirming that his relationship with Ali

was structured by fieldwork and not friendship concerns, Rabinow explains his enthusiasm for later making a truce with Ali. Sometime after the “car incident,” Ali asked Rabinow if he would drive him and his girlfriend to her village to visit her mother. Rabinow “was delighted to agree” (ibid: 61) because “At the time, complicated negotiations were being conducted about my taking up residence in the village of Sidi Lahcen, and since Ali was my principle spokesman, the idea of doing him an important favor seemed like a good one” (ibid: 61/63). We might suspect that Rabinow gained some satisfaction from re-establishing contact with Ali for friendship sake but, clearly, the fieldworker’s primary concern was with his scientific endeavor.

Fieldwork memoirs are inundated with accounts of distrusted fieldworkers accidentally finding ways to relate amicably with locals, facilitating the fieldworkers’ primary concern with data collection. Raybeck remembers feeling frustrated because “I was still not sufficiently trusted to be made privy to the sensitive and sometimes less than ideal social life of the village [in Malaysia]” (1992: 12). Raybeck knew he “needed a means to delve below the surface boundaries of village life” but did not know how to proceed. Raybeck confesses that the “solution to my problem came in an unforeseen manner, from an unexpected source, and owed little to the anthropologist’s intelligence” (ibid) or, I would add, to his sincere desire for friendship. Villagers’ trust of Raybeck began increasing when two of his informant-friends, Yusof and Mat, started asking the fieldworker about sex. Raybeck obliged Yusof and Mat and these were the two informants, you will recall, who ended-up taking Raybeck to town for a secret “night out” of drinking and sex. It was this “night out” that marked Raybeck’s privileged access to previously withheld information from villagers.

Golde and Nader also made use of accidental increases in trust from local counterparts to forge ahead with collecting ethnographic data. In Golde’s case in Mexico, a grandmother, stereotyping the fieldworker as a medical expert, brought her

grandson to Golde for treatment. Golde interpreted the grandmother's gestures to understand that the boy had been bitten on his penis by a dog. Golde explains, "Since I could see that the skin hadn't been broken, after debating with myself about the wisdom of acting as a nurse, I decided to take the risk and painted his little penis crimson with mercurochrome" (1986: 72). This "dog biting" incident precipitated visits to Golde by many people requesting medical assistance, and her access into the minds of the people increased in turn: "As it turned out, acting as a nurse gave me access to many houses and legitimized my calling on people or their visiting me" (ibid: 73). Like Golde, the relatively easy relations Nader was able to consummate with her Mexican hosts derived not from a deep desire for friendship but by stumbling on a desperately desired way to access information. Nader's "terrible strain" during fieldwork had to do with being in "a society where so many people, especially women, were strongly averse to answering direct personal questions; if they could see no direct practical relevance to a question they would avoid answering" (1986: 101). Nader describes how she happened upon an approach to gaining insider status: Nader asked an elderly woman, "How many grandchildren do you have?" Nader continues,

"My potential informant, a woman, became very angry; she told me that she liked my visits but asked why I had to ask questions that were one of my business. I answered that Americans had a custom of being *pregontones* (big question askers)...Because the woman responded with laughter, I seized on this approach as a way to get the Zapotec to accept me on my own terms" (ibid: 101).

Here, Nader accidentally found a way to present herself in way that Zapotecs found appealing, open, and friendly, and Nader did not hesitate to push her self-presentation as friendly in order to access to anthropologically-useful information.

Anthropologists writing about fieldwork in post-colonial times seem reticent to call their “friendships” with locals superficial, leaving the line between their desire for data and friendship ambiguous and in need of being objectified into plain sight. By contrast, older, modernist generations of anthropologists more blatantly revealed friendship-type relations as routes to scientific information. Malinowski writes, for example, “Collecting information went less well. The old man began to lie about burials. I became enraged, got up and went for a walk” (1967: 35). In another instance where jovial relations with locals depended on their usefulness for gathering data, Malinowski confesses, “Sent Igua to the village—he came back empty-handed. Again I fell into a rage” (ibid: 67). Malinowski tends to feel good about his Melanesian interactants when they provide information: “Came back in the dark, with Diko. Strong liking for him. Talk about *sihari*...He shows me what [gestures] they make to a *kekeni* when they want to *gagai*—how *sihari* sits at Motu and Rigo” (ibid: 83 – original emphasis). For her part, Powdermaker seems to have genuinely liked two of her married fieldwork servants, Sinbanimous and Kuserek, but she never stopped understanding them essentially as informants. Speaking of Sinbanimous and Kuserek, Powdermaker says, “They often quarreled, the fights usually provoked by Kuserek’s nagging suspicion of Sinbanimous’ intentions towards other women” (1966: 73). Instead of feeling a need to intervene in these quarrels as an arbiter for the sake of arbitration, Powdermaker admits, “In the beginning, the quarrels interested me as data, but since they were quite uniform, they soon lost that function and were only a disruption in the household” (ibid).

*Befriending Other Westerners.* Fieldworkers have certainly been willing to befriend local counterparts, and probably even wished for such friendship. But it seems they have been unable to commit to the unalienable types of camaraderie experientially demanded by their anthropological subjects. Their inability to

consummate amicable relations based on perpetual reciprocity as opposed to volunteerism has something so far unspecified to do with fieldworkers' steadfast reticence to sacrifice their relationships of information for ones of unmitigated friendship. In this context of sacrificial friendships, fieldworkers persevere psychosocially in their fieldwork in a combination of two basic ways: They either (1) retain or establish firmer friendships with people of or familiar with Western cultural origins as a sort of umbilical chord confirming their sense of autonomous selfhood; or they (2) learn to consciously, and then perhaps semi-habitually, to present themselves in ways amenable to local sensibilities, which may be viewed as a more deceptive way of reinforcing their sense of creative and independent subjectivity. Let us first look at how fieldworkers, representing different personalities, historical eras, research questions, and fieldsites, nevertheless consistently depend on linkages to people highly sensitive to Western lifestyles for senses of comfort. These "Western" comforters are at times friends and at other times spouses and other family members to the fieldworkers. Fieldworkers certainly experience plenty of ambivalence about their usually newly discovered oneness with Westerners and Western culture.

Rabinow recalls an episode in which "Two friends from America came to visit me, and we decided to go to Marrakech for several days. I mentioned this to Ibrahim and he said he would like to come along" (1977: 28). Surprised that his informant-friend invited himself along, Rabinow "was not enthusiastic about the idea since I had been looking forward to the trip as a relief from the mounting anxiety of learning Arabic. Bringing my teacher along hardly seemed a vacation" (ibid). Besides going on excursions with American friends to achieve senses of comfort, Rabinow also used to assuage his loneliness during fieldwork by thinking of an angelic-type reunion with his friends back home in the U.S. The reality of the reunion, however, proved disappointing to Rabinow. He writes, "But the city [New York City] and my friends

were now more impenetrable to me than ben Mohammed. The whole revery of future *communitas* which had sustained me through months of loneliness refused to actualize itself upon my return” (ibid: 148).

Powdermaker and Malinowski’s diaries’ spoke with similar ambivalence about an undeniable, seemingly visceral connection with people and materials sensitive to Western culture. Both of these anthropological fieldworkers spoke with disgust about certain closed-minded Westerners. Powdermaker asserts, for example, that Australian planters with whom Powdermaker became friends “saw the natives solely as a source of plantation labor and we could not have been more different in our attitudes towards them” (1966: 102); speaking more self-righteously, Malinowski fumes, that a certain missionary “disgusts me with his [white] ‘superiority’” (1967: 16 – original bracket). Both fieldworkers nevertheless experienced resonance with these and other culturally Western people. Powdermaker, for instance, appreciated certain voluntary kindnesses, such as getting rides and her mail delivered to her, rendered upon her by “people of her own civilization” (1966: 103). [see p. 73 for “lashing out” like other whites] Powdermaker particularly like one Mrs. Grosse, an Australian planter, because, unlike other foreign planters, she “was a pioneer type” (ibid: 104), working industriously to clothe and feed her family, as opposed to lounging about all day like other Australian women. Mrs. Grosse was not particularly enlightened, however, when it came to viewing Melanesians, for “She had no more interest in the native peoples than any of the other island Australians, and I never discussed my work with her. Mostly we talked about clothes” (ibid). In short, Powdermaker simply breathed a bit better when she was “out of this Stone Age culture” (ibid: 105).

Despite his stated disgust with several missionaries, this distaste of Malinowski’s seems to have been ideological more than fundamental, for he routinely sought out missionary stations as safe zones from which to venture out and return

from villages (e.g. 1967: 61). Malinowski also experienced reading as a surrogate to accessing relief from actual Western people. Observe the following quotes for Malinowski's initial description of grief followed immediately by him reading to feel better: "During that time I was much too disorganized. I finished *Vanity Fair*, and read the whole of *Romance*. I couldn't tear myself away; it was as though I had been drugged" (ibid: 16); and "Throughout that time I felt rather poorly. I read [*The Count of Monte Cristo* without stopping" (ibid: 34-5). Reading for relief was a cornerstone method of Malinowski's (e.g. 26, 28, 70).

Anthropological fieldworkers, including the ones just cited, also make unequivocal confessions about the relief they find outside of their diverse fieldsites. Powdermaker divulges, for example, "A day or two later, my anthropologist friends left me to return to their work. As a waved good-bye, I felt like Robinson Crusoe, but without a man Friday. That evening I ate dinner, I felt very low" (1966: 53). After taking malaria medicine, Powdermaker "saw myself at the edge of the world, and alone. I was scared and close to panic" (ibid – original emphasis). For his part, Malinowski had excellent relations with the Governor, saying of him and his family, "I was on the same footing with them as before; free friendly conversation, and it was I who gave it color, without feeling obtrusive" (1967: 58). Post-colonial anthropologists may proudly acknowledge their intellectual inheritance from the likes of Powdermaker and Malinowski but would probably view themselves as somewhat more socially sophisticated than their forbearers. Yet we too seem to experience reprieve during fieldwork in relation to intermittent, close proximity with fellow Westerners. Raybeck, for instance, writes:

"Amidst considerable frustration, persistent dysentery, occasional heat prostration, and continuing bewilderment, there was one precious asset, an experienced pilot to assist in navigating these unfamiliar waters—

Amin Sweeney—who had arrived in Kelantan [Malaysia] a month before us and who charitably provided his time, assistance, and friendship throughout the field work period. Born in England, Amin lived for years in Kelantan” (1992: 4-5).

Overcome with a need for anonymity during fieldwork, Golde once sought solace not in a Western person but in a Western environment, such as a church, signaled as such by its facilitating alone time. Golde remembers “a time when I went to church solely in order to cry, knowing it to be a place where I might be alone for a while, and knowing that if I should be discovered, my tears would not be remarked, since many women cry in church as they pray” (1986: 90). As Weidman felt increasingly estranged from her closest Burmese companion during fieldwork, she explains, “I began to relate to a much greater degree to other Americans and Westerns, generally” (1986: 247). Specifically, Weidman turned for companionship to a community of foreign technical advisors to Burma: “I began to enter more and more into the life of the community of technical advisors to Burma. I now consider it my greatest mistake” (ibid).

*Strategic Submissions.* In addition to relying on the company of Western people and materials, fieldworkers also faced their field situations more directly and strategically in efforts to fulfill their scientific missions. A common way for fieldworkers to transform themselves from strangers to insiders in locals’ eyes is to strategically participate in local social events. Raybeck, for example, rented the house of a man who participated in patrolling the Malaysian village at night. Since the man “was scheduled to do guard duty on Tuesday and Thursday evenings, I had (rather cleverly) arranged to take on his obligation, thereby making a statement to the village that I was not simply an interloper but was willing to assume some responsibilities for the privilege of residence there” (1992: 7 – original parenthesis). Through this

premeditated participation, Raybeck “was presented to villagers, not simply as a nosey busybody (it became clear later that such was my true calling) but as a visitor willing to share in the social life and responsibilities of the village” (ibid: 8 – original parenthesis). Generally, Raybeck’s strategic participation led villagers to perceive him as an insider; specifically, the fieldworker was well aware that achieving the status of insider helped him reformulate open-ended research questions into questions already embedded with local knowledge. Raybeck explains the significance of this achievement:

“Information garnered from Yusof and Mat allowed me to ask very different and far more successful questions of other villagers. Instead of asking open-ended questions betraying my near total ignorance of a situation, I could now inquire about events in a manner suggesting I was already privy to the main issues and only wished clarification of details” (ibid: 14).

Powdermaker too realized that fitting in, or at least appearing to fit into, Lesu life was the route to rich scientific data, and so she struck out from the beginning to participate in social routines. Powdermaker admits, “From the beginning I fitted, as far as possible, into the native economic system” (1966: 63). Powdermaker clarifies her thinking, “In this society, no one did anything for nothing. Equality was the ideal in reciprocal gift giving, but if there was a difference, prestige belonged to the person who gave the most” (ibid). Powdermaker desired the prestige status in reciprocity exchanges: “Quite early I began a pattern of distributing gifts on Sunday morning to those who had been particularly helpful to me during the week” (ibid). In one specific case of manipulating her knowledge of Melanesian gift exchange for ethnographic data, Powdermaker traded a large pig for esoteric knowledge about rain magic with an old man (ibid: 64). Like Powdermaker, Golde also tactically presented herself at times

as a participating member of society in order to access information. Golde speaks, for example, of how her public presentation of “two very expensive, highly decorated candles to the larger-than-life-sized figure of the Virgin [Mary]” (1986: 72) helped to “reduce some the ambiguity about me” (ibid). Golde also dressed like her Mexican, female hosts in order “to minimize difference between myself and the women” (ibid: 80); and she threw herself into the local circuit of reciprocal gift-giving, which she recommends all fieldworkers formally and consciously do, to satisfy many locals’ felt-need to open-up to truly socialized members of society.

*Strategic Attitude Adjustments.* According to fieldwork diaries and reflections, strategic participating seems to require strategic attitude adjustments on the part of fieldworkers. At the beginning of his fieldwork in Morocco, Rabinow, for the sake of the anthropological principle that says “the informant is always right,” used to allow his informants to direct his activities and life. But Rabinow learned to interact and defend himself as he saw Moroccans doing. Once when his host community began believing a rumor that said Rabinow was a Christian missionary to whom information should not be entrusted, Rabinow responded in a way the community members would recognize: “Shocked, I put up my stoutest front, maintaining that the gendarme had said nothing of the sort. I did have permission to be there and the government certainly knew about me. We should go to the *qaid* tomorrow and he would back me up” (1977:87). Conscious of responding in Moroccan fashion, Rabinow concludes, “In good Moroccan rhetorical style I had countered a strong gambit with an equally strong counterattack” (ibid). The strategic attitude adopted by Holmes was to consciously plan on unpredictability, which was otherwise experienced by Holmes with anxiety. Holmes writes, “Once I began to accept unpredictability in certain situations as a given, I suffered less anguish about life in the [Samoan] islands and consequently became happier for the remainder of our fieldwork” (1992: 33). For fieldworkers such

as Malinowski, peeling oneself away from self-imposed isolation and toward the lives of locals was an intentionally induced attitudinal move to progress toward data collection. Malinowski struggles, “I must not read novels, unless I am sick or in a state of deep depression; I must foresee and forestall either of these conditions. The purpose of my stay here is ethnographical work” (1967: 110). Recall too that Nader also “made myself go out and talk to people” (1986: 103). Finally, Weidman half consciously, half imperceptibly “became aware of the double-edged way the Burmese have of relating [and] began to meet this challenge by responding in fairly typical Burmese fashion” (1986: 261). Weidman details, “I became much less trusting. I quietly developed an invisible chip on the shoulder and watched carefully to see that no one succeeded in knocking it off” (ibid). Undoubtedly speaking to the experiences of many if not most fieldworkers, Weidman thoughtfully admits that no matter how deep her adjustments to local life, “The Burmese world view was not congenial to me” (ibid).

When successful participation and attitude adjustments reached some sort of as yet unspecified, inevitable limit, fieldworkers would simply let their fieldwork frustrations burst out openly and directly. Against his better judgment upon reflection, recall, Rabinow “reached the limits of my endurance and could no longer maintain a good front. Malik persisted and persisted [in asking Rabinow if he was feeling alright] and so did I, until I finally turned to him and said, slowly, firmly, and emphatically that I was not angry at him, that I was tired and wanted to be by myself” (1977: 114). In response to Moroccan villagers’ seemingly never-ending requests for rides to town, Rabinow “steadfastly refused after that incident [of an elderly couple invoking a medical emergency to go to town only to end up shopping]. My anger was openly expressed” (ibid: 115). Describing the behaviors of white men in Melanesia she found deplorable, Powdermaker comments, “The relationship with my servants was unusual on these islands, where the tempers of white men (and women, too) were short.

Irritated by the heat, the rains, the ever-present malaria, they often lashed out at their servants on the slightest pretext” (1966: 73). Powdermaker quickly and honorably confesses her complicity with “white men” in “lashing out” at servants: “I prided myself on being different, until I fell from grace” (ibid). This fall from grace involved an incident in which one of her servants, Sinbanimous, accidentally exposed and ruined a roll of Powdermaker’s photographs. Qualifying her reaction to seeing her photos ruined her “only eruption” Powdermaker admits, “I was angry and exploded with exasperation” (ibid).

Anthropological studies of friendship have given us a window into various ways friendships are experienced within respective social groupings. It has taken a perusal of a residual kind of anthropological writing, i.e. fieldwork memoirs, to gain scholarly perspective on friendship dynamics occurring between individuals representing different social backgrounds. Anthropological fieldworkers, representing diverse historical eras, research topics, fieldsites, and both genders, confess with one voice to the impossibility of consummating “true” friendships with their certain individuals from their respective fieldsites. Fieldworkers have certainly wished for friendship and have found individuals among host communities with whom they could maintain lighter, less structured relations. Yet it seems that the “interpersonal malaise” that Rabinow admitted characterized most of his interactions with his Moroccan hosts applies to all of the fieldworkers reviewed above.

Several friendship/relationship assumptions patterned-out from the fieldwork diaries and contextualize the discord between fieldworkers and individual hosts. First, while fieldworkers experienced autonomy as a natural relief from social pressures experienced as somehow suffocating, locals from around the globe uniformly attempted to draw their scientific guests closer to social life in times of distress. Second, fieldworkers expected to establish friendships on voluntary bases, whereas the

reported actions of informant-friends show they intended to create a kinship-type of permanence out of friendships. Third, as an aspect of being associated voluntarily involved, for fieldworkers, a free trade in information and truth. By contrast, locals consistently confessed the truth only after “sure signs” of the fieldworkers’ socialization into local life. Perhaps as a consequence of these contradictory friendship assumptions, fieldworkers (1) established their closest ties with individuals who most closely approximated the fieldworkers’ status and feeling of “outsider,” and (2) prioritized the informant aspect of their informant-friends over the friend-aspect.

Bringing this discussion of friendship to bear on this dissertation’s overall concern with phenomenological aspects of development work, fieldwork memoirs, on the surface, offer scant information about bodies, and particularly about spontaneous body perceptions. “Reading between the lines,” however, we do get a strong sense of where bodies objectively go when subjects undergo certain kinds of stress. The bodies of fieldworkers habitually “take a walk,” venture out in the company of “Western” friends, and isolate themselves “over a book” when fieldworkers desire to go unseen and be anonymous during ethnographic research. Of course, fieldworkers’ bodies can also be understood as moving toward their social others, whether through interviewing, going out to drink or dance with research counterparts, or dressing in local styles, for example. Yet it is simplistic to conclude with the neutral statement, “Fieldworkers sometimes move away from and sometimes draw near to their local hosts.” Relations between fieldworkers and informant-friends are far from innocent or balanced ones. Fieldworkers’ wish for sincere friendships was routinely neutralized by their overwhelming feelings of being overburdened by these awkwardly experienced relations; and fieldworkers confessed to their need for cultivating a certain amount of endurance to temporarily experience themselves and their relations with locals as relatively comfortable and normal. Thus, there is something about fieldworkers’

bodies that learn to bear and partially assimilate to social activities of host communities even as they fundamentally find solace and strength in the “breathes of fresh air” that come with distancing themselves from others’ bodies.

Evidently contradicting the movements of fieldworkers’ bodies were the bodies of diverse individuals of hosting communities. Their bodies were seen “chasing after,” “pursuing,” and “saddening” as fieldworker-friends moved away from them to re-group from nerve-racking situations. Locals’ bodies were also seen parting company with fieldworkers at times. But this distancing movement did not occur for the sake of psychic relief but precisely in situations in which fieldworkers were understood to be unwilling to shed their neutral, ambivalent identities as scientists, fieldworkers, and autonomous individuals and fully submit to their host societies. As we saw with the grassroots development workers and their Limpopo interactants in the previous chapter, then, anthropological fieldworkers can be seen valuing precisely what their informants and hosts value least, autonomy. This goes along way in explaining why friendship was such a problematic non-institutionalized institution to satisfactorily consummate. It may even be said that it is presumptuous to say we are talking about friendship since it is doubtful that fieldworkers and their local hosts would, if they were supremely honest in their self reflections, find each others’ attempts at it wholly acceptable. We are talking *around* friendship about partial social encounters or wishes and attempts at friendship.

### **DEVELOPING FRIENDSHIPS?**

Sergeant and Ishmael lived in rural Limpopo communities peopled respectively by roughly five-hundred and ten-thousand residents. While Valerie lived with just one or two Catholic “sisters” in the town of Tzaneen, she interacted daily with dozens of villagers through her routine sojourns to the Bonketsi-based Kurisanani office and

surrounding communities. Yet these three change-agents, so happy and almost proud at times to be at the “grassroots,” could not find even one local who they might classify, even colloquially, as a “good friend.” In the vignettes above, we see Sergeant rejecting friendship in the name of God even as he was lonely; Valerie remaining socially aloof from her local colleagues in the name of work; and Ishmael wishing for friendship but finding only stereotyping interactants who care little about who he truly is as a person.

Inadequately representing local perspectives on friendship with the foreign benefactors, David laments that, after living, working and praying with Sergeant for more than one decade, he only knows him “sixty-percent.” David’s view is an “inadequate” representation because he knows Sergeant better than any local knows any of the three aid workers participating in this study. That is, all other villagers, who participated in these development projects, told me, either through statistical means or qualitatively, that they barely know anything about Sergeant, Valerie, and Ishmael, despite their wish for such intimacy. Many of the same friendship-inhibiting factors discernable in the fieldwork reflection literature above also form an intrinsic part of the relations between the grassroots development workers and their Limpopo counterparts. Let us take a look.

### **No Strings Attached**

The grassroots workers spoke of honesty as a key to true friendship. Further, true friends should volunteer the truth in most circumstances. When they found no such associations forthcoming, Sergeant, Valerie, and Ishmael, in their own historically particular ways, railed against what they perceived as rampant dishonesty among locals.

Valerie and Ishmael were, like Sergeant (see Chapter 3), annoyed by locals whom they either perceived of as liars or who were actually caught deceiving them.

Within a larger discussion she and I were having about her druthers to avoid social intimacy with her Limpopo colleagues, Valerie said that if she could find a local person who would even go “an inch” toward being honest with her, she would go “a mile.” The point is that she felt she could find no one who would go an inch and, thus, could call no one a friend. Ishmael too detested dishonesty. Ishmael one day visited me and my family in Poolo Village. He related to me a story of how his host father, Mr. Shikibana, had apologized to him the previous day for lying. The incident goes that Ishmael, in trying to help Mr. Shikibana revive a labor-providing farming project in Pensi Village, asked if the project had any “accounts.” Mr. Shikibana told Ishmael it just had one. Out of apparent guilt, the host father called Ishmael to tell him he had lied and that the project actually has two accounts, the second one being at the post office. Thinking his host father did not understand that he was inquiring about “bank” accounts and not other sorts of accounts, Ishmael nevertheless took the opportunity to warn the elderly man that he would have to be honest with him if wanted his help. When we informed Ishmael that there are actually post office bank accounts, Ishmael turned livid, realizing that Mr. Shikibana was not mistaken and that he had in fact committed a “real” lie. Ishmael returned home and scolded Mr. Shikibana, establishing to the best of his ability a “no lying or else” relationship with him.

It is one thing, and no doubt a good thing, for anthropological scholars (Bell and Coleman 1999, Smart 1999) to de-center popular and scholarly notions of friendship for passing off as universal what is actually culturally specific to the West; it is another thing to find individuals experiencing friendship precisely in Western cultural terms. Sergeant, Valerie, and Ishmael heralded volunteered honesty as the hallmark of a true friend; in this, they approached friendship on the basis of a self Paine (1999) terms “idea value.” In asking itself, “Am I true to myself,” this self turns inward for verification; consequently, signs of dependence on others upset its

existential experience. Their sentiments of frustration and hopelessness at perceived dishonesty among locals speak to the existential quandary friendship with Limpopo villagers posed for the grassroots workers. Sergeant, Valerie, and Ishmael expected truth to flow freely among individuals, without recourse to material signs of social obligation or reciprocity—“No strings attached.” In this, these grassroots activists demanded the autonomy of ideality over materiality, of mind over body and, ultimately, of voluntary associations over social obligations.

### **Open and Free**

If Sergeant, Valerie, and Ishmael longed for contingent-free friendships, their Limpopo hosts spoke of friendship in terms of “openness” or “being free,” synonyms in local parlance. Conversations with Sergeant, for example, became predictable to his Tuvo congregants. In David’s terms, though representative of all congregants, Sergeant “will greet me, ask me how school is, and talk a little about church matters. That’s it. Nothing more. You see, he’s not open.” In his own words, Sergeant explains, “I can only go so deep with people here.” “What about with David?” I asked, knowing they spent a lot of time together. Sergeant responded, “We can talk about church things but we don’t go deeper. It’s like there’s a block. I can get further with Alice and Mr. Ndebede, but I can only trust Mr. Ndebede so much.” Mr. Ndebede was 80-something-year old man—the only elder—who attended Sergeant’s Tuvo Christian Church.

While Sergeant and I talked in his church-side apartment, Alice knocked and Sergeant called her in. Sergeant asked her why she was not afraid to regularly converse with him. At the excitedly expressed answer, “To learn English,” Sergeant’s face frowned in disappointment. Even a congregant, with whom Sergeant felt he interacted on a relatively genuine basis, seemed to have “what could she get out of it” foremost in mind. Seeing Sergeant’s face sour at her response, Alice made an obvious

search for an answer more pleasing to Sergeant and said, “But you’re such a wonderful pastor and you’re so easy to talk to.” In a previous conversation, however, Alice confessed, “My favorite pastor is Pastor Edward” because, as Alice blushed, “I like handsome pastors.” Alice had also told me several times that Sergeant was not open, despite her hurried proclamation to him to the contrary.

We have already heard Valerie consciously closing herself off from personal relations with her NGO interactants. Recall Valerie’s comment, for instance, about not wanting to know the personal lives of her co-workers. Valerie “made good” on this comment for, with one voice, it seemed, Kurisanani staffers and HIV-AIDS clients complained of their inability to open-up the nun. Regarding Ishmael, I used to ask teachers why they would ask me about Islam and not Ishmael since I am a convert and know much less about the religion than Ishmael. Independently of each other, but perhaps having discussed it among themselves, the teachers all said they feared Ishmael. When I asked why, they said because he is not “open” while I was “open.” The teachers often pointed to Ishmael’s habitual head-hanging posture as material evidence of his antagonism toward openness. By openness and free, locals mean the quality of spontaneous sociality, easy going dialogue about personal life and feelings, including topics ranging from sexual exploits and extra-marital affairs to family backgrounds and future aspirations. After years of living and working together, villagers could still say, “I don’t know him” and “I don’t know her,” when referring to Sergeant, Valerie, and Ishmael.

Although there are cases in which individuals established and maintained friendship among kin, Limpopo villagers experienced friendship and kinship as culturally distinct, though not antagonistic domains of interpersonal interaction. Here is an illustration of the dynamics of kinship and friendship: An elderly woman in my host village domesticated me as her “son.” Her relations instantly became my relations

and all of these hosts proudly referred to me using kinship terminology. I was a “son,” “brother,” or “in-law” to these family members. Relations between us were not “open”; we did not discuss personal feelings. When I tried to personalize relations with some of my unmarried male “kin”, they, like others, resisted. They preferred me as a relative rather than a friend or “chomi,” as locals say. While the former implies interminable relations and mutual aid, the latter signals the threat of the opposite. I often heard reports about other village families envying my host family. People asked how this particular family, and not others, managed to secure such a valuable person as a family member. Envious assumed my host mother put a magical concoction in my food to make me love her and her family so much. My host mother’s leg began swelling as I planned to return to the US after fieldwork. My family members speculated that envious villagers witched my host mother, for they were jealous of her for securing me as kin.

Meanwhile, Chobi, my informant-friend, resisted my efforts at calling him “buti” or “brother.” I was using “brother” in the African-American sense of “We are one ideological people” but Chobi interpreted this term according to local linguistic meanings. For him and for others, I belonged to a family. This family had already properly socialized and cared for me. I had “khanda(ed)” in the way Patrick Harries described the necessity of 19<sup>th</sup> century Tsonga individuals to submit to a chief in order to transform from stranger to proper social being. If they had a choice, which they felt they did not, Chobi and others would surely make me their kin instead of a friend. Meanwhile, calling each other “brothers” had the repugnance for Chobi of closing-off of our personal interaction. As friends, Chobi and I—and others—could talk about subjects that were not talked about among kin and, especially, more formal kin relations involving generational differences. Friends could talk with each other about sex but could not have the same conversations with parents, grandparents, or aunts

and uncles. Being open and friendly also implied the expectation of getting to know about each others' families and religions, a nonsense expectation among kin since they are presumed to already know their common family relations.

While Limpopo villagers distinguished culturally between kinship and friendship, they did not experience them antagonistically, for both made sense within an overall framework of valuing sociality. Perceived by locals as given and immutable, kinship reigned supreme over friendship. But friendships socialized through reciprocal exchanges of gifts and favors proved more valuable and dependable to Limpopo villagers than looser associations. Xisevese ceremonies, in which individuals publicly formalize their friendships through ritualized gift exchanges, epitomized true friendship. Here, true friendships do not distinguish ideal from material considerations but organically include both; they furthermore make formal and informal reciprocity between associates so obligatory that, as in the case of the two Ndendeuli friends (Gulliver 1971) discussed above, friendships often come to look like kinship relations. As Bell and Coleman (1999) observe, and as Rezende (1999) demonstrates in Brazil, rural Limpopo friendships frequently occur across social hierarchies, with partners exchanging according to their means. In these situations, the friend of less means may act submissively at times toward the better positioned partner, though the sentiment of friendliness prevails over that of dominance.

The following case will demonstrate the role of giving and receiving in local friendships. One of Kurisanani's HIV-AIDS clients, Selina, befriended two other clients, Flora and Rose, through their mutual attendance at a support group held at their clinic in Mogapeng Village. Selina explained in Sepedi, and Chobi, my informant-friend translated for me, that her association with Flora and Rose was deepening to the level of *chomis*, i.e. they became informal exchange partners who felt

they could safely divulge personal information to each other. But then these *chomis* started “talking too much,” according to Selina. Selina gave the example of having once told support group members that only HIV+ individuals should be allowed to attend the meetings, signaling that Elizabeth, Kurisanani’s careworker for the village, should stay away. Selina felt betrayed when Rose told Elizabeth, which she learned happened because Flora told Elizabeth who confronted Selina. In response, Selina reduced her friendship with Rose, the divulger of secrets, and Elizabeth, the offended one. The reduction involved maintaining their informal exchanges of small money gifts and foods, such as bread, but trimming personal chats with Rose and Elizabeth to simple back-and-forths, for example, about their HIV status. By retaining their exchange relationship, Selina signaled her continued wish for friendship. As Selina explained next, however, if Rose, Elizabeth, or any other *chomi* stopped bringing gifts, Selina “would stop visiting the person and think the person had a problem with me.” The friendship dies, i.e. friends re-become strangers to each other, with the halting of gift exchange.

It is now clear why Sergeant, Valerie, and Ishmael, on the one hand, and their respective local interactants, on the other hand, could not establish genuine friendships. The felt need of the grassroots workers for friendships based on volunteered honesty belied the ideational basis of their subjectivity. In eliminating material considerations in their associations with others, they unwittingly made themselves strangers in the eyes of their Limpopo hosts. Their insistence upon “purifying” relations of the “burden” of obligation, as we saw happening in the previous chapter on residence, rendered them strange strangers to boot. Seeing how Africans generally seem to expect individuals to belong to specified social relations with others (Evans-Pritchard 1933, Driberg 1935, Gulliver 1971, Aguilar 1999), the structural question Limpopo hosts asked was, “What sort of stranger rejects any and

all invitations to socially submit or become ‘not a stranger’?” Now we see that it is a kind of individual who, in valuing a “no strings attached” brand of honesty, values ideational-based autonomy. Whereas Sergeant, Valerie, and Ishmael waited for locals, any local, to befriend them for who they felt they intrinsically were as individuals, villagers withheld personal information from their foreign benefactors, waiting for material signs of being “in it to stay.” Clearly, interpersonal relations matter in international development contexts.

### **Marginal Characters**

As we observed in the cases of anthropological fieldworkers who similarly valued autonomy, the grassroots workers associated best with rural Limpopo’s socially marginal characters, with its “insider’s outsiders” (Rabinow 1977). Ishmael’s host father was unique among Limpopo residents with whom I became acquainted, for he confessed to his deception of Ishmael. While there were certainly strings attached to this confession—the host father felt he needed Ishmael and especially his American status to move the farming project forward—the host father was at least aware enough of the honesty expectations of the *valungu* (white people / foreigners / strangers) to manipulate it to his own ends. His awareness of and dexterity in using key features of *valungu* behaviors, cultivated over years of serving *valungu* as a hotel host in Johannesburg, points to his unusually high access to Western life and relative estrangement from village culture. According to Ishmael, his host father regularly complained about the backwardness of the rural communities and especially of the mindset of the villagers themselves. Ishmael and his paternal host could speak for hours about these sorts of issues, for Ishmael could not have agreed more; they seemed to have shared a common foe in the backwardness of local culture and a common hero in modernizing institutions and thought processes. Ishmael was closer to his host father than to any other local person.

Yet, while they shared some discursive references in common, Mr. Shikibana proved himself to have been socialized locally after all. His tendency to lie to Ishmael when the latter showed no sign of having earned access to knowledge via social participation was one such indication of his continued tie to his upbringing. Further, the host father evidently made a reciprocal agent out of Ishmael without the latter's knowledge or consent, for he traded signs of voluntary friendship, which he knew would resonate with Ishmael, for Ishmael's continued support of the farming project. While his wife, teachers, and other villagers showed they disapproved of Ishmael's aloofness by subtly withdrawing from conversations and withholding information, the host father interacted with Ishmael as if no such problems existed—and Ishmael believed he had an unproblematic relationship with him. Yet Ishmael's host mother and Principal Rhandzo used to tell me confidentially that the host father was as perturbed by Ishmael's behavior as anyone. His strategy was to make use of Ishmael and especially of his modern thinking, which the host father genuinely felt was better than local forms of knowledge.

Sergeant and Valerie also and predictably established their closest local ties with the least socially integrated of characters. Sergeant's closest companion was Mr. Ndebede, the eighty-four year old man who attends Sunday services at TCC. Uncannily similar in life experiences to Ishmael's host father, Mr. Shikibana, served for many years as a waiter at a segregated restaurant in Johannesburg. Mr. Shikibana speaks fondly about his encounters with John F. Kennedy and other notables whom he met while working in the big city; he also traces his English and Afrikaans-speaking abilities to his exposure to *valungu* to this time period. Further similar to the Ishmael-host father social dynamic, Sergeant appreciates Mr. Ndebede for the kinds of topical discussions, such as Christianity, the state of South African development, with which he is familiar. Sergeant has some reservations, however. While Sergeant values Mr.

Ndebede most for being able and willing to bring community news to Sergeant's doorstep, it is his same looseness of tongue that worries Sergeant. Sergeant told me that while he likes Mr. Ndebede he can only say "so much" to him because Mr. Ndebede cannot be trusted to keep things confidential. One thing he has kept secret is his willingness to rely on Sangomas to treat illnesses, such as the one his wife had during my field research. Knowing Sergeant vehemently opposes traditional doctors, seeing them as Satan's servants, Mr. Ndebede makes himself appear as resistant to local social practices as Sergeant when in the latter's company. Thus, rather than having found an individual who will truly understand him and his positions, Sergeant has rather been duped by an old man who, while surely genuinely liking Sergeant, has figured out how to manipulate the presentation of himself to appear compatible with Sergeant's beliefs while remaining open to Sergeant's cosmological nemeses.

Local co-managers of Kurisanani all swore that Valerie favored Bill over everyone else. Although Valerie was known to financially assist Laura, Gaul, Lateef, and Laura herself felt that Bill was the only person to whom Valerie would intently listen. Is it just a coincidence that, within the management work environment, Bill was an outcast? Laura and Gaul are brother- and sister-in-law to each other while Lateef and Laura's settled, if unequal relationship dates back to pre-Kurisanani times, when they worked together at the NGO called ChoIce. Bill was doubly marginal to Laura, Gaul, and Lateef. Bill coming late to their social circle is easily rectified by "getting to know each other" over time. Yet this centrifugal force was forestalled on account of the second obstacle to Bill's inclusion, his relative power over his three local colleagues. Bill had rather perfected his English as well as a compassionate delivery of it, so much so as to impress Valerie greatly. Valerie called him a sweetheart, though she did not hesitate to teach him lessons such as how to prefer Jesus over money. Bill's English proficiency was made possible by his marginality from his community.

Bill, the oldest sibling of seven, did not have a close relationship with this father, who worked, lived, and even married a second wife away from their little village of Mosane. When his beloved mother died, Bill was left to care for himself and his younger siblings. The foreign-run Catholic Church stepped in to help a struggling Catholic family; it financed Bill's private, Catholic education and assisted the children financially. Bill's relative mastery of English and his Western sensibilities came from this educational experience, rendering him more liked by Valerie than his colleagues. Laura and Lateef, who were more prone to jealousy than Gaul, were demanding, "How could a newly arrived person already be positioning himself as a favorite of Valerie and the Catholic Church?" Bill's status as a favored local meant greater access to power and money. Bill's female colleagues, and sometimes Gaul, made the environment of the Kurisanani offices so anti-Bill that he decided to quite his post and work elsewhere. Valerie lost the local who was most marginal and most like a friend to her.

### **Work First, Work Only**

Also congruent with the fieldwork dynamics of anthropological fieldworkers were the grassroots workers' common rigid privileging of work over friendship with their colleagues. Sergeant and Valerie more straightforwardly than Ishmael showed they had come to South Africa to work and not to socialize. Sergeant engaged in no idle talk that I ever witnessed. Indeed, he preached passionately against such vanities from his church pulpit. When Sergeant was talking, it was about Jesus, church related concerns, such as teen pregnancies and showing up on time to church services and other events. For her part, the discussion I had with Valerie, captured in the vignette above, puts the matter unflinchingly: "I don't know what they eat for breakfast; I don't know when they sleep at night; I don't know what they like to watch on TV," said Valerie, the nun. "And you don't want to know?" I asked. Valerie replied, "I don't

need to know everything, especially about people I work with.” Clearly, Valerie had no intention of mixing work with matters she considered private. Less preachy than Sergeant and Valerie, Ishmael revealed his “work first / work only” assumption in the way he interacted with the school teachers. Once, after giving a guest math lesson at Mafarana Primary School, Ishmael walked out of the classroom toward the teachers’ lounge. Mrs. Tanani, the regular teacher, trailed Ishmael by a step on his right side and I walked behind both of them. Ishmael’s head hung low, Mrs. Tanani’s pointed forward. No one said anything. This is a typical interaction between Ishmael and teachers, except that they may greet each other *before* the lesson begins. Ishmael structured this interchange, for he, and not the teachers, experienced a marked distinction between work time and social time, public and private time.

In stark contrast, and to the consternation of many PCVs, including Shana who participated in this research prior to Ishmael’s arrival in South Africa, village teachers predictably break from their work to attend to all sorts of social matters, from making business calls and meeting friends to gossiping with other teachers and arranging to have students wash their vehicles. My presence at the schools could certainly draw-out teachers from classrooms, especially when Ishmael, who teachers felt related to them more as an overseer than as an interactive social person, was absent. Being at school, which has been imported into Southern Africa as a distinct place of work, is not a barrier to private, social life for teachers. It should be noted, however, that teachers, especially principals, feel and, at times, respond to pressure from educational administrators to desist from such interruptions at school. Shana, Ishmael, and every other PCV I came to know proved part of the pressure on Limpopo principals to reserve school time for educating the children. To use a colloquial expression, it “broke their hearts” to see teachers neglecting the education of children.

## CONCLUSION

Anthropological studies have so far studied friendship situations either at the centers or peripheries of Western modernity. While these studies have candidly (Carrier 1999, Paine 1999) or guardedly but effectively (e.g. Aguilar 1999) acknowledged two “different” subjectivities motivating a range of amicable relations, they had not yet investigated situations in which individuals manifesting these divergent subjectivities interacted under one ethnographic spotlight. In attending to the everyday interchanges between grassroots workers from Western cultural locales and their village beneficiaries in South Africa’s Limpopo Province, the current study fills in this gap.

This chapter concludes that the grassroots workers and the Limpopo residents who they wish to help could not be friends. While the change-agents wished to establish friendships based on volunteered truth (autonomy), locals sentimentally demanded of friendship an almost kinship-like reciprocity and permanence (sociality). The emotional investments they displayed, in forms such as frustration, incredulity and loss of hope, for their respective friendship expectations underscores the difficulty, if not impossibility of the grassroots workers and villagers simply changing course and befriending according to each others’ value orientations. Thus, the problem that emerged in the previous chapter on residence surfaces again: Seeing how people’s cultural values seem to keep them from being friends, how do we talk about friendship and evident “difference” without reifying that difference? Chapter five on bodies addresses this conundrum.

Finally, this dissertation is concerned, in part, with moving beyond negative criticisms of Western categories, such as ontological distinctions between mind and body, to an appreciation for the kinds of subjects who, in their everyday lives, experience these categories as natural. In their experiences of friendship, the grassroots lived-out or practically manifested a subjectivity that atomizes individuals,

self and other into bounded entities. By contrast, Limpopo interactants understood the self-separating tendencies of their benefactors as individuals “having apartheid in their hearts.” Given its objectively documented, oppressive effects on human life and its current state as a reviled system in hegemonic discourses, apartheid accusations aimed at grassroots do-gooders is a serious allegation. First, who is this “peculiar subject of capitalist modernity” (Mitchell); how do we explain, and not just describe and criticize, this bifurcating individual? Second, what does it mean that anthropological fieldworkers seem to have as much trouble as change-agents in establishing satisfactory friendships with modernity’s marginal people?

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **YES-ING BODIES AND NO-ING BODIES**

The previous section of this dissertation detailed development relationships through the lens of the residential and friendship circumstances for Sergeant, Valerie, and Ishmael and their respective Limpopo interactants in foreign aid contexts. We found that in spite of their conscious wishes and efforts to “live among the people” and “establish local friendships,” the grassroots workers contradictorily sought personal comfort in living and befriending apart from individual hosts. Concomitantly, development workers’ movements away from local life induced senses of anxiety in their Limpopo counterparts. The residential and friendship choices made by Sergeant, Valerie, and Ishmael implicated their and the villagers’ bodies, a key concept in this dissertation, which focuses on the analytic intersection of development and phenomenology. Let us recall how the change-agents and Limpopo interactants’ residential and friendship choices implicated their bodies:

Objectively, the persons of the three grassroots workers pivoted away from permanent social submission and toward self-isolating spaces in times of interpersonal distress. This was as true for their respective development associates as it was for Sergeant, Valerie, and Ishmael. By contrast, the bodies of key Limpopo interactants trailed after the international guests in efforts to work through anxieties socially instead of independently. When the bodies of the grassroots-agents moved toward villagers, they did so with increasingly adept ways of maintaining senses of self in ever tighter social interactions. Similarly, when villagers’ bodies moved away from the change-agents, they did so in the context of losing hope in the sociability of their development guests.

From the standpoint of philosophical and “cultural phenomenology,” the body movements observed thus far occur late in human experience; they have already happened; they are accomplished. This chapter looks at body actions of the development personnel at the beginning of human experience, i.e. at the analytic and experiential moment of perception (Merleau-Ponty 2002) or pre-objectivity (Csordas 1990), just prior to or temporally commensurate with interpersonally-based conscious expression. The vital research finding is that the comforts and discomforts encoded for in the residential and friendship experiences of the variously positioned development participants correspond precisely with the feelings expressed in their spontaneous body gesturing. Specifically, while the bodies of Sergeant, Valerie, and Ishmael gesture against close social contact, those of their Limpopo hosts embrace such contact. Attention to development as interpersonal relations has led us thus to an appreciation of how corporeality figures in foreign assistance.

This chapter, first, describes the body perceptions of Sergeant, Valerie, and Ishmael. The first section of this chapter also draws on data from members of the respective development networks of Sergeant, Valerie, and Ishmael to show the generality of the phenomenon in question without drowning out detail and intimacy related to our three representative grassroots workers. The second part of the chapter shifts to a focus on the body perceptions shared by some of Sergeant, Valerie, and Ishmael’s key Limpopo interactants. The third and fourth parts of this chapter respectively analyze this dissertation’s data in light of “cultural phenomenology” and the scholarship of Jane Fajans. A merger of these two interpretive sources helps to form a theoretical framework sensitive to and synthetically inclusive of the issues intrinsic to the ethnographic data of this research. These issues include relations between embodiment, conscious choice, interpersonal relations, and psycho-social interdependency. The chapter, lastly, illuminates the residence and friendship

conundrums of the previous section of the dissertation with reference to a further phenomenologized Fajansian notion of “schemas.”

In an academic age largely characterized by postmodern criticisms of universal truth claims, robust theoretical elaborations, and strong scholarly voices (Clifford and Marcus 1986, Fabian 1983, Marcus and Fischer 1985), the data of this dissertation research necessitates the courage to counter the criticisms. Under-elaborating the current data would prove anthropologically problematic and morally suspect, if not reprehensible. Stated plainly, the data, collected with the aid of many Limpopo villagers, suggests “difference” between the West and the Rest, whites and blacks, and urban and rural dwellers. The humanist, bi-racial, and Muslim sides of me would consider any scholarly voices that would leave doubt about the essential oneness of Sergeant, Valerie, Ishmael, and Limpopo villagers handmaidens to human division and argument. The pertinent moral-theoretical question is, therefore, not primarily to contextualize “differences” back to “different” social spaces but to understand how the grassroots-activists and their village hosts are each other even as they face-off in embodied contradiction.

### **BODY PERCEPTIONS – CHANGE-AGENTS**

The objective movements of the change-agents in contexts of residence and friendship correspond exactly with the most spontaneous of physical gestures they make in routine human interchange. The correspondence hinges upon an evident association between autonomy and psycho-social comfort.

*Sergeant, the Afrikaner missionary from Cape Town, shakes hands exceptionally hard and smiles with exaggeration as he does so. He thrusts his small, stiffened hand into the outstretched hands of his church guests and squeezes to a point and relaxes his grip. Having grown accustomed to the looser clasping of hands of the African locals,*

*I once extended a relatively limp set of fingers to Sergeant and paid the price. His rigid clutch buckled my knuckles on top of each other. I made sure my hand was ready the next time.*

*Valerie, the Irish nun, jumps out of her buggy and darts into the administrative office of her NGO about ten yards away. As she runs to the office, Valerie whips past Susan, a local colleague of hers standing two arm-lengths away, who tries to wave down Valerie for a greeting and conversation. Valerie, without slowing down, says, "Susan, I'll be with you in four and a half minutes." Ten minutes later, Valerie emerges from the office and walks toward and then past Susan, saying, "Okay, talk to me."*

*Ishmael, the US Peace Corps Volunteer, walks from a grade three classroom in which he was reading for the children back to the teachers' lounge in a separate building. On his twenty-yard journey across a path through the flower garden, Ishmael walks with his head and eyes turned down. When an elderly female teacher greets him in the Tsonga language, Ishmael's body perks up as he moves straight toward the teacher with right hand extended in greeting.*

Typical and, thus, predictable, the interpersonal encounters sketched in these three vignettes involve different grassroots workers from various backgrounds and with diverse personalities and development missions. Yet their bodies encode for a common socio-cultural value: autonomy. Sergeant's stiff hand shake says, "I am here, full and self-complete," and the effect this has of keeping his and his interlocuter's bodies separate reinforces this statement. Valerie's determined gate says, "There is no one or nothing that can stop me from accomplishing my task," and striding past Susan the second time while saying, "Okay, talk to me," converts a possible interruption by another person into an independent choice to stop as experienced by Valerie. When Ishmael hangs his head contemplatively as he walks through the school garden, he is centering all of his attention on himself and on his thoughts and this newly reified sense of wholeness embellishes subsequent greetings as if saying, "Hi. I am here and, yes, I am greeting you."

The body perceptions of Sergeant, Valerie, and Ishmael described above occurred spontaneously, just before or exactly as these grassroots workers began speaking. Yet the fact that the bodily spontaneity of some (i.e. development-agents) but not all (see vignettes below) social actors share a “love affair” with personal space already makes it inadvisable to reduce what is happening here to “human nature” or “biological reflexes.” We are looking here at a social phenomenon. A further caveat is this: “Running away” or “Escaping” oversimplify and mischaracterize the change-agents’ actions: First, the workers have voluntarily come to these Limpopo villages and their autonomous bodily perceptions are nevertheless manifesting deep within the interstices of interpersonal encounters with village hosts; second, there is a lot of “coming together” occurring in the scenes sketched above: Sergeant’s hand *stretches out* to others; Valerie *walks back to meet* Susan; and Ishmael *perks up to greet* teachers. The phenomenon in question is thus a subtle, though persistent and reliable instance of perceptual techniques in which the change-agents’ bodies have learned to engage others only to retract into postures and positions experienced as wholly and, its becoming clear, safely independent.

Further, speaking of the grassroots workers sharing “connect and withdraw” gesturing techniques is to speak abstractly, to pull the pattern out of context and give it an a-historical label. Bear in mind, however, that before abstracting the pattern, Sergeant, Valerie, and Ishmael unknowingly shared it historically in their quotidian and respective engagements with Limpopo villagers. Put back in historical context, the snapshots above speak to the nuanced reality of Sergeant, Valerie, and Ishmael embodying unique economies of the “connect and withdraw” phenomenon, based respectively on rigid, speedy, and self-humbling bodily apparatuses. This observation confirms the idea of the existence of multiply practiced individualisms (Kusserow 2004). In Kusserow’s terms, Sergeant and Valerie seem to express a hard

individualism with Ishmael exhibiting a soft individualism. Similar to his stiff handshake, Sergeant's unflinching eye-contact reciprocally stares his and his interlocuters's selves apart and thereafter probes the faces and overall demeanor of his interactants "over there" for their integrity and honesty; Valerie's walking speed is easily refashioned into what locals consider a disingenuous double-handed handshake and a strained smile which she produces with great rapidity and a-historical uniformity as she extends them to a dozen villagers visiting her NGO office; and Ishmael's head-hanging, which resolutely breaks off all eye-contact with others, accomplishes the same effect as him gazing steadfastly and confidently at the lowered heads of students as they busily write answers at their desks to multiplication problems Ishmael reads to them in rapid-fire succession—in both cases, Ishmael avoids eye-contact completely, as if by design.

Why these change-agents have nuanced perceptual manifestations of the shared value of independence is an empirical question relating to their diverse backgrounds, including their divergent national, social, ideological, employment, and personality positionalities. Absenting a view of how these particular grassroots workers were parented, diverse studies of U.S., Swedish, and Israeli middle-class culture give a sense of how parents and teachers socialize autonomously-leaning children and how wide-spread and general these individuating techniques prove: parents putting babies in own beds and bedrooms (Kusserow 2004: 92, Richman, Miller, Solomon 1988: 71); providing bedrooms with locks and knocking before entering (Kusserow 2004: 92); minding children's diaries, birthday cards, and letters (Kusserow 2004: 92, Much and Shweder 1991: 190); teaching children their "natural rights" as human individuals (Blum-Kulka 1994, Kusserow 2004: 84, Much and Shweder 1991: 190, Shweder, Mahapata, and Miller 1990: 183); demarcating social from alone or "down" time (Kusserow 2004: 89, Richman, Miller, Solomon 1988:

72); encouraging children to play by and talk to themselves as well as provoking creative expression to tap into the “true self” (Kusserow 2004: 92, 95); avoiding referring to children by “herd” names such as “girl” and “daughter” and being relatively receptive to children calling parents by given or first names (Kusserow 2004: 105, Shweder, Mahapata, Miller 1990: 180); rarely holding babies in favor of “containerizing” them in cribs, high chairs, playpens, and other bounded constructions (Richman, Miller, Solomon 1988: 69-70); and discouraging hugging and touching (Kusserow 2004: 94-5). Further, American teachers typically give students great individual attention (Stigler and Perry 1990: 337) and name the cubbies and rugs of young children for senses of individual ownership (Kusserow 2004: 94, Much and Shweder 1991: 192).

Although the aforementioned studies background the issue of embodiment, they clearly contextualize how the bodies of children would learn to feel that independence is normal. In addition to Sergeant, Valerie, and Ishmael, every other Western change-agent traced through the respective and sometimes interrelated social networks of the missionary, nun, and PCV also participated in bodily techniques of self-sufficiency. Thus, the bodies of other PCVs, such as Tammy and Jenita, would routinely startle and the PCVs would say with great senses of regret, “Oh, I’m sorry,” in accidentally and very lightly bumping their feet or shoulders against those of others; three US missionary friends of Sergeant, Pam, Tim and Tammy, all performed the intensely hard handshakes and intractable stares like Sergeant. They went further, however, in converting their stiff handclasps and unflinching eye contact into hard-armed hugs which they administered to usually young, relatively limp-bodied African interactants while walking with them side by side in villages. Resonating with the stiffness of their arms were their heads which would bend toward the faces of hug-recipients with determination while smiling confidently and saying things like, “Are

you saved?” or “Are you okay; are you staying strong?” Like Valerie, several female PCVs routinely “half-smiled” as they passed Africans in town and village settings and often enough when passing each other at PCV parties. These “half-smiles” or smirks sometimes formed as quick twitches and at other times slowly passed away. Villagers often asked me why “so and so” would smile if they did not really want to. In sharp contrast to Chinese styles of walking downward toward the earth and with rounded shoulders reflecting the value of social relationships, middle-class Americans tend to “raise their center of gravity and move as if they want to leave the earth behind” (Brownell 1995: 9-10). Here, Brownell implies an association between raising centers of gravity and valuing socially-free autonomous actions. The overall point is that even the grassroots-agents’ otherwise haphazard body perceptions gesture them into relative social distance from villagers with whom they interact on face-to-face, conversational bases.

### **BODY PERCEPTIONS – LIMPOPO VILLAGERS**

*Mr. Tangona, a father of several of Sergeant’s congregants, had returned to Tuvo from Johannesburg. As he was fixing a radio outside his house, Mr. Tangona spoke jovially with his wife and several children. Seeing me approaching with my band of friend-informants, however, his face angered as if he was holding his breath and joy inside the wrinkles of his frowned face. He stayed aloof and didn’t greet for six tense minutes.*

*Dean, the self-styled “disease of [Tuvo Christian] church,” began fidgeting his legs and hands as he heard Sergeant straight-forwardly depreciating traditional religious practices to an elderly grandmother of one of the church congregants who everyone knew practiced those traditions. Serving as Sergeant’s translator, Dean insistently advised Sergeant to follow-up by saying, “But it’s good you’re participating in those traditional things.”*

*Jeanette, Director of Kurisanani, hears someone “koo-kooing” at the door of the NGO office. As the visitor enters, Jeanette, with a*

*passive/aloof face, stops her work, gets a chair, puts it next to a table, and motions gently for the visitor to sit. After greetings, the visitor says, "It's nice and cool in here." Jeanette smiles a bit at the comment and becomes increasingly friendly and animated as the agreeable conversation progresses.*

***Mrs. Rhandzo**, principal of Pfukani Primary School and designated local counterpart for Ishmael, leans her head on her hand which is braced up against the outside wall of one of the five school blocks on the premises. She is looking down, occasionally shifting her feet. She is disturbed, almost heartbroken as she talks to me about why Ishmael is not getting along well with his host family, particularly the mother.*

As idiosyncratic as they may seem, the data within these vignettes reveal that the corporealities of Mr. Tangona, Dean, Jeanette, and Mrs. Rhandzo all spontaneously “spin on” a wish for interconnectedness. This is as true for all Limpopo villagers with whom I interacted as it is for the four research participants mentioned above. Is it just coincidence that gestures of interconnectedness, which will be analyzed below, resonate so well with the project of reeling-in “runaway” change-agents as living partners and friends in which villagers’ bodies were implicated? I have intentionally foregrounded descriptions of angry, fidgeting, indifferent, and “broken” African bodies to short-circuit any temptation to associate the term “interconnectedness” with romanticized notions, images, and ideologies of souring African love, unity, togetherness, and affect (de Lame 2005: 270, Mudimbe 1988). Sergeant, Valerie, and Ishmael can make better claims than most of their Limpopo interactants to believe in and attempt to practice these lofty ideals, and so these aid-agents’ autonomous orientation would be only simplistically characterized as selfishness. This chapter’s analytic focus is, within the overarching project of illuminating interpersonal aspects of development work, preobjectivity and bodily perception and, for Limpopo villagers such as Mr. Tangona, Dean, Jeanette, and Mrs. Rhandzo, connections between individuals is experienced as fluid, un-mediated,

immediate, and direct. What flows along the immediacy of interactions is perfectly recognizable, running the gamut of human emotions from anger and jealousy to conviviality and well-wishing for others. Villagers' "interconnectedness," in short, has less to do with *what* is expressed than *how* it is expressed.

So, *how* does interconnectedness permeate the otherwise idiosyncratic bodily gestures in the vignettes above? First, Mr. Tangona's withdrawing from others shows that individuality and distancing maneuvers are as "African" as they are "Western." However, Mr. Tangona's unreflective gestures revealed an immanent evaluation of individual space which differed markedly from the embodied assessment of the grassroots workers. Mr. Tangona's amicable expression recoiled into a knot of anger upon seeing me, for I later learned he associated me with Sergeant whom he and his wife view contemptuously as turning their children away from traditional life. Mr. Tangona pivoted on his spontaneous anger to suspend himself in an isolated state of tension, walking sullenly and silently back and forth in and out of his house as he now fixed his radio in defiance of engaging me in a friendly manner. His gloom and quietness became Mr. Tangona's next perceptual manifestations, precipitating Mrs. Tangona finally and consciously to beg him to re-enter the fluid interactions of convivial life. Mrs. Tangona said in Sotho, "This is the American I was telling you about." Mr. Tangona's face and body expressions lightened at this news and his tension seemed to flow out from him. His relaxation signaled Mrs. Tangona to hint that I could now approach her husband, which I did with great respect and a good amount of fear. Reversing the change-agents' experience of "alone time as *relief*," Mr. Tangona simply endured "alone time as *grief*," an embittered and unwelcome time of disrupted social fluidity that *ends with relief*. Further, the project of calming down and socially reintegrating Mr. Tangona is not experienced by any of the concerned

villagers as one of “taking control of himself” but of “overcoming his pride with begging,” that is, not self-control but social control.

Second, Sergeant, like many PCVs (Alverson 1977), may have felt he was simply telling the elderly woman the truth about her religious activities and that there was nothing wrong with being honest with people. For Dean, however, and surely for rural Botswanians and Limpopo villagers at large (ibid), Sergeant was starting to insult the woman directly, an act that potentially alienates the perpetrator from society and instigates reprisals in forms ranging from social alienation to occult violence (Geschiere 1997, Nyamnjoh 2001). Dean’s disturbed limbs spontaneously evaluated Sergeant’s language as anti-social and, thus, negative and became the perceptual ground for trying to sure-up an interpersonal relationship his foreign minister was busy de-valuing in the name of “Truth.” Third, unlike Valerie and many PCVs who voluntarily smiled at friends and strangers alike, Jeanette’s bared her teeth in utterly historical terms. Jeanette’s reluctant bodily demeanor scrutinized the visitor as a stranger of whom she possessed no knowledge or historical connection and livened up as the conversation deepened. In short, Jeanette’s preobjective gestures indicated increasing happiness with the closing of social distance. Finally, Mrs. Rhandzo’s body found it difficult to stand at the thought of Ishmael’s poor relationship with his host family. Mrs. Rhandzo’s spoke words of sorrow and lament but it was if it was her body that was really doing the talking. The body perceptions of specific Limpopo villagers described in the vignettes above reveal how a “love affair” with intersubjectivity may be expressed in ways we would not normally think of as loving or interconnected. The bodies spontaneously enraged, worried, dulled-down, and buckled when they sensed breaches in normal social intercourse.

But villagers’ perceptions of connectedness also manifest “positively.” For example, the bodies of close and distant [female] family relatives and, often enough,

first-time [female] interactants can make impromptu darts to a nursing baby and snatch it away from the mother while saying things like, “Ta na” (come here) or “Ndzi ta ku yiva” (I’m going to steal you). The nursing mothers appear happy to have their children so loved and to have the break from childcare. Both women often erupt into “a good laugh” when the children sometimes cry-out as they stretch to get back to their mothers, a scene as available in Southern Italy as in rural Limpopo (New 1988). Related, whether in villages, on public taxis, or in “modern” supermarkets in town, female guardians may hand their children over to [male or female] “strangers” to be held while the motherly figures situate themselves in one way or another. Often enough, the guardians do not even ask but simply hand children to the “strangers” with little if any eye contact that might ask if this transaction is permissible. The “strangers” receive the outstretched children without hesitation. Further, women who may or may not know each other may kiss each other on the lips quickly but enthusiastically when meeting each other, but never between husbands and wives in public. There is apparently nothing romantic in this kissing and is quite ordinary and unmarked in this regard (Blacking 1978). Women more than men tend to curtsy in full or partially when greeting, and representatives of both genders clasp one of their hands around their own outstretched wrist or forearm as they greet others. Clasp one’s own outstretched wrist or forearm is a sign of submission and respect.

When male friends meet each other after significant time apart, they can frequently be seen embracing each other tenderly, though seemingly unromantically as if their bodies could be melted together. These embraces often end with arms dropping and one hand (or perhaps just some fingers) from each man clasping each other gently on the way down while talking. Hands or fingers become unclasped when one of the partners uses an arm or hand motion as part of a conversational gesture. These same embraces and hand-clasps occur among women and, in many instances, between men

and women who are not married. During these and other sorts of hand-holding conversations, eye-contact [of men and women] is minimal, eyes raising and lowering to make contact with the situational flows of the dialogues. The hand-clasping position seems to mean, “My full attention is yours.” This contrasts sharply in detail and ethos with one of Sergeant’s persistent ways of showing he is attending to interactants—an unflinching, almost principle-based, wide-eyed stare into others’ eyes. In all of these widely practiced and oft-occurring ways and more, the bodies of Limpopo villagers feed a sense of inextricable interrelatedness among people into their conscious interchanges with others. Thus, resonating with the objective movements of their bodies to chase down Sergeant, Valerie, and Ishmael and make residential partners and friends out of them, even the most impromptu body habits of Limpopo villagers gesture them toward others for senses of comfort, happiness, and normalcy.

### **DEVELOPMENT BODIES AND PHENOMENOLOGY**

Description, then, which is of course never purely objective, leads to this phenomenon: Grassroots workers from Western cultural milieus and Limpopo villagers from South Africa embody diametrically opposed relationships to the values of autonomy and sociality. Further, their respective relationships to these values are marked by emotions. Whereas Sergeant, Valerie, and Ishmael sought personal space as a relief from stressful residential and friendship situations, their Limpopo interactants experienced aloneness as an unfortunate breakdown in social intimacy. Objective body movements in residence and friendship contexts and perceptual body movements in intersubjective contexts parallel each other to form the material ground of this phenomenon. Insights from “cultural phenomenology” prove indispensable for interpreting this data because the data speaks to embodiment, one of its core objects of study. After this section of the chapter makes use of the beneficial elements of

“cultural phenomenology,” it will show how this sub-discipline of anthropology runs out of interpretive principles to account fully for the phenomenon in question. The dissertation’s attention to development intimacies will lead below to important theoretical innovation.

First, “cultural phenomenology” alerts scholars against the temptation to reduce spontaneous reflexes to biological or natural responses universal to all human beings. Perceptions occur pre-consciously but are not pre-cultural; they are learned (Csordas 1988, Downey 2003). This dissertation’s data confirms this position in multiple ways: Abstractly, networks of grassroots workers in rural Limpopo respond positively to increases in personal space during times of stress whereas villagers react negatively to it. If spontaneous reflexes occurred naturally without culture’s intervention, then the change-agents and villagers should embody identical spontaneities. Concretely, Sergeant, Valerie, and Ishmael, on the one hand, and their respective Limpopo interactants, on the other hand, share specific gestures but manifest them differently in everyday life. For example, whereas Valerie and many PCVs tend to volunteer their smiles to known and unknown individuals alike, villagers, such as Jeanette, find this awkward and habitually smile and become easy-going as they come to know individuals in concretely historical terms.

Second, “cultural phenomenology” asks scholars to understand body perceptions as the ground for conscious and inter-conscious or inter-subjectivity activity (Geurts 2003). The descriptions within the vignettes above provide empirical validation of this principle. Regarding the grassroots workers, for example, Sergeant’s hard hand shakes and eye stares fed his self-assured greetings of his guests; Valerie’s speeding gait propelled her “Okay, talk to me” at Susan; and Ishmael’s exaggerated salutation of the teacher countered his perceptual contemplation, which he had pinned under the cover of his hanging head. On the local side, Mr. Tangona’s decision to

remain aloof from visitors pivoted on his initial bodily perception of tension; Dean fidgeted himself into advising Sergeant about proper human interaction; Jeanette smiled her way into engaging the stranger in friendlier conversation; and Mrs. Rhandzo's lamentations rode the back of her body of despair. In each of these cases and in all cases I observed, an individual's conscious expression lodged in his or her bodily gesturing, itself invoked in the context of intersubjective exchange.

The significance of the principle of bodily-based consciousness and inter-consciousness has to do with the balance it strikes between structural-determinacy and agency (Jackson 1998: Preamble). On the one hand, if consciousness takes cues from spontaneous bodily perceptions that are themselves not instinctive but learned, then human choice is never "free choice" but always socially embedded (Mitchell 2002). Clearly, the decisions made by the subjects of the vignettes congealed within them emotively-laden body perceptions. Sergeant, Valerie, and Ishmael may feel they made unique choices in their distinct residential and friendship situations, yet they each ended up alone in times of frustration. Similarly, Mr. Tangona, Dean, Jeanette, and Mrs. Rhandzo's otherwise distinct choices hinged on their shared bodily-based embrace of interconnectedness and visceral discomfort with autonomy. On the other hand, while body perceptions gave their choices a basic orientation or directionality, they did not determine the contents of decisions. In slightly different situations, for example, Mr. Tangona surely could have angered himself into his house and stayed there and Mrs. Rhandzo could have decided to withhold her feelings about Ishmael's living situation from me until a later day or perhaps forever.

Here, the body-as-ground-of-consciousness is an immanent and, sometimes, explicit (Csordas 1994: Introduction, Jackson 1998) warning against discursive and social explanations that tend to over-determine the subjectification of the body. A discourse analysis might suggest, for instance, that it is their institutional missions that

structure the grassroots-agents into partially or half-participating in Limpopo residential and friendship life. “Cultural phenomenology” says, however, that before bounded bodies go into fully discoursed and socialized action, they gesture (Csordas 1988, Merleau-Ponty 2002). The spontaneity of gesturing creates a moment of socio-temporal distinction between articulated discourse and habitual body activities, on the one hand, and perceptions grafted seamlessly onto the body and enabling of subjectivity, on the other hand. This distinction raises the fundamental question: Is the body at the service of the discourses and societies or are the discourses and societies at the service of the body? “Cultural phenomenology’s” unequivocal stance, which is also taken here, is that all consciousness, social life, and subjective activity, even in highly articulated forms such as discourse, rituals, and revenge, are grounded in bodily perceptions, i.e. in history.

Third, the socio-cultural milieu is, of course, an undeniable factor in human life. Though they end-up acting in semi-autonomous and spontaneous ways in real human experience, perceptions and gesturing take their original, revitalizing, and accommodating cues from *habitus* (Csordas 1988, Jackson 1983) or, shorthanded, socio-cultural environment, which “cultural phenomenology” always and, I contend, rightly considers practiced and historical. With rural Limpopo as its exclusive ethnographic setting, this research finds itself inadequately positioned to observe and detail the backgrounds of the change-agents in their respective countries of socialization. However, I have been able to employ the method of participant-observation to make solid observations of a few of their locally established reference points for comfortable sociality in the Limpopo Province.

For example, Sergeant’s key destination outside of his church in Tuvo Village was the Tzaneen-based Letaba Christian Church (LCC), his local church of sponsorship. The organization of LCC overflows with a correspondence between

autonomous space and the assumption of this space's Godly nature: LCC offers consecutive Sunday services for English/Afrikaans, Pedi, and Tsonga speakers. This distinction among sub-congregations by languages exactly mirrors Apartheid's basis of separation, itself made possible by the felt-need of earlier Christian missionaries to re-organize Southern Africans into the kinds of ethno-linguistic groups found in Europe (Harries 1994). LCC's monthly "combined service" did not recognize an organic connection among its congregant groups as much as it "mixed and stirred difference." The enormous, elevated stage at LCC cut physical space between spiritual providers, including pastors and band members who perched "up high," and congregants seated in three large sections of rowed chairs "down below." Facing each other physically and hierarchically paralleled the flow and content of their discourse, with pastors directly ministering to the assembly, as an "I" teaches a "Him" or "Her," about salvation as individual choice and effort." LCC's organizational style and Christian message was a movement against perceived disorder and toward rationalized divisions between groups, individuals, and spiritual spheres of Heaven and Hell. In short, LCC was Sergeant's body and, so, it was no wonder he found comfort there.

Valerie's two main social circles in the Limpopo Province were her home, which I never visited, and the diocese headquarters in Tzaneen. The latter social space divides discretely into the Bishop's home, a garage and driveway dividing a reception block and an administrative office building, and laborers' living quarters. I spent a significant amount of time in the reception block talking with nuns, especially Sr. Sally who coordinates the affairs of the diocese according to her interpretation of the Bishop's vision of it. Sr. Sally also serves as Valerie's primary confidant.

Ishmael's social life in South Africa involved formal and informal gatherings with other PCVs. Formal meetings with PCVs included several in-service training sessions in Pretoria. PC/SA denied my request to attend these in-service training

conferences. However, Ishmael welcomed me to join him and other PCVs when they met informally. Observations from two informal PCV gatherings at a backpackers hostel outside of Tzaneen prove fascinating. At root, these gatherings amounted to a pocket of time and place where individuals basked in spaces of silenced sociality. Nothing seemed to matter here except that things, especially social roles and institutions, should not matter. PCVs engaged in the ritual whereby male PCVs, including Ishmael, would cook and wash dishes. Female PCVs came and suggested, "Let me do that," to which the males would say each time, "No, you relax." This play with and dismissal of gendered responsibilities proved satisfactory to all concerned. During these informal gatherings, PCVs also unwittingly set out to cut the sanctity of marriage down to size. For someone who does not know the PCVs and their relationships, it would be nearly impossible to walk into a PCV gathering and pick-out the married couple. Multiple female PCVs could be found consecutively and sometimes concomitantly laying their heads on the shoulders or lap of the married man; and male PCVs could wrap their arms around the wife of another from behind. This is not an issue of "multiple partners" or "swinging." The spirit of these marriage "transgressions" seems to be, "We are above the absurdity of having to spell-out that infidelity is wrong. We can brush up against it because we all recognize each other as trustworthy, morally self-controlling individuals." PCVs unconsciously invoked social roles and sociality itself as straw-men to be leveled in the name of self-controlled and abstract senses of individuality.

On the local side, the body-based perception of interconnectedness we saw reflexively expressed in locals' gestures have clear roots in child rearing practices of rural Limpopo. Here are a number of activity types, suffused idiosyncratically throughout Limpopo, in which children find themselves in unmediated body contact with each other and elders: (1) as LeVine and LeVine (1988) found among the Gusii

of Kenya, holding babies approximately eighty-percent of the time and attending to them promptly when they cried made the babies manageable for various caretakers; (2) caretakers of babies, including mothers, older siblings and others, usually hand-feed infants (Krige and Krige 1943: 23); (3) caretakers grab babies and hoist them onto their backs where they strap them in with a towel and often carry them around for hours at a time; (4) caretakers, when bathing for babies, toddlers, and children, stroke their little bodies with firm hands (ibid); (5) caretakers give speechless prompts to growing children to climb onto their backs as if they have no other choice but to obey; (6) caretakers structure children into eating together (ibid: 24), an unmediated mixing of fingers and residual saliva rendered additionally organic by the absence of distancing mechanisms such as silverware for eating and straws for drinking; (7) elders will often handover half-eaten plates of food and started beverages to the young ones; (8) unlike parents in middle-class America (Kusserow 2004) and Sweden (Welles-Nystrom 1988), caretakers and elders rarely if ever teach youth in direct or formal, “I am teaching you such and such,” ways (Krige and Krige 1943: 105, 109, 111, 121). Rather, elders tell children relevant stories of morality (ibid: 29) about animals and giants and model cooking and other techniques indirectly; (9) children know a beating is coming their way when they see a caretaker pick up a stick. At the sight of the stick, the children speed away into the distance (ibid: 104), another Limpopo practice which encodes for physical distancing as abnormal, negative, and natural (i.e. a stick). When children see no whipping sticks in their caretakers’ hands, they experience interpersonal relations as unmediated and easy.

Taking Ishmael and Mr. Tangona as grassroot-activist and villager examples, respectively, resonance clearly obtains then among preobjective gesturing (head hanging / tensing up), objective action (exaggerated greeting / pacing aloof), and social context (social-busting gathering / children eating together). There are two

cardinal ways of interpreting this resonance in “cultural phenomenology.” First, following Csordas (1988), we can say that preobjective manifestations of the development participants beget their conscious articulation in terms of *habitus* possibilities. The “in the terms of *habitus*” phrase evokes a real concern among critics who see Csordas’ conceptualization of *habitus* as over-determining of preobjective bodiliness (Jackson 1996: Introduction). I submit, in passing, however, that “studying up” (i.e. perceptions > actions > *habitus*) may create a sense of *habitus* determinism because of its “this leads that” flow. Slippage, dialectic, and nuance may be recovered simply by “studying across” (i.e. interacting individuals). Here, spontaneous gesturing takes its place in human experience as initiating action between perceiving subjects. Second, Jackson (1983) might have us conclude that the development participants’ perceptions, articulated actions, and *habitus* “are each other.” The evident flattening-out of these analytic moments of human life in Jackson’s work seems to have us end where we ended with Csordas’ ideas, i.e. lacking dynamism. Given powerful criticisms of determinism aimed at Bourdieu’s elaboration of the *habitus* concept (Fajans 1997: Conclusion), perhaps their use of this Bourdieuan idea structured Csordas and Jackson into under-representing the conceptual use and power of perceptions.

“Cultural phenomenology” also exhausts its interpretative potential because of its unbending, if impressive commitment to postmodern criticism. “Cultural phenomenology” captures its postmodern position with the term “Epoche” or “Bracketing off” (Jackson 1998: Introduction). “Bracketing off” involves a principled rejection of modernism’s universal truth claims, which scholars understand as leading to the reification of groups, i.e. *the Tsonga*, *the Pedi*, *the Americans*, denying agency and history, and creating contrived “difference.” This conscientious academic stance loses its interpretive grip on the ethnographic data of the current research on the

microsocial intimacies within development work, however. Here, international grassroots development brings together actors who find it difficult and stressful to live together and be friends. “Difference” lodges objectively in their relationships and material bodies, not in the whims of the ethnographer. “Cultural phenomenology’s” principled rejection of “false” difference has so far precluded it from elaborating an approach to interpreting “real” difference (Piot 1999: 20). How do we amend “cultural phenomenology’s” indispensable insights on relationships between body perceptions, subjectivity, and socio-cultural context to embrace a discussion of the kind of “real difference” present in the data of this research? This study of development encounters leads to the conclusion, “It is time for the bracket to come off.”

### **EMBODYING A REJECTION OF BRACKETS**

One of the key contents within the brackets of “cultural phenomenology’s” “Epoche” is psychology. Scholars of embodiment and perception regard the psychic lives of subjects as an untouchable analytic (Csordas 1990, Jackson 1998). This dissertation’s data on the change-agent / villager interface renders untenable this silencing of psychology. Socialized feelings of ease and tension and of comfort and discomfort stirred Sergeant, Valerie, Ishmael and their respective Limpopo counterparts into perceptually-based action. Further, their feelings oriented them in divergent bodily directions. Interpreting this data demands (1) a reconciliation of embodiment, experience, and perception, on the one hand, and psychic life, on the other hand, and (2) an explanation of how the participating grassroots workers and Limpopo villagers “are each other” at the very moment when their corporeality gesture them apart. Can elaborations on psychology meet “cultural phenomenology’s” high and rightful demand for radical historicity? I submit that tracing their divergent body perceptions back to divergent, formative *habitus* amounts to unacceptably projecting still

unexplained “difference” from a smaller to a larger scale of analysis. This chapter turns now to the scholarship of Jane Fajans whose data and interpretive frame promise to shed light on the residential, friendship, and bodily conundrums of the research participants.

Based on her survey of numerous and independently-written Melanesian ethnographies, Fajans contends that psychic desire transforms into cultural motivation oriented toward an inter-play of the social values of autonomy and relatedness. The key concepts of her argument are desire, cultural motivation, and the social values of autonomy and relatedness. Starting with the social values of autonomy and relatedness, Fajans found these interrelated values central to discussions of the socio-cultural lives of Melanesians: “Autonomy and relatedness emerge from ethnography not as two opposing forces but as part of a dialectical relationship in which the manifestation of one provokes the assertion of the other” (Fajans 2006: 103). The development actors who participated in the current study and who represent various Western cultural milieus and Southern Africa likewise can be observed acting according to these values. Analyses of residential, friendship, and perceptual dynamics indicate that Sergeant, Valerie, and Ishmael experience contradictory relationships individuality and connectedness: While grassroots workers experience autonomy as a relief and [unmediated] relatedness as a felt-challenge to their sense of independence, participating Limpopo villagers experience autonomous space with a tension mitigated by reestablishing intimate, verbal, and physical social contact.

Historicizing her social theory, Fajans understands the social values of autonomy and relatedness in terms of “transformative schemas” (Fajans 1997) which, under normal circumstances, work to convert unfavorable values into favorable ones. The Baining of Papua New Guinea thus worked to transform unpleasant / undesirable “natural” phenomena (e.g. biological families and forests) into positively experienced

“socialized” phenomena (e.g. adoption and gardens). The case of international development personnel involves two distinct “transformative schemas.” On the one hand, “patient” villagers worked to domesticate (e.g. keeping open lines of communication) their “renegade” benefactors (e.g. partially- or non-disclosing helpers). Like the Baining, Limpopo villagers acted with persistence to socialize development workers whom they considered out of [social] control or natural. On the other hand, the grassroots developers worked to convert the “threat” of direct connectedness (e.g. living as a family member with local hosts) into spaces favorable to autonomous selfhood (e.g. self-isolating residentially). Directly contrasting the “transformative schema” common to the Baining and Limpopo residents, Sergeant, Valerie, and Ishmael sought to untie socialized activities and identities and rediscover the presumably pure nature behind them.

As Fajans finds among the Baining of Papua New Guinea, Sergeant, Valerie, Ishmael, and their local interactants experience their socio-cultural values as reversible (Fajans 1997: 8), i.e. moving from the favorable to the negative as well from the harmful to the helpful. This reversible schema manifests, for example, when Valerie leaves her autonomy-building vehicle and ventures out to interact with villagers she finds “Dead to God”; on the local side, it occurs, for instance, when Mrs. Mushwana decides to endure the discomfort of giving up hope for ever knowing Ishmael. Besides “regular” and “reversible” schematic transformations, my research data pushes toward a third kind of transformation, which I call “strategic transformations.” At times, and seemingly against their own interest in comfort, development actors precipitated goal-oriented schematic reversals. Sergeant’s “acceptance of unappetizing food” and Valerie’s “prefigured handshakes” illustrate this concept on behalf of the change-agents. When Mr. Tangona’s withdrew from social intercourse to signal his contempt, he reversed the normal autonomy-to-social schema to make a point. Thus, the notions

of social values and schemas alone significantly enable researchers to recreate in their scholarship the historicity of human agency, a core principle in “cultural phenomenology”.

Fajans’ innovative idea of cultural motivation further captures the historicity of action. Transformative schemas as a scientific concept occur late in human experience; they first manifest as empirical social emotions or sentiments embodied and, thus, practiced by historical individuals. Sentiments do not manifest haphazardly as raw, untamed emotions, however, but rather redirect psychic desire toward some contextually particular inter-play of the persistently-documented social values of autonomy and relatedness. “Cultural motivation” captures the totality and historicity of this entire dynamic. Social emotions or sentiments demonstrably pivoted grassroots development workers and Limpopo actors into full social action. Sergeant, Valerie, and Ishmael frustrated themselves into finding relief in “alone time,” i.e. into reverting socialized products back into an assumed state of naturally occurring existence. The self-isolating moves of the change-agents annoyed villagers, by contrast, into finding ways to stay tied to Sergeant, Valerie, and Ishmael, i.e. into redirecting movements toward disarticulating individuality or “nature” toward thoroughly socialized relations.

Taking stock, there has been no need to force data to fit Fajans’ fact-based interpretive framework; quite the reverse, the data re-drives her keen insights and exceeds them at times, e.g. “strategic reversals.” Another instance of data overflowing the bounds of Fajans’ theoretical framework involves this dissertation’s focus on everyday interpersonal relations. The development-agents and Limpopo villagers did not set out to value and pursue the precise actions that would disturb the other; their demands on each other are what evoked their contrary body perceptions and choices. This data demands to know, “How might the cultural motivations of the change-agents contain the cultural motivation of the villagers, and visa versa, in the immediacy of

their daily encounters?” The schema-concept enables an impressively robust analysis of the change-agents / villager conundrum along two merging lines: From their common desire emerge distinct perceptual- or sentimentally-based actions oriented toward contradictory social values based on divergent socio-cultural milieus and activities. With its respect for psychic life, this forceful formulation promises to cut through “cultural phenomenology’s” principled “Epoche.” In a study of interacting individuals, however, this vertical dividing line inhibits understanding the immediate “each other-ness” of the development participants. A radical empiricist perspective, which finds historicity everywhere, asks if the concepts of autonomy and relatedness are fully historicized. The following analysis affirms as it expands Fajans’ insights by making them more amenable to analyses of radical intersubjectivity.

Consider the following phrases from Fajans’ thesis: “emotions...mediate relations between the *subject* and the *external environment*” (104); “*people* seek to enhance their own *identities*” (108); and “emotions...have both an *individual* and *social* component” (108). For “cultural phenomenology,” the words I italicized in the three representative phrases are instantiations of subject / object, individual / social, signified / signifier dichotomies. The problem with such constructions is that, from the perspective of how subjects experience identity, it starts from the already objectified instead of with perceptions—those instantaneous rushes, as opposed to whole emotions such as anger, fear, and love, which solidify subjects and objects into full blown but ephemeral moments of clarity and wholeness. The great potential in Fajans’ formulation has to do with her concept of schemas which, like Bourdieu’s notion of practice, mediates subject / object dualities. The complication lies in the concept of schemas seeming to mediate un-de-centered subject / object categories. Consequently, inasmuch as the two ideas of autonomy and relatedness respectively signal “individual” and “social” or “independence” and “interdependence,” they are in fully

objectified states, raising the question, “How could they ever interpenetrate or constitute each other?” The moment autonomy is affected by connectedness, it is no longer autonomous. Fajans acknowledges this: “No one can enhance his or power and autonomy without the complicity of others” (112) and “Full autonomy...is tempered by the values of interdependence and nurturance” (113). By definition, the only true autonomy exists in absolute solitude. So the term autonomy must always be qualified in terms of its impossible, wishful, and imaginary, though still historically effective status.

To make the concept of schemas work better for interpreting the kind of radical intersubjectivity focused on in this dissertation, we must work to de-center the objectified notions of autonomy and relatedness and, by extension individual / social, subject / object, consciousness / unconsciousness with which it interfaces. A reformulation must acknowledge the domestication or socialization of all individual action (Bateson 1972, Mitchell 2002), even action that may present itself as autonomous or independent. Fajans contends that desire transforms into cultural motivation toward social values but does not explain why the psychology of desire (i.e. individuality) would *stick* to anything sociocultural (i.e. sociality). Drawing out what Fajans seems to imply, I argue that individuals desire to be social, not anti-social, to *inter-depend*, not *in-depend*, to *fit-in*, not *fit-out*, to say “yes” not “no” to social incorporation, to become, in short, persons society recognizes and recognizes as positive, not as negative—even when fitting-in sometimes takes the contradictory form proving one’s independence. That human beings are social is surely a truism. But it is a truism confirmed by scientific studies that demonstrate not only that we are “hardwired to connect” (Boisture 2003, Burhmann 1986) but that we fail to connect to others to our psychological detriment. Thus, desiring to *fit-in*, not *fit-out* is at the same

time a desire to be healthy as opposed to unhealthy in terms of psycho-social and physical security.

In case it was missed, this study of “development as interpersonal relations” has just un-bracketed phenomenology’s “Epoche”; it has discerned, in keeping with phenomenology’s demand for radical empiricism, a “practiced universal” in the form of body perceptions socialized to spontaneously and constantly evaluate, either by embracing or negating, a psychic desire for connectedness, i.e. for fitting-in, not fitting-out of social relations. Other implications of this formulation, relating for example to ideology, will be drawn-out in subsequent chapters with the empirical demands of the research data. For now, I want to reengage a discussion, started in the introduction, with the theoretical works of Timothy Mitchell and Dominic Boyer. Mitchell identifies a “peculiar metaphysic” in which the world appears resolved into representation and reality, objectivity and subjectivity (1991) and traces its historical construction in colonial and postcolonial Egypt (2002). In a theoretically parallel piece, Boyer effectively calls this worldview a “phenomenology of expertise” (2005a-b) and, despite its experience as a “mind-in-vat” (Boyer 2005b: 245), unveils its dependence on corporeality. I add that bodies socialized to gesture away objective dependencies in order to feel autonomously agentive form the existential ground and possibility of the peculiar metaphysic. This *No-ing Body*, to borrow from Jackson (1983), is the capitalist metaphysic, an impossible psychosocial gesture at ontological autonomy characterizing both.

## **RESIDING AND BEFRIENDING BODILY IN LIMPOPO**

To restate the problem, Sergeant, Valerie, Ishmael, and their comrades within their respective and sometimes overlapping development networks in South Africa’s Limpopo Province, and their village hosts find it nearly impossible to reside together

and befriend each other without significant tension. This situation occurs despite their best wishes to live and befriend in harmony. Villagers participating in the development projects certainly want to know their development-guests fully instead of partially. Similarly, the grassroots workers would like to “walk with the people” as heroes instead of as avenues to wealth. The objective and perceptual body movements of all concerned indicate, however, the existence of a battle of bodiliness contradicting the well-wishing and best-intentions of actors on both sides of the formalized development line.

The bodies of the grassroots-agents and their Limpopo interactants manifest divergent value orientations. Evidently, their bodies have been socialized differently in relation to a mutual desire for fitting-in. The Limpopo social world guided the bodies of villagers to say, “Yes,” to desire for sociality, which is why their most un-reflected-upon cultural gestures express comfort in relations of bodily immediacy and distress in experiencing flashes of over-stretched or de-linked autonomy. On the contrary, the bodies of Sergeant, Valerie, and Ishmael have evidently learned from their historically distinct (and apparently not so distinct) milieus of socialization to say, “No,” to a desire for inter-dependence. This explains why their most spontaneous of socialized gestures, while reflecting unique registers, commonly encounter demands for obligatory interconnectedness fitfully and physical and psychological distancing as a “breath of fresh air.”

There is benefit in tracing these “Yes-Bodies” and “No-Bodies” back to their respective worlds of socialization. In the context of a dissertation dealing with the phenomenology of grassroots development, however, it is important that we can now understand the divergent perceiving bodies of the change-agents and villagers as containing each other in the immediacy of their routine interactions. The gestures of Sergeant, Valerie, and Ishmael negate, make disappear, or silence the intersubjective

intentions of villagers. Villagers, perplexed by the aura and practice of steadfast human autonomy, try to gesture away at the perceptual artifice of autonomy built up in rejection of desire for social inclusion. The change-agents and their Limpopo counterparts do not relate to each other ineffectively simply because they embody different value orientations; rather, they fail to connect because their divergent embodiments embrace what the other rejects and rejects what the other embraces. Differently and socially evaluating a common desire—this is how they are each other even in their embodied contradiction.

The fundamental antagonism of their embodied relations to desire or, simply, of their cultural motivations made their patterned senses of sentimental comforts and discomforts unavoidable. For Limpopo bodies trying to tie-up loose or fully breached social connections, Sergeant's uncompromising eye contact, Valerie's piercing speed, and Ishmael's head-hanging withdrawal, looked like rejection from a family member, i.e. a brother, sister, mother, or father. For development-agent bodies feeling the routine need to realize themselves as distinct entities, villager bodies constantly approaching to clean clothes, shake hands, or just talk seemed like suffocating or trespassing (Kusserow 2004: 91). It is because their "different" cultural motivations presume, implicate, and contain each other preobjectively that relations between the grassroots workers and Limpopo villagers pivot not just on bodies but on sentimentally-laden bodies. Here, cultural bodies speaking philosophically and emotively about the nature of human relations is entirely an empirical and historical phenomenon. Bodies learn to evaluate and philosophize.

During these first, socially reflexive moments of experience, the body perceptions of the participating development actors proved quite learned in their dexterity and strength of orientation. At times, the aid-workers' bodies revealed their socialized wish for autonomy, such as when Valerie's head and shoulders would droop

while she sighed at the sight of “another villager” coming to ask her a question. However, perhaps because of the longevity of their relationships, the gestures of change-agents and locals alike were more effective at deflecting unwanted demands: The legs and hands of Sergeant’s missionary colleague, Tim, learned to pull closer into this body when he was not “up to” holding a villager’s outstretched hand; the body of Ishmael’s friend, Tony, who told me he found local greetings annoying, became deft at “giving into” the warm gestures of village interactants only to “pull himself together” afterwards; and I realize now that, when I was a PCV, I unconsciously trained my body to turn “at the drop of a dime” and move “full steam ahead” *toward* or rather, *at*, like a target, the human source of my potential discomfort as a way to control it on my own terms. Each of these instances suggest (1) generally how perceptual repertoires for *No-ing* desire can grow in number and sophistication and (2) specifically, how consciousness, oriented already against the grain of desire for social incorporation, can, strategize psycho-social security measures, which can seep in as another perceptual manifestation or bodily skill of *No-ing*.

The cultural motivations of the grassroots workers and villagers definitively tied to their self-identifications. Regarding the change-agents, for instance, Sergeant’s body straightened up and stiffened and his eyes opened wide when he used to ask himself the rhetorical question in front of one or some of his congregants: “How can I call myself a Christian if I’m drinking beers at the bar lounge?” In two different conversations with me, Valerie once sat up straighter and once raised up her hands as if saying, “Hold it right there,” when she defiantly called herself “just a [Catholic nun] visitor” who is “only helping people help themselves.” I heard Valerie conceptualize herself in this way five times directly to her Limpopo counterparts at the NGO, her body gestures resonating with the ones just described. For its part, Ishmael’s face used to express a “no way” attitude when he talked to me about his unwillingness to simply

do and get for teachers what he felt they should express interest in learning to do and get for themselves; his voice spoke more confidently when he relayed similar, though subtler messages directly to the teachers during workshops. In each of these cases and more, the identities of these developers link to and are orientated by “No-ing Bodies.”

Numerous studies have recently made relations between identity and embodiment their primary focus (e.g. Garot and Katz 2003, Geurts 2003, MacPhee 2003, Wilson and Csordas 2003). In serving this chapter’s overall purpose of understanding perceptual difference in everyday development encounters, attention to the intersections between identity and perception among Limpopo villagers must be schematic rather than holistic. Villagers of course identify in numerous ways, e.g. by personality, family, chiefs and queens, ethnicity, race, country, etc. Like the scholars above, I found identifying practices perceptually marked. For example, Principal Bayana of Huko Primary School hung her head, exaggerated at the phrase “for me,” as she related, “I went to the funeral in Tzaneen [this past weekend]. When I arrived it was difficult for me to know who the bereaved people were because the law of our tradition says, ‘When a person is bereaved he or she is supposed to be humble to show that it is painful for her or him.’ It was so embarrassing.” Here, Mrs. Bayana identifies ethnically, dropping her head to signal at once her disappointment at people snubbing social customs and her own self-perceived submission to the “law of our tradition.”

Within the specific contexts of the development projects, connections between corporeality and identity of villagers articulated routinely around perceptions of intimacy. We got a sense of this dynamic from the vignette that opened this dissertation. When my PCV friends either folded their arms or fidgeted at the “chaos” of villagers jostling each other to buy Cokes from a spaza shop, my host brother, his face squeezed on one side indicating “figuring something out,” asked whether or not the Americans liked black people. In this, my host brother, like many villagers,

facially ticked into consciousness an idea about identity as intimacy, he and other villagers presumably expressing “proper intimacy” and PCVs falling on the side of “rebuffing intimacy.” A similar dynamic occurred when Mhani Stella, a Pfukani teacher, said in mix of broken English and Tsonga, and with arms outstretched and palms up as if asking, “Why,” “That one [Ishmael], he has apartheid. A nga rhandzi vanhu [He doesn’t love people]. He just sit in the lounge, talk to nobody. If it’s me, I must talk to the teachers. Ku tiva vutomi bya vona [To know their life]. Eish!” Mhani Stella, like my host brother above, sentimentally (i.e. Eish – a popular expression of frustration) armed and palmed her way into tapping into an identifying mechanism, which cast her and all black people, grouped together as victims of apartheid, as “having love” and Ishmael and, by extension, all whites, who are associated with apartheid, as “having apartheid.” Like Mhani Stella’s, the bodies of village participants in the development projects, *Yes-ed* identifications, experiencing associations with interpersonal intimacy as positive and “loving” in contrast to associations with social distancing, which they negatively characterized as “having apartheid.”

When Sergeant, Valerie, and Ishmael and hosts of other networked development workers all independently “chose” to distance themselves from residential and friendship situations they found over-bearing and stressful, it was their spontaneous perceptions, and certainly not their minds, fundamentally doing the talking. On an idealistic level, the grassroots workers, as we have seen, waxed romantically about the rare and privileged opportunity they had in living up-close with “the people”; in practical terms too, however, they justified their movements away from local life in what we might call wholly positive terms. Sergeant, for example, explained his departure from the Pelesi household as a need to live closer to the church; Valerie justified residing in Tzaneen in terms of the conceptualization of

herself as a visitor empowering villagers to help themselves, as opposed to depending on others; and Ishmael rationalized his move into host family's garage room as a way of ensuring fair contributions by family members, including himself, toward electricity, food, and other bills. Their express views of friendship too appear benign on the surface: Thus, Sergeant disappointingly talked about his inability to "go deep" in friendly conversation with locals as he did with me; Valerie spoke about friendship as something that could be sacrificed for the important, Godly work she performed; and Ishmael parleyed a wish for "true" friendship based on "loving each other" instead of on "what can you do for me."

The stakes prove higher than their self-validations suggest, however. The *Yes-ing* bodily gestures of locals provide the perceptual ground for conscious attempts at transforming their foreign benefactors from unbounded strangers into fictive kin, from untamed nature into socialized and controllable residents. Villagers' conscious efforts at making brothers and sisters out of Sergeant, Valerie, and Ishmael service their own senses of domesticated subjectivity (Nyamnjoh 2001, 2000) and social identity, including Tsonga and Pedi expectations of residentially hosting and befriending foreigners. The perceptual and express attempts by Limpopo villagers to socialize their visitors contradict the socially embodied wish of the change-agents to feel autonomous of *involuntary* or socially-prescribed relationships. The *No-ing Bodies* of the development workers assiduously deflect the socializing gestures and commentaries of Limpopo hosts, creating a sense of purified autonomous space for themselves, even, and perhaps especially, in a crowd of villagers. Their *No-ing Bodies* further concretize their negation of desire for relationality in their reflected-upon decisions to routinely isolate themselves in their homes, vehicles, or on vacations to "regroup" or to revitalize their subjective energies. As engines churning out socially submissive individuals, Limpopo host families and local-styles of friendship encode

for an embrace of the very same desire the change-agents perceptually repress in order to identify personally and publicly as they do. Submitting to local residential and friendship expectations spells the death knell for how Sergeant, Valerie, and Ishmael experience themselves; it is tantamount to “going native.” This is why they couldn’t live together and be friends.

But this is all to state the matter negatively, i.e. what could not be consummated. However, the grassroots workers succeeded at *No-ing* much of their life worlds into relatively stable binaries. Sergeant, Valerie, and Ishmael did more than just pull back into their homes; they labored to produce their first and probably most resilient artifactuals. Artifactuals refer to the institutional instantiations of the “peculiar metaphysic of capitalist modernity” (Mitchell 1991) which attempts to resolve the world into structures standing apart from their apparently pure producers (Mitchell 2002), objects apart from subjects. In speaking and practicing their homes spaces into bounded areas for the production of autonomous self-certainty, the grassroots workers transformed their households into artifactuals, precipitating the emergence of a phenomenological distinction between private space “in here” versus public space “out there.” Not only are private / public domains not naturally occurring distinctions (Comaroff and Comaroff 1999: 19, Kasserow 2004: 88-89) but they work toward institutionalizing the peculiar psychosocial shape of *No-ing Bodies*. Though quite stabilized, the artifactual of private home space had its ontological claim routinely challenged, for example, host family members drinking from Sergeant’s cups and host sisters washing Ishmael’s shoes were experienced by the grassroots workers as “crossing a line,” “going too far,” “invading privacy.” Valerie more surely established her phenomenology of private versus public space by living far away from the villagers with whom she worked; she of course also never invited her Limpopo interactants to visit her at home.

In addition to producing relatively tangible experiences of private / public domains, the grassroots workers, in withdrawing from potential friendships which unsettled rather than affirmed their discrete senses of self, also hardened the line they perceived between self and other. In this sense, gesturing themselves into experienced senses of atomized corporeality and internal subjectivity produced another and, indeed, the existential artifactual—the autonomous self. The ultimate ontological insecurity of this artifactual was evident, for instance, when Sergeant, Valerie, and Ishmael all reached out for “true” friendship only to be hurt by the deception and lies of local hosts. Whereas scholars have previously understood the line between developers and the developed as a discursive construction, we must now seriously qualify this. As the grassroots workers drew lines around their private homes and autonomous selves, they created, for themselves, phenomenological distinctions between self and other which, in their historical ventures, manifested as developer and developed, Christian and pagan, educated and ignorant, expert and non-expert. The development line itself was *No-ed* or negated into phenomenal existence through the mundane activities of eating, drinking, cleaning, and befriending apart from Limpopo villagers. The dividing line itself must not be considered a mere intellectual or discursive effect, for it was produced amidst the dynamic sentiments of discomfort and anxiety and, thus, congeals them and is fundamentally sentient. The development line, like the residential and friendship lines, owes its existential possibility to *No-ing producers* whose agency turns on a felt-need to silence its constituent objectivity. Discursing social distinctions occurs late in human experience, though it undoubtedly then serves as another context for attempting to naturalize binarisms.

While *No-ing Bodies* are the emotional / gesturing roots of phenomenological binaries, it is not only these sorts of embodied subjects who can engage the dyadic terms and occupy its practiced spaces. As has been shown elsewhere, Africans have

come to terms with social milieus rearranged, with their complicity, in terms of Western binaries such as cemetery versus home space, Christian versus heathen, and modernity versus tradition (Greene 2002). This is perhaps nowhere more in evidence than in South Africa's Limpopo Province where, as we saw in Chapter 1, most villagers have gained a conscious mastery over Western modernity's key symbols and evaluative frameworks. As Chapter 1 began to understand, however, it would be wrong to theoretically connect these villagers' basic sense of optimism to Western modernity. Limpopo villagers experienced hope in terms of connectedness, irreducible enmeshing of subjectivity and objectivity.

This is why they socialized the suggestions of autonomy intrinsic to missionary-Christianity's call for monogamous marriages, etc. and sought Western modernity's signs and materials while being profoundly sensitive to others' perceptions of their efforts and progress. Such domesticating activities reinforce their existentially embodied embrace of desire on which their senses of self, interpersonal relations with others, and identities are based. If concepts such as bricolage, adaptation, and alternative modernities have overstated cultural mixture at the expense of discerning fundamental changes in the "terms" Africans now use to understand themselves and the world (Greene 2002), then a focus on "terms," language, and discourse overstate change at the expense of existentially embodied continuities in African agency across the terms "colonial" and "post-colonial." It is not just that subject and object must always interpenetrate; it is rather that Limpopo villagers, and perhaps others within and outside of Africa and Western spaces, *value their interpenetration*; they *hope* the next individual will be impressionable, convivial, open to negotiation, in short, comfortable with his or her objectivity that makes experiences of unmediated forms of interdependence possible.

It has been, I hope, obvious to observe the power of perception in this chapter, for interpersonal relations have been turned inside out for the sake of scientifically ogling this otherwise unassuming phenomenon. Turned right side out again, the intense battle of bodiliness between Sergeant, Valerie, and Ishmael, on the one hand, and their Limpopo interactants, on the other hand, is easily lost sight of amidst a whirlwind of mundane talk, pleasant conversations, strategic negotiating, shared terms, routine work, and other phenomenal activities occurring relatively late in human experience. How could the image, for example, of Sergeant jovially wrapping his arms around the shoulders of David and Solomon and swaying them back and forth be anything but an innocent if not positive encounter among individuals in a development context? We now understand Sergeant's determined, forcible display of togetherness as a product of a *No-ing Body* which says, in essence, "Let's [plan to] be social" as opposed to experiencing relatedness as normal or unremarkable. Re-imagined back into the experiential background of their interpersonal interactions, this perceptual skirmish hauntingly more than blatantly unsettles the residential and friendship attempts of the change-agents and their Limpopo hosts. In Section III, we will follow their interpersonal encounters from the supposedly "private" spaces of residence and friendship to the apparently "public" space of work. We do so by engaging two topics central to Development Anthropology, participation and side-effects. It will become clear that personal relationships, in conjunction no doubt with discourses and institutions, have great impacts on development work; concomitantly, private (informal individual relationships) versus public (formal group activities) spaces will be shown not so much to interpenetrate as much as defy separation in the first place.

**PART III: YES-ing and NO-ing DEVELOPMENT**

## **CHAPTER SIX**

### **EMBODYING PARTICIPATORY DEVELOPMENT**

The previous section of the dissertation illuminated the significance of interpersonal relations in contexts of foreign assistance; it concomitantly showed how intimacy misunderstandings occur outside as much as inside formalized work spaces as within them. Indeed, the inside-outside divide was seen to be constructed out of everyday residential, friendship, and interpersonal comforts and discomforts rather than resulting from purely mental activities. The current chapter moves forward and shows how relationship miscues, now understood to be grounded in distinct and interconnected regimes of embodiment, unsettle a recognized development issue: local participation.

Before doing so, however, it is important, first, to come to an understanding of what we mean by “participation.” Thereafter, we will provide an overview of how anthropological scholarship has critiqued real-world attempts by development agencies to include beneficiaries in their own “take off.” While this scholarship identifies several problems with participatory aid initiatives, the general conclusion is that participatory approaches to development have half succeeded at best, which is to say they have failed. My data on three grassroots initiatives in rural Limpopo confirms that participatory efforts are largely undermined in practice but stresses that this is due as much to everyday miscommunication as it is to larger structural problems, such as reliance on chiefs and donors to make development decisions.

#### **PARTICIPATORY DEVELOPMENT IN ANTHROPOLOGY**

In our effort at understanding the notion of participation, it is not necessary to craft an exact history of the concept’s discursive emergence. A brief but illuminating history of

“participation” has been rendered elsewhere (e.g. Rahnema 1992). The current aim is to introduce the reader to the issues and concerns being addressed by the use and criticism of the participation concept. Achieving this aim will be facilitated by a schematic, as opposed to a precise understanding of the history of participation.

Participation, it has been noted, is fundamental to being a human being (Rahnema 1992). We are innately given to relate to others because we are social beings. In this view, we simply participate because we are. As a concept within the discourse of development, however, participation emerged in the late 1950s (ibid). Grassroots change-agents and activists first articulated the importance of getting locals to participate in their own development. Their contention was that benefits of development at the time were not reaching the neediest people because these neediest people were precisely the ones not contributing to the planning or implementing of projects. The development establishment, and particularly states, however, saw people’s participation as a threat to their then newly found political power of the 1960s. It was not until states in the 1970s realized that they could actually extend their influence through people’s participation in development projects that they publicly embraced participatory approaches to aid. One of participation’s attractions was that it had become a fundable concept, and NGOs, in their idealistically drawn position between states and local communities, were considered perfect outlets for donor funds. Thus it became that a coalition of grassroots workers, states, NGOs, and donor organizations ushered in the era of participatory approaches to development.

Discourses of participatory development depicted and continue largely to depict the notion of participation as an unquestioned moral good (Fisher 1997). Looking at specific ethnographic studies that discuss the issue of participatory development, we learn that US-based, religious NGOs working in Zimbabwe in the 1990s and 2000s idealized participatory methods in Christian terms (Bornstein 2005).

Bornstein thus found that personnel of Christian NGOs likened their participatory commitment to Jesus walking with the people as opposed to trying to affect change from a distance. In his studies of charcoal production in Senegal, Jesse Ribot (1999, 1995) observed that the development discourses of powerful merchants and political interests coalesced around the notion of participation, viewing it positively as a more efficient way to manage resources, transact costs, and make decisions (1995: 1588). Shifting to more abstract discussions of participatory development, Pauline Peters captures the concept's idealism as the "ability of people to share, influence or control decision-making and authority in development projects" (1996: 2). Richard Peet and Elaine Hartwick summarize the participatory ideal as the "capacity of exploited grassroots people to articulate and systematize their own and other's knowledge so they could become protagonists in defense of their class and in the advancement of their society" (1999: 140). In short, refashioning development as a participatory project has devolved a litany of ethical imagery, ranging from development now being grassroots and liberating to it being more efficient and respectful of beneficiaries' forms of knowledge and knowing.

Despite its view of itself, participatory development has turned out to be not so inclusive of local views after all (Peters and Hartwick 1999: 2, Weisgrau 1997: 97, Rahnema 1992: 124). There are six, interrelated and discernable reasons for participation's failure that I have identified within anthropological literature of development. First, grassroots activists, in spite of their presumed good intentions for including locals in their own progress, nevertheless assume their own superiority of knowledge and try to push their "educated" views onto locals (Peet and Hartwick 1999: 141). Rahnema explains the self-contradictory behavior of many change-agents: "When A considers it essential for B to be empowered, A assumes not only that B has no power—or does not have the right kind of power—but also that A has the secret

formula of a power to which B has to be initiated” (1992: 123). To illustrate this first point, Weisgrau found that representatives of local, urban-based NGOs in northwest India tried to explain to village women that their economic hardships resulted from gender inequalities. In this, the social workers were advancing a feminist critique onto the situation of rural India that was apparently foreign to village women. Weisgrau writes,

“At one point during this lecture a village woman spoke out. She said that her problems were not caused by being a woman. She said that her husband didn’t exploit her, nor did other men in her village. Her exploitation, she said, was from ‘your Rajput cousins’—the landowners in her village” (1997: 99).

This piece of ethnographic detail shows that NGO personnel, who are not necessarily “Western” in geographic origin, short-circuit participatory ideals by pushing what they *misperceive* as simple truths onto situations which locals understand quite differently. Sergeant and Valerie, we will see, were particularly prone to follow in this pattern.

Social workers who assume that their feminist orientation will be accepted by all women speak to a second reason that participatory development is having only partial success, the naivety of the change-agents. As humanists who take ideologies such as “individual choice” for granted, many grassroots activists assume that participation is a voluntary exercise among self-directing, responsible adults. The reality is, however, that individual choice is, as everywhere and always, contextualized by a variety of political concerns (Peet and Hartwick 1999: 142). Local beneficiaries of aid have their own uniquely shaped “power plays” and thus their own understandings of participation. Believing, as Christian NGO personnel did in Zimbabwe (Bornstein 2005: 126), that the mere presence and use of a participatory discourse meant locals were self-developing, change-agents often fail to see and

acknowledge local forms of participation. It would not easily occur to many grassroots activists, for example, that their local “participants,” including many in my case studies, may be heeding the call for local empowerment less for ideal reasons than for the belief that working for NGOs is a route to personal upward mobility (Weisgrau 1997: 186-7, Bornstein 2005: 124).

Indeed, scholars have noted that participation has been an issue conceived and debated by interests, such as Western donors, multilateral organizations, and states, ironically far removed from local / beneficiary contexts. Participatory development as essentially an “outsider issue” is thus a third reason cited for its faulty implementation. In the most basic sense, participation is cited as an outsider issue in that it was first debated and established in places far outside of local, client communities (Weisgrau 1997: 99). Bornstein specifies that participatory development speaks to Western donor expectations of democracy, egalitarianism, and individual potential (2005: 114), as opposed to local values or versions of the stated values. Weisgrau found not only that the participatory “debate” reflects values foreign to beneficiary communities but also that specific NGOs may reflect the foreign values of their individual initiators (1997: 100). In addition to the participatory ideal reflecting foreign values, it has also been called an outsider issue in the sense that many NGOs may have promoted it in order to secure donor funds that were being earmarked for projects incorporating participatory development strategies (Bornstein 2005: 121). What a supervisor for a Christian NGO in Zimbabwe says makes sense, then: “Most people don’t want participation; they don’t want to participate to have things work” (ibid: 131). If participation is an ideal foreign to beneficiary communities, many beneficiaries may indeed not understand why they have to participate to get services they may feel entitled to as citizens of states.

Another indication that participatory development is a concept and movement mobilized external to recipient locales is that its articulators and apologists often depict host communities as ideally homogenous and non-contradictory (Bornstein 2005: 120-1). This idealization of community is thus a fourth factor cited by scholars for participation's lack of success. Bornstein writes, "PRA [Participatory Rural Appraisal] assumed that there was a unitary, coherent community to be developed, that it would develop itself, and that it would eventually finish being developed" (ibid: 120). As Bornstein found in Zimbabwe, however, "communities" were often rife with internal conflicts that casts serious doubt on the efficacy of PRA. For example, World Vision, one of the Christian NGOs studied by Bornstein in Zimbabwe, hired a member of its host community to serve as the project bookkeeper. World Vision staff understood this hire in terms of its up-to-date commitment to local participation. One evening, the bookkeeper was suddenly overcome by illness. A traditional healer diagnosed the illness as an "evil spirit called chikwambo [pl: zvikwambo] that had been sent to kill him" (ibid: 142). The bookkeeper explained to Bornstein that he thought that because other community members were jealous at his apparent success and disturbed by the pride success had engendered in him, they wanted to kill him. This case shows that while NGO and other development personnel may perceive "communities" in ideal-typical terms, the reality is that they are drawing people in to participate from locales that are likely fraught with contradictions at least along the lines of gender, marital status, age, and class. Weisgrau adds the nuanced observation that idealizing "community" further makes it difficult to understand who is a community insider versus an outsider (1997: 98). Her point is that local NGO workers who are from urban areas will not necessarily understand villagers just because they are all from one country—as was the case with Sergeant. In this case, an NGO social

worker from an urban center may be just as foreign in his or her ideals and expectations as one from “The West.”

One consequence of idealizing the concept of community may be to assume that certain community representatives will be truly representative of his or her local consociates on various sorts of development committees. The issue of non-representative representatives is a fifth reason cited for participation’s questionable success (Peters and Hartwick 2000: 6). In his study of charcoal production in Senegal, for instance, Ribot found that while representative councils were formed under the pretext of participation, the councils were beholden to national figures (1995: 1594). Similarly, although most villagers wanted to evict charcoal producers for devastating village forests on which locals relied for food and other products, this decision rested primarily with the chief. Far from being a “free” actor, the chief’s choices were largely structured by relations with powerful merchants and political and religious figures who supported charcoal production (ibid: 1587-8). Wood cutting and charcoal production thus continue unabated. In these two instances in Senegal, there are local representatives but *who* they represent ends up being the developers instead of the so-called beneficiary community. Another form of non-representative representation is when aid initiatives target only one analytic segment of the target population, such as women or youth (Weisgrau 1997: 172). Referring to NGO work on gender inequality in northwestern India, Weisgrau concludes,

“A development strategy that targets only one group in a village also has the potential of fragmenting the community; development programs that target SC/ST groups [new terms for old castes] and exclude the poor of other caste groups and communities foreclose an alliance based on common poverty and lack of state resources. An exclusively gender-based development strategy may therefore prevent the formation of strong cross-gender village-based alliances” (1997: 172).

A final oft-cited reason given for the partial success of participatory approaches to development argues that, far from being unproductive, these approaches successfully and efficiently bolster state power. In an overview of articles focusing on participatory development, for example, Pauline Peters notes how development discourse, in bracketing-off politics along the lines of Fergusonian analysis (1990), silences the participation of states as well as the politics intrinsic to locally understood forms of participation (1996). In the specific context of charcoal production in Senegal, Ribot argues for participatory development as a new form of indirect colonial rule. He writes, “Participation is a modern reproduction of indirect rule when it uses local non-state authorities [i.e. chiefs] to legitimate and carry out external projects of the state and international organizations” (1996: 46). Maxine Weisgrau (1997: 103), following Rajni Kothari (1986), suggests that NGOs in India in the 1980s facilitated state rule through decentralization and participation policies. These policies, Weisgrau contends, helped to link rural areas to international capitalist markets.

Some of the aforesaid dynamics were discernable in the three grassroots projects discussed in this dissertation. It is arguable that the dynamics compromised the participatory commitment of the aid initiatives. For example, Valerie’s HIV/AIDS initiative, Kurisanani, targeted local Africans who tested positive for the disease. This may seem logical, but focusing on only one analytic segment of the local population created some structural dilemmas that can be argued to impact the ideal of participatory development. Volunteer careworkers resented the fact that, for all of their hard work, they were compensated less than the clients for whom they cared. This was a doubly hard pill for the careworkers to swallow when they realized that many of their clients were finding ways to stay sick-enough to continue receiving relatively lucrative monthly government stipends for people with disabilities. From the

perspective of careworkers, Kurisanani failed to make participatory development an attractive prospect.

While it is possible to analyze my data according to insights on participatory development above, I wish to make a different point. Notice that development projects that proclaim to use participatory techniques have not been assessed at the analytic level of intersubjectivity. I propose to make such an assessment below. Here are a few observations concerning the analyses of participatory development above: First, the ideal of participatory development is concerned with the question, “Are the beneficiaries working toward their own improvement?” This is a practical, on-the-ground matter that asks us to note if, for example, beneficiaries are speaking-up at planning meetings, providing critical assessment of implementation procedures, etc. To understand participatory practice in terms of chiefs, politicians, merchants, donor expectations, and activist ideologies is, therefore, to approach the issue from the top-down instead of from the ground-up. Insofar as the analyses of participatory development try to wrap-up the matter using categories external to or “above” actual grassroots activities, it may be said that these analyses of participation are ironically failing to include the beneficiaries of development.

Second, we saw in Chapter Four that anthropologists may overlook the importance of friendship because it seems like a small scale issue when compared with more objective social structures such as kinship and formalized age-sets. Is it possible here too that analytics such as chieftancy and capitalist merchants are preferred categories because they denote objectivity and bigness, whereas intersubjectivity is a much more slippery notion to deal with for its perceived smallness and suggestion of subjectivity? Perhaps this is so. Instead of approaching the problem of participatory development from “above,” my druthers, in concert with the overall aim of the dissertation to revisit development in terms of everyday interactions between

individuals, is to understand it as tied up with intersubjective experience from “below.” The questions are: How do Sergeant, Valerie, and Ishmael get along with their respective local counterparts; is communication effective or problematic; and what does participating actually mean to everyone concerned? Before addressing these questions, however, we will first see that the three improvement initiatives discussed in this dissertation were indeed overtly or assumed to be participatory projects.

### **PARTICIPATORY INTENTIONS OF PROJECTS**

The Christian NGO workers in Bornstein’s study of faith-based development in Zimbabwe were aware of scholarly and professional debates dealing with participatory development. During my investigation, I found no such familiarity among the grassroots workers or their African hosts with these debates. Instead, the change-agents’ wish for local inclusion in their respective projects manifested practically, as if they became committed to participatory development via more popular, less specialized discourses and practices. In terms of verbalized participatory sentiments, Sergeant would stress the importance of his local church leaders in setting examples of Christian conduct for other congregants; Valerie frequently reminded me, and perhaps most importantly herself, that she was just a visitor and that the responsibility for the HIV-AIDS project rested on the shoulders of her local village counterparts; and Ishmael used to say with hints of frustration that if teachers were not enthused about participating in their own advancement, he would not simply do the work for them.

Photos, and images etched in my mind’s eye, give further credence to the argument that the three aid initiatives studied here are thoroughly steeped in an era of participatory development. In the photos of its 1960s and early 1970s manuals and reports, the Peace Corps represents itself in terms of mostly young and racially diverse male and female PCVs who are busy transferring knowledge to darker skinned locals

of the so-called Third World. In many if not most of these photos, PCV bodies are typically higher than local bodies, leaning over them in order to teach, direct, or administer shots and other medicinal remedies for illnesses. This was clearly the time when successful development was perceived as transferring Western, scientific knowledge to the formerly colonized. Speed up to today's Peace Corps brochures and you will see that the bodies of the PCVs have dropped to the level of their local interlocuters and that it is difficult to discern who is teaching who. In a significant number of instances, PCVs and locals seem to be simply engaged in informal, tit for tat conversations. We can imagine that such quotidian conversations between PCVs and beneficiaries took place even during the 1960s and 1970s. What is important here is that development organizations such as the Peace Corps find it necessary to illustrate their success nowadays with images that resonate with locals' participation in their own progress.

The central Tzaneen office of the Kurisanani NGO represented itself pictorially in its 2005 report just as the Peace Corps currently depicts itself in its pamphlets. Of the few dozen pictures in the report, only two show grassroots activists helping locals in a unidirectional manner: one is a white, middle-aged doctor sitting across a desk from a small boy who is flanked by the Catholic nun who accompanied him there; the other shows white, presumably female hands holding one of the hands of a sickly black boy who is outstretched on a bed. Even these exceptional photos are only humbly unidirectional, for the doctor is shown receiving information from the child patient and the body and arms of the nun have been completely cut away from the picture. In the dozen or so pictures in which there appear a change-agent and locals, the two development partners are always captured as being on par with each other. Their arms may be draped around each other, or they may be sitting or standing side-by-side, or, as in one photo, they may be drinking coffee or tea together. If I were

positioned to snap photos of Sergeant at various times, he would have been seen interacting with his African congregants similar to the way PCVs and nuns are now photographed relating to locals. During special events at his church, Sergeant seemed to delight in wrapping his arms around the shoulders of his two local, male leaders, Solomon and David, and swaying them side-to-side as if a gentle breeze were blowing them. It was their on-the-ground commentaries and their organization's photos and photo-like postures, as opposed to plain statements, that pointed to the commitment of Sergeant, Valerie, and Ishmael to participatory techniques of development.

For their part, Limpopo villagers were also excited, if sometimes anxious about the prospects of in-coming development projects. Thomas Pelesi, Sergeant's first interpreter, spoke of the "miracle" of a white man, and an Afrikaner at that, coming to reside and proselytize among Africans. Dean becomes giddy when reminiscing about how Sergeant would lead congregants out on weekly "home sells," though Dean now miffs over Sergeant withdrawing his leadership from this activity. Regarding the health development project, Valerie's local colleagues welcomed Kurisanani as an opportunity to develop their clinical skills, upgrade their qualifications, and qualify for higher paying jobs, usually imagined to be nursing. Meanwhile, teachers at Pfukani and Huko Primary Schools had looked forward to meeting an American and were excited to witness the material improvements he or she would bring. The term "he or she" is significant here because it attests to some reservations teachers also had about the in-coming foreign guest. Many teachers wondered and cared about the gender and age of the volunteer. Older female teachers hoped the volunteer would be an older man, not for romantic considerations but because this kind of person would be presumed to have the maturity and "contacts" to lead the schools toward progress. All of the teachers say they were anxious to get to know an American.

## CONTRADICTING PARTICIPATORY IDEALS IN PRACTICE

It would be difficult to imagine international development projects more committed to local participation and empowerment than those facilitated by Sergeant, Valerie, and Ishmael. Yet their participatory intentions were regularly unsettled if not undermined, evidenced by how all the change-agents independently weeded-out unwelcome local ideas, suggestions, and customary approaches to solving problems. A consensus had grown among congregants, for example, that while Sergeant would routinely welcome the views of his youthful followers, he would only implement these views if they coincided with his; otherwise, Sergeant was said to dismiss locals' ideas as quickly as he welcomed them. Similarly, local leaders of Kurisanani complained that Valerie tried to force her ideas to be followed. In terms of everyday sorts of behavior, Valerie, locals grumbled, would dominate what were supposed to be fully participatory meetings with her local leadership team. Meanwhile, primary school teachers suspected Ishmael of hiding useful development information from them. Following are examples of how development activities, overseen respectively by, Sergeant, Valerie, and Ishmael, promised local participation only to break the promise in practice.

Sergeant facilitated the establishment and running by locals of prayer groups, specifically for small children, pre-pubescent girls, pre-pubescent boys, teenage girls, teenage boys, and women. Sergeant expected the sub-groups to meet once a week for the purpose of institutionalizing the remembrance of Jesus between Sunday services. The women's group soon split internally between mothers and childless women. The mothers initiated this separation on the basis of the village belief in the social superiority of empirically fertile over barren or childless women. During the combined meetings, mothers represented their higher status by wearing *dukus* or scarves around their heads, a customary, if sometimes unreliable display of female maturity in rural Limpopo; mothers also often spoke condescendingly toward their scarf-less

counterparts. Finally, disgruntled by their felt-inability to speak openly with the childless women about “big people’s things,” the mothers raised the idea to Sergeant of dividing the group into two locally palatable sub-sections. The lead mother, Betsy, reported to me with distaste, “He [Sergeant] refused with an angry face,” souring her face to mimic her recollection of his. When I confronted Sergeant about this matter, he frustratingly said, “I’m trying to teach them that everyone who believes in Jesus is equal. The way they divide themselves by who has a child or not or how old or young someone is not Christian and I’m trying to break them of this cultural thinking.” After several more meetings, the women’s group did not merely splinter but altogether disbanded, the women never again convening during the week and some of them avoiding Sunday services from then on.

I am aware of several occasions on which Valerie’s colleagues tried to make their benefactor understand, though apparently to no avail, the importance of attending funerals. One Sunday, Valerie organized for a Mass at Bonketsi’s Catholic Church. The Mass would be extra special because the Bishop himself would lead it. Laura came to the church early and stayed for just a half an hour before leaving for a family funeral. The next day, Valerie scolded Laura, asking her how she could choose a funeral over any Mass, let alone one led by the Bishop. Laura responded, “I’m not going to bury myself.” Here, Laura was referring to the local social practice whereby funeral activities, such as digging graves, visiting and consoling the bereaved, and contributing funds toward funeral costs, are carried out and financed communally. When Laura asked how she would bury herself, she was saying that if she failed to help care for funerals, and particularly family funerals, few if any people would arrange for her burial. Rather than accepting this bit of locally understood wisdom, however, Valerie, who trumpeted the importance of Catholic gatherings over all others, dismissed it as an inexcusable excuse.

As a participatory technique, Ishmael administered questionnaires to teachers that asked them to identify their schools' problems. Teachers said they wanted developments such as computers and computer classrooms, an office, new school buildings, and televisions and VCRs. To me, Ishmael dismissingly referred to these improvements as "stadium projects," i.e. large, material objects that signaled development and wealth. Having observed the educational environment of the schools, however, Ishmael grew to believe that stadium projects were far from what teachers really needed. What they needed, Ishmael concluded, was a revolution in their critical thinking skills. Critical thinking skills would empower local educators to work by themselves toward acquiring the sorts of "stadium projects" for which they hoped. Ishmael embarked on developing teachers' analytic skills by offering to help construct lesson plans and to teach proposal writing. In a letter he sent home and to which he made me privy, Ishmael shared his strategy:

"I didn't get much info from the surveys. But I took what I got and tried to make a list of possible things I could work on. To this list I added some of my own ideas of some things I could help the school with. So, next time I had a meeting with the school to discuss things I could help with, I planned that (if I didn't get any replies when I asked what I could help with) I would put this list up and use it as a starting point to discuss what and how I would help the school."

"As expected (I got a feel for what to expect pretty quickly), I got stared at again. So, I put the list up and tried to use that as planned. That didn't work. Somehow, I don't remember how exactly, but basically they all wanted everything. I couldn't get them to vote to prioritize the list or anything. So, I made a spur of the moment decision: I was going to start all of them off on alternatives to corporeal punishment."

Meanwhile, the teachers believed Ishmael knew exactly how to use his American status as leverage to develop their poor schools and only coldly refused to help. For

his apparent unwillingness to access available assistance, nearly all of the teachers concluded, “He has apartheid in his heart.” The third grade teacher at Pfikani Primary School said, “He’s just like an Afrikaner.”

## **ANALYSIS OF SUPERFICIAL PARTICIPATION**

*Expecting Volunteerism.* At this point, perhaps we can intuit how interpersonal dissonance is creeping up into and unsettling participatory ideals. Let us take a closer look. There are several interrelated entry points for unraveling why participatory development ideals only partially succeeded. Let us begin with the change-agents’ common expectation of volunteerism (Peet and Hartwick 1999). Sergeant expected locals to voluntarily participate in their own spiritual development. Teenaged congregants of Tuvo Christian Church, for example, protested secretly to me that Sergeant would call on groups of them to perform various sorts of hard manual labor around the church, such as digging dirt and removing weeds, and never considered rewarding their efforts. Brian said of this situation, “He [Sergeant] thinks we just want to work for nothing. That’s why he eats and drinks tea while watching us work. Sometimes he gives us tea only, tea only, when we’re finished.” A number of youth boys, including Brian, shared with me that when Sergeant occasionally offers monetary compensation for particularly grueling work, Sergeant seems to intentionally delay payment to the boys for weeks and sometimes months. “So many people are poor in this village; they need that money to buy food and he’s holding it like money doesn’t matter,” Dean griped on behalf of Brian and others who typically labor for Sergeant and the church. While Sergeant, like NGO staffers in Udaipur, India, deemed it “unfair and dishonest” (Weisgrau 1997: 189) for villagers to personally benefit from his Christianizing mission, villagers felt they deserved reward for their work.

Like Sergeant, Valerie also presumed villagers would participate in her AIDS awareness, treatment, and prevention project with a spirit of charity, especially since it was, as she felt, for their own benefit. Speaking of her own charitable motivations, Valerie said to me, “I never experienced a desire for children. I like helping people I don’t know because it’s part of our religious calling, religious life; it’s the Christian response to life.” Valerie complained frequently to me that her NGO leadership team, as well as the village-based volunteer care-workers, agitated incessantly about being poorly compensated for their work. Valerie said to me during an interview, “We all need money, but only so much. We shouldn’t be greedy. If those [villagers] who have it could share a little bit more—they need to be educated in this.” “Educated in what way?” I asked. Typically slow to identify herself as a proselytizing Christian, Valerie hesitated before responding, “A love of Jesus.”

Valerie tried to convince her colleagues that doing the work “from their heart,” in the same way that Jesus helped people unconditionally, should motivate their actions, not the lure of money and particularly the material things it affords. Even her evidently favorite local co-worker, Bill, who was anxious at the time to raise enough money to marry his girlfriend, found himself on the receiving end of Valerie’s impatience for demands for higher compensation. Bill confided, “When I asked Valerie [just a few week ago] for more pay, Valerie turned me away [flicking his hands away], ‘Don’t worry. God is good all the time. He will provide’.” Already married to an abusive, alcoholic man who only irregularly gave her spending money, Lateef was searching desperately for funds to build two new rooms to accommodate her six children at home. Upon asking Valerie for extra pay, Lateef recalls, “She [Valerie] told me she wants me to work for free, stipend only, to simply be a volunteer.” Valerie’s expectation of laboring freely for the sake of God found institutional support within the Tzaneen Diocese. During a Mass at Bonketsi Catholic

Church, the Bishop said, as if prearranged to deflect local demands on Valerie for greater material benefits, “It’s important to fill-up the family and make it strong. That doesn’t mean it has to be rich. People have material needs, yes. But what’s important is to have a spirit of faith.”

Significantly younger than Sergeant and Valerie and engaged in putatively secular as opposed to religious development work, Ishmael nevertheless shared with his missionary elders the expectation of voluntary participation by locals. Ishmael usually spoke to the issue of volunteerism via the word “caring,” by which he meant doing good works for their own sake. This PCV expected himself to care, a quality I feel I share with him and which, in large part, forms the basis of our enduring friendship. Sickened by the decadence of city life in South Africa and beyond, Ishmael pondered his preferred lifestyle in a diary entry: “It’s like I have to give up so much of myself so that I can be poor, so that I can feel like I’ve done all that I can, so that I can feel like no one can say you didn’t give it all for others / God.” After this diary entry comes Ishmael’s indelible comment, which we remember from Chapter Three, about wanting nothing more than a single patched-up garment, the shirt of which he would take off of his back for someone who needed it. Ishmael would probably be reticent to say he expected as much from locals, but this expectation bled through occasionally, particularly during times of frustration:

“In person I mentioned the idea of different levels of understanding and how teachers here tend to reduce any teaching method to its base level. Relating to my situation I must now ask myself how do I get teachers to teach understanding. Teachers don’t seem to care and they lack understanding (often) of the stuff they teach. It’s a frustrating challenge. Seemingly impossible to surmount. I thought maybe I could trick them into certain effective teaching methods but now I’m realizing that I’ve got to get them to care before they’ll do anything.”

That Sergeant, Valerie, and Ishmael should idealize an agency of volunteerism and expect it of themselves and their Limpopo collaborators and beneficiaries should come, by this time, as no surprise. We have seen that their most spontaneous body gestures, even while revealing their distinct individualities, worked to give Sergeant, Valerie, and Ishmael senses of themselves as purely autonomous individuals. Whereas William Hanks only suggests the possibility of bodily based ideology (1996: 234), here we empirically confirm his suggestion. Body perceptions that gesture away irreducible intersubjectivity in order to imagine independent selfhood (1) culturally negate desire for relatedness and, therefore, (2) misrecognize the social bases of their own constitution. The change-agents' *No-ing (Negating) Bodies* structured or oriented, but did not determine the detail of their conscious decisions to reside and befriend apart from their socially oriented Limpopo hosts, colleagues, and beneficiaries. Although the grassroots workers understood it in their own unique ways, their common and viscerally felt expectation of voluntary participation by locals represents another project and reinforcement of their *No-ing (Negating) Bodies*.

*Voluntary Truths.* In addition to sentimentally expecting locals' participation to conform to their ideals, each of the grassroots-agents further justified his and her position with reference to self-verifying truth claims, unanimously God in these instances. Speaking to me about how he believes voluntary work serves village youth more than him, Sergeant, in a way typical for him, said, "As they work for the house of God they will come to value it more than their own homes. This is what we want—putting your work in line with the 'truth' instead of evil things. This is what will save these young ones from the 'fire'." Sergeant believed his own volunteer spirit spoke for itself. He said to me, "God is preventing me from starting my own business but maybe he wants me to use my knowledge to plant a church and help the village economically."

Had they known each other, there is of course no guarantee that Sergeant and Valerie would have liked each other. They agreed from a distance, though, that a love of Jesus, and not the lure of money and material modernity, ought to motivate the actions of their Limpopo colleagues to work indefatigably for development.

We began to observe above how Ishmael habitually talked about “caring” with God as his reference point and motivation. He said he wanted to “feel like no one can say I didn’t give it all for others / God.” In discussing with me how he managed frustrations during his early days as a PCV, Ishmael shows that his allusion to God is not transient but routine. In a diary entry, Ishmael remembered, “I drew a lot of strength from religion. Especially the parts where God says don’t worry about it, do what you can.” Without breaking narrative flow, Ishmael has God talk with “people,” who are evidently South Africans, about the need for self-motivating energies: “There are people who will call you a fool, whine about being oppressed when they aren’t. Don’t worry about it, do what you can and then they will have to deal with me [i.e. God].” Resuming his own voice, Ishmael concludes, “You do what you can and then trust God to mete out justice in the end.” Within the same discourse, Ishmael more clearly shows that he has been referring here to South Africans and particularly with his frustrations with their lack of drive. He laments, “What reason / urge do I have for working when no one around me is motivated? It’s my own will power and the support of friends that keep me going.” By “friends,” Ishmael of course meant fellow PCVs and companions in the U.S.

If expectations and practices of volunteerism receive sustenance from *No-ing (Negating) Bodies*, *No-ing (Negating) Bodies* perceive their own autonomy in reference to claims of objectivity, of pure knowledge untainted by social factors. When Sergeant, Valerie, and Ishmael separately but commonly invoked God / Jesus and logical abstractions in discussions of local volunteerism, they were speaking out

against the desire for sociality they were socialized to repress in order to experience themselves as self-complete individuals. Their expectations of voluntary participation were thus demands for interpersonal relationships which reinforced rather than problematized their very senses of self. No wonder, then, that the sentiments of frustration and anger accompanied their discussions of villagers' "laziness" and "selfishness." Also, no wonder that Sergeant, Valerie, and Ishmael, as if one person, dared not venture far from their godly logics in order to know Limpopo colleagues and beneficiaries on social terms.

*Superficial Integrating.* Including the ideas and wisdoms of beneficiaries in their own development implies an ability to know them in a holistic and sincere way. Sergeant knew precious little about the lives of his congregants. Squirt spoke for all the church goers when he said to me in the company of his cousin Steve, "Sergeant knows my face and name but he doesn't know my life at all. You [me] already know me better [even though this is only your first time visiting me at my house]." Even David, one of the church leaders and a regular companion for Sergeant, agrees with Squirt's sentiment. While visiting his home in the neighboring village of Shamasulu, I asked David, "If you were pastor of the church for a week, what would you do similarly and differently than Sergeant?" Choosing to answer the "differently" part of the question first, David responded, "I'd get to know people personally instead of just waving and smiling as you pass by in your car." David continued, "In the end all you know of the people are their smiles and waving hands. I want to know people's personal problems." Sensing a chance to clear his name, David concluded this portion of our talk, "The other congregants think Sergeant and I are so close [bringing his two forefingers together], but he doesn't know my life and I only know his about sixty-percent." "After ten years [of Sergeant living here]?" I queried. David simply said, "Yes."

Valerie had little interest and, perhaps, ability to socialize her ideological knowledge down to local contexts. Indeed, her superficial integration into Limpopo life, as perceived by her colleagues and beneficiaries, rivaled that of Sergeant Kurisanani's HIV-AIDS clients tended to be reserved in their comments about Valerie, predictably ending complaints with concessions about how much she has helped them with their viral struggles. During a visit to her house in Bonketsi, Hope, a Kurisanani client, said, "Valerie likes to say, 'How are you feeling today?' She knows how to ask, 'How are you doing?'" Her husband Thomas, who is also a Kurisanani client, distilled the significance of his wife's self-restraining comments when he added, "Valerie doesn't want to be known and we don't know her, just greetings only." Katrina, another Kurisanani client who lives in a village a few miles southwest of Bonketsi, observed with a sense of self-restraint, "Valerie knows my place, my house [Katrina turned her head slightly toward her shoe-box shaped home]. But she has never gotten out of her car to come into the yard and sit down—like you're [me and Chobi] doing now." Disappointed, Katrina concluded, "I don't know Valerie at all."

Valerie's local colleagues at Kurisanani echoed similar sentiments about their foreign benefactor as the clients. Lateef, for example, said, "I don't know Valerie at all. I didn't have any chance to stay with her. She always comes and goes so quickly." Lateef continued, "Sometimes I call her to say, 'When can we talk?' Valerie says, 'Oh, don't worry, we'll talk.' But still no talking." Valerie's favored co-worker, Bill, expressed to me privately a similar experience with Valerie: "I started [working] with Valerie in January [2005]. Whenever I tell Valerie my [marriage / financial] problems she pats me down, [saying] 'it's okay, don't worry.'" Locals experience Valerie's responses to their inquiries and complaints as flippant, distancing techniques in which Valerie withdraws herself from being socially implicated in local lives. Valerie

affirmed their experience of her as reluctantly social during an interview with me. After Valerie named a few non-local people with whom she felt she could speak on personal bases, I asked Valerie why she felt she could not open-up to locals. In response, and as captured in a vignette in Chapter Four on friendship, Valerie plainly stated, “They don’t need to know [my personal life].” I asked if she knew their secrets to which Valerie answered, “No.” I continued by asking Valerie what she did not know about the lives of her colleagues and patients. “I don’t know what they eat for breakfast. I don’t know when they sleep at night. I don’t know what they like to watch on TV.” I said, “And you don’t want to know?” “I don’t need to know everything, especially about the people I work with,” Valerie ended.

Ishmael amassed knowledge about South African and Tsonga life generally and about the schools in particular. Of the schools, he writes in a letter home, “To really understand it [the situation of the schools] I’ve found that I spend a lot of time just observing and listening. I try really hard to just collect large amounts of information.” It is instructive that Ishmael uses terms such as “observing and listening” in conjunction with “large amount of information,” for it speaks to how he managed to take in information without socially infusing himself into the work life of his colleagues. On several occasions, teachers, in the spirit of sharing their lives with him, took Ishmael to observe special events, such as weddings. Mrs. Baloyi shared with me her perplexity in Ishmael hardly saying a word as they drove together to a wedding. Mrs. Baloyi confronted Ishmael, saying, “You don’t talk a lot” and her bewilderment magnified when Ishmael responded with a smile. Back at Huko Primary School, teachers said Ishmael was insensitive for eating of their food almost daily and never thinking to bring his own dish to share with everyone. Repeatedly, Ishmael was “right there” in the company of his hosts, acquiring information while managing to de-socialize the context of acquisition. We are now halfway to understanding the partial

success of participatory development in Sergeant, Valerie, and Ishmael's respective spiritual, health, and educational aid initiatives. A contradiction has already surfaced: Change-agents, who are considered non-participating from local perspectives expect Limpopo counterparts to participate fully in grassroots aid work. This is the precise moment when participatory ideals lost traction, for Limpopo villagers distrusted what they felt were anti-social and, more precisely in the current context, anti-participating individuals. To be trusted one must holistically participate in local activities, i.e. one must show him or herself to be a social person. Absenting this condition, most villagers are not likely to disclose information to you.

*Loss of Trust.* This realization began materializing for me upon asking Mr. Swakina, principal of a primary school in my host community, how to elicit truthful answers from informants. Mr. Swakina told me, "You have to show you already know half the truth." An incident involving Sergeant and Dean substantiated Mr. Swakina's insight: A self-restraining Sergeant and an intoxicated Dean faced off against each other on church grounds on the night of New Year's Eve, 2006. Dean told me a few days after the encounter, "If he [Sergeant] said, 'I know you've been drinking, just tell me why,' I would have told him [the truth]." Instead, however, Sergeant, who heard from David about Dean's binging but pretended not to know to test Dean's willingness to volunteer honesty, asked the uninformed question, "Have you been drinking, Dean?" Dean said he scrutinized Sergeant's answer and face and found, "He didn't know anything, so I tightened up my [intoxicated] body and said, 'No'." Speaking to me in front of several other congregants, Dean continued, "If he [Sergeant] wants to know, he should come with us. You see, you [me] know our [drinking and pre-marital sex] secrets because you're not afraid to be with us." Knowing half the truth is like a badge saying that you have, somehow and somewhere, submitted yourself to social relations.

Being social, in the form of “being there” intimately in space and time with others, is experienced by Limpopo villagers as sign of maturity. When Brian noted (Chapter Three) that Sergeant was probably in his house, “biting his angry lip” in anger after Brian and other boys called him on his favoritism, Brian perceived a link between what he evaluated as Sergeant’s immature, if imagined lip biting and his self-isolating or anti-social behavior. This experienced association between maturity and social inclusion embeds broadly in Limpopo social practices.

For example, children who ask parents or caretaker-figures, “What’s in your [pregnant] belly?” the uninformed or objective nature of the question elicits the deceptive response, “Ku na vuswa,” or “It is porridge.” Similarly, when slightly older children ask, “How does a baby come out,” the out-of-touch inquiry prompts caretakers to misleadingly answer in the Tsonga language, “Swithlangi swi huma endzaku,” or “Babies come out from behind [i.e. the anus].” Such deception corresponds nicely with Oriya mothers in India explaining menstruation to children “by telling them they [i.e. the mothers] stepped in dog excrement or touched garbage, or they evade the issue” (Shweder, et. al. 1990: 196). Showing no sign of knowing something in Limpopo marks a person as a stranger, foreigner, locally undomesticated and, thus, untrustworthy—at least regarding a particular social practice. The implicit question is, “If no one else around here has trusted you enough to let you in on what’s going on here and how we do things, why should I trust you?” Individuals, including children, who exhibit little to no evidence of socializing in local life and knowledge do not get their queries rewarded. In a second example, young lovers who intend to marry but are not yet legally tied feel ashamed of their union. Because of their sense of shame and immaturity, they keep their unlawful and un-socialized relationship secret from their respective caretakers and from elders generally. When the youthful lovers finally strategize the financial means to pay for their wedding, it is with great relief

that they can finally “bring each other home” to meet their parents and in-laws. The truth, i.e. local voices, emerges locally when proper sociality is observed; it is rarely volunteered otherwise and being lied to is your reward for remaining disconnected. Dominic Boyer (2005a-b) uses the term “phenomenology of expertise” to describe experiences of decorporealized knowledge practices. In rural Limpopo, villagers, who perceive knowledge as something earned through intimate participation in social life, may be said to value learning through a phenomenology of intimacy.

As noted in previous discussions of residence and friendship, Sergeant, Valerie, and Ishmael failed to “be there” in satisfying ways to their local counterparts. We realize now that in “failing,” they were preserving the ideological integrity of their autonomy-based identities. Sergeant’s superficial integrating into village life, from local perspectives, is the stuff of legend among Tuvo residents. Besides smiling and waving from his car, Sergeant has accrued infamy for refusing to attend funerals. His absence is particularly embittering to Tuvo residents because, as pastor of the first and only church in their village, Sergeant is expected to deliver the socially important eulogy for the deceased. Sergeant repudiates local funerals for the presence of what he sees as anti-Godly ancestral beliefs and practices (see Chapter Seven). It is common for bereaving women to shout out to the spirit of the dead person as he or she is being lowered into the hand-dug grave. “That is devil worshipping,” Sergeant said with a sense of disgust about this particular practice. Dean harbors resentment toward Sergeant for failing to attend and eulogize at his beloved mother’s funeral just a few years ago. Dean’s sister, Sue, quit the church in large part because of what she understands as Sergeant’s inexcusable absence from her mother’s funeral. It is not a stretch to view Sergeant’s absence at this particular funeral as precipitous of Dean’s counterinsurgent actions (see below) against the church. Given that Dean is related to and the leader of a significant number of other congregants, Sergeant’s withdraw from

Dean's mother's funeral and funerals in general may have inflamed the ire of many of his congregants against him and his church.

While villagers trusted Valerie to care for them medically, they lost faith in her ability to interact as what they perceived as a proper social person. As E. Jensen Krige and J.D. Krige observed of South Africa's Lovedu culture of alcohol consumption more than six decades ago, part of being "properly social" in rural Limpopo is not appearing to hurry others or be in a hurry (Krige and Krige 1943: 26). Yet Valerie made it a routine, from locals' perspectives, to prematurely jettison scenes and people and this disturbed her local interactants, including some of her clients. The married couple living with HIV / AIDS, Thomas and Hope, are a case in point. With Hope nodding in agreement, Thomas said, "We're scared to ask Valerie deeper things. We don't feel free with her because she's always in a hurry." Thomas then offered another reason they have lost hope in socializing with Valerie, a reason I heard echoed often by Laura and her brother-in-law, Gaul. Thomas said, "Valerie likes to talk down to people." As if they had discussed this many times between themselves, Thomas and Hope dropped their heads, mimicking their impression of a head and neck posture made by Valerie. I have witnessed Valerie in this posture. When someone presents Valerie with a personal problem, she will often put her arm around the person, bend her head in toward him or her with an expression of sympathy on her face, all the while saying, "Awww," as in the colloquial English expression, "Awww, poor baby." In addition to Thomas and Hope, several of Valerie's co-workers believe Valerie's sympathy is fake and untrustworthy.

In keeping to himself, or not "opening-up" in local vernacular, Ishmael incurred the distrust of his colleagues at work. Many teachers took Ishmael's social reserve to mean he was hiding important development information from them. The kreshe / primary school teacher at Huko Primary School, Mrs. Wateta, for example,

told me that if she were in Ishmael's shoes, she would inform the teachers of what she is doing, what she plans to do, and "most important" what she has been "able and unable to do." Mrs. Wateta illustrated her point in the following terms: "I'd tell the teachers I had no luck finding computers so teachers know this." Moving to interpret Ishmael's behavior, Mrs. Wateta concluded, "Ishmael is selfish in the sense of not offering information, he's holding back information." Mrs. Wateta exemplified this point, saying, "I once asked him about life in America. He said he cannot answer because he only has two days at each school," meaning he was too busy to respond. Mrs. Wateta's colleague at Huko, Thomas, was one of many teachers who felt Ishmael was hiding information. In a sort of veiled threat, Thomas spoke to the consequences of Ishmael's secrecy, saying, "This doesn't build solidarity." Stan of Huko Primary School also believed Ishmael was concealing development information, though his interpretation differed from that of his co-workers: "White people know how to smile holding in anger, while they're thinking or feeling something totally different." What I knew as Ishmael's righteous intentions to purify his thoughts, actions, and speech was judged by his fellow educators as sneakiness.

*Withholding Information.* If the grassroots-agents' avoiding full participation in local life led to them not being trusted by their Limpopo interactants, then this consequent lack of trust resulted in locals deceiving and hiding information from their foreign benefactors. If Sergeant backed himself into a corner, waiting for the day congregants would come to their senses and rush forward to work and live life tirelessly in the name of Jesus, congregants responded to his social withdraw with subterfuge. Let us take an extended look at how Sergeant's congregants maintained their socially-based activities without their benefactor's knowledge. Sergeant believed that of his 100+ young members of Tuvo Christian Church, only a handful or, "Less than five," as Sergeant told me, drink alcohol and engage in premarital sex. In my

capacity as fieldworker, however, I frequented the homes and leisure destinations of the Tuvo congregants and knew that 90% of the teenage boys and girls participated in both religiously illicit activities. I once used a stick to sketch a rectangle shape into the dusty ground at Dean's house. I asked Dean's cousin, Teres, who everyone confirms is one of the few older, alcohol-free virgins at the church, to dissect the rectangle to show the proportion of sexually- and alcohol-active teenagers at the church. He drew the line on the far right side of the rectangle, showing close to 100% of congregants being involved in religiously illicit activities. Dean quickly followed, "Most of these [pointing to the smaller section of the rectangle] are just too young but they'll be over here [pointing to the larger section of the rectangle] soon."

Indeed, Dean was a central figure at the church and made it his conscious mission to deflower virgins at the religious sanctuary. Tall, handsome, talented, and charismatic, Dean did more than succeed. The virgin girls clamored for him to succeed. Referring to himself as "The disease of the church" because of his deflowering mission, Dean's behavior must be understood in a few interrelated contexts: First, while the majority of post-pubescent congregants engaged in the religious sin of premarital sex and Sergeant's prohibition against drinking alcohol, these youths, both boys and girls, found partners outside of the church; they did so because Sergeant, during Sunday services, spoke the church girls into an untouchable or "off limits" status that most boys feared to transgress. Dean's particular daring was not deflowering virgins, for they desperately wished to experience sex. His daring was smashing the "off limits" status of girls within the church and pursuing them tenaciously, though subtly. At the time I first met Dean, he had already seduced seven of the church's virgins. On New Year's Eve, 2006/07, Dean had sex with two drunk virgins of the church, at slightly different times, in the one-roomed kresche or pre-school just outside of the gates of Tuvo Christian Church. Second, Dean felt

consciously guilty about violating what he saw as a good principle of the church, i.e. abstinence, as the self-chosen word “disease” of the church indicates. Yet he more profoundly found Sergeant’s proclamation of abstinence unrealistic and wrong. If Sergeant assumed he was the head of the church, Dean was its true leader behind the scenes, easily influencing receptive congregants to abide by their “God-given feelings that men and women feel for each other,” as Dean put it.

Sergeant’s insistence on remaining abstinent prior to marriage, as well as the thought of him still being a virgin at the age of thirty-eight, bewildered congregants. Among themselves, and often enough to Sergeant directly, male and female congregants asked if Sergeant was a man with manly feelings. His answer that, yes, he had those feelings but that he controlled them for the sake of the Lord proved incredulous to his village followers. After the first year of my two years of fieldwork, a rumor began circulating throughout the village that Sergeant must be taking *pillies*, i.e. medicine, to control his sexual urges. With groans of approval from friends and relatives who attend the church, Emmanuel asked me, “If he’s [Sergeant’s] taking *pillies*, why doesn’t he give us some so we can be like him?” Teeky’s mother pointed to her daughter, Francis, who is another widely confirmed teenage virgin, saying, “Sergeant and Francis are the same [in status].” The punch of this comment is that their extreme age difference should correspond to differences in status, with Sergeant being fatherly, elderly, and wise, and Francis being daughter-like, youthful, and inexperienced. Sergeant’s abstinence put him in the same category as Francis—immature, childish, and inexperienced. Most congregants and their caretakers at home ultimately concluded that Sergeant was lying about being a virgin and that he secretly had girlfriends. Living openly autonomously is unimaginable to the villagers. This half-believed conclusion created a silly situation in the minds of congregants: If

Sergeant would just come clean about being a man like any other man, they all could engage in manly activities together instead of hiding them from each other.

It was Sergeant's socially hesitant lifestyle that made his religious appeals incredulous. Congregants asked, "How can someone who has never experienced sex tell us anything about sex?" Congregants complained frequently too that they could not bring themselves to listen to Sergeant's advice because he was not married. Listening to an unmarried person was, for these teenagers, like listening to a child. Almost with one voice, dozens of congregants pleaded with Sergeant to get married in order to prove himself a social and, thus, "normal" person. In this, locals were trying to show Sergeant how he could more effectively influence and change them! Sergeant only responded, however, that although he did want to marry, he had to wait for God to confirm a marriage partner for him.

Sergeant's most loyal and trusted leader, Solomon, was at the forefront of pushing Sergeant to marry. Solomon had a girlfriend, Bapela, at the church and he desperately wanted to marry her in order to engage her sexually within the bonds of matrimony. However, Solomon could not stand the thought of getting married before Sergeant, his elder and his pastor. Unable to wait any longer, Solomon and Bapela made love at night in the only place of solitude to which they had privileged access, Sergeant's church, and on a table on the preaching platform to boot. After searching in all of the usual places to find his confidant, Sergeant finally found Solomon and Bapela engaged inside his church. Crushed that one of his strongest converts lacked the self-control he thought he was flawlessly imparting, Sergeant disciplined the couple for six months. Discipline included removal of leadership status, in the case of Solomon, and remaining silent during church services for both congregants. In their new status as "disciplined congregants," Solomon and Bapela joined what seemed a fast increasing number of pregnant teenagers at the church.

Sergeant's perception as an unapproachable change-agent had ramifications well beyond Solomon's individual case, for this status elicited "stealth mode" in nearly all of the congregants. Sergeant was indignant during one particular Sunday service. As Sergeant fumed and tried to incite the young congregants to guilt, Squirt whispered to me what had happened: A group of teenage congregants from Tuvo Christian Church went on a religious retreat with a group of teenagers from Pam's missionary church. At night, as everyone was lying down on the floor in preparation for sleeping, Pam asked who was committed to disengaging from friends at school who talked about and encouraged teen sex. None of the Sergeant's congregants stood up as prompted and only a few of Pam's did. Embarrassed and hurt by what he perceived as the moral ineptitude of his congregants, Sergeant railed against them this particular Sunday:

"Why are girls getting pregnant? Why are boys not virgins? Where are the believers? What's the difference between us and the school? It's happening in the church! Where's Jesus? We're standing on the word of God. How can you say, 'I'm a child of God,' when sisters and brothers are living in sin? Some say, 'I love Jesus but I won't stand for him in certain things.' How can you be a light for the world? How can people come to Jesus Christ if you're not standing up for him?"

Sergeant then organized a mass confession. He commanded congregants to raise their hands high if they swore there and then to abstain from all premarital sexual intercourse. Everyone raised his and her hand, though not high and strong enough. Sergeant demonstrated as he told his congregants, "If you're sure, don't raise your hands half way. Don't let your arm be bent. If you're sure about abstaining from premarital sex, raise your hands high." Everyone stretched his and her hands very high. Clearly pleased, Sergeant next organized for rows of congregants to come to the front of the church to confess:

“All of you get on your knees. This is confession. You’re going to speak to God. God will change your heart but you must be strong in your decision. You must not turn back. Lord Jesus, today I make a decision to give my life to you. You died for my sins. I ask for forgiveness. Change my heart. Take control of my life. Become my father. Thank you Jesus that you are my father. My faith, I believe you have died for me so that I can have life today. Thank you Jesus that my name is today written in the Book of Life. In Jesus’ name, Amen.”

Upon speaking with a few of the congregants outside of the church after this service, they all said, independently of each other, that they raised their hands and confessed because they did not want to hurt Sergeant’s feelings. From their perspective, they were being Godly by protecting someone’s feelings, even if that meant lying. Their exploits of intimacy carried on unabated.

The most prominent instance of unabated sexual intimacy once again involved one of Sergeant’s most trusted local leaders, Solomon. Sergeant used to tell me about one of his best and most loyal converts, Bapela, Solomon’s girlfriend. Upon me asking of her whereabouts, Sergeant told me she was visiting relatives in Johannesburg. It was not long before I learned from other church participants that Bapela was actually just a few villages over, hiding her pregnancy from Sergeant in the company of family members. Without being able to explain why, Sergeant observed that Solomon began acting strangely at about the same time Bapela presumably left for Johannesburg. Solomon stopped attending church regularly and voluntarily handed over his responsibilities as leader of the children’s group to Steve. In one particularly acrimonious episode, Solomon withdrew from leading Sunday service on behalf of Sergeant, who would be gone for Christmas holidays. Other congregants, all of whom knew about Solomon, Bapela, and their pregnancy, explained that Solomon could not stomach the hypocrisy of standing in front of church congregants as if he were

different or more righteous than everyone else when his sexual activity made him just like them. For Sergeant, who everyone kept in the dark about Solomon's situation, Solomon was simply letting him down. Then one day Bapela returned to Tuvo with a baby, believing that although she betrayed Sergeant's trust, he would forgive her at the sight of the new life she had brought home. Instead, Sergeant refused to visit Bapela and the baby. During my and my wife's visit to Bapela, the baby, and their family, Sergeant walked past the house and toward the church. I said, "Should I go and talk to him?" Bapela's mother said, "Go (and talk with him)—don't be childish like him."

As I accompanied Sergeant down the rest of the short dirt road and into the church gate, he was indeed glum about the news he heard second-hand from David. Sergeant explained to me how particularly negative this news was since it was a leader of the church who committed what he resolutely believes to be the sin of premarital sexual intercourse. "If the leaders go astray, how can I expect the rest to keep straight?" he rhetorically and hurtfully asked me. Then he explained how he learned of Bapela's pregnancy: After David, who later confirmed to me that he told the pastor, reported the pregnancy to Sergeant, Sergeant phoned Solomon and "asked if he fathered Bapela's baby and he said yes." Then Sergeant asked Solomon how this happened and "Solomon said he didn't really know. I asked him how he couldn't know because sex is so up-in-your-face and personal." This comment prompted Sergeant to follow with a related thought, "I strangely hear from people that they're on drugs or something when they're having sex." After this reflective tangent, Sergeant continued, "I called Bapela who was by that time back in Tuvo. She confirmed everything." During the next Sunday service, Sergeant announced that Bapela and Solomon would be disciplined for six months. Many children in Limpopo may be named one to two weeks after being born. When I left Sergeant at the church and returned to Bapela's house, Bapela asked Brian to tell me that she had decided to

name the baby the Pedi equivalent of “plenty more,” a direct, self-conscious repudiation of Sergeant’s approach to love, pregnancy, and forgiveness.

Valerie’s NGO staff also kept her in the dark about their socializing activities at the work place. For example, although Valerie noticed Laura driving a new car to work at times, Laura avoided telling Valerie its history. The vehicle belonged to Laura’s boyfriend, a married police officer whom she had been dating for several months. The officer would leave his wife and many children home, allow Laura to drive him to work and take the car, only to be picked up by Laura at the end of his shift. As a gesture to the officer’s wife, who later discovered and was hurt by the affair, Laura pushed Valerie to give her a job at Kurisanani. This was a hard sell because Valerie’s objective was, according to her village interactants, to transform Kurisanani into an-all Catholic institution and the officer’s wife was not Catholic. Laura pushed so hard, however, that the wife got the job and she and Laura are now friends. Laura understood Valerie’s insistence on the separation of work and social life. Instead of heeding to the *No-ing* or sphering of life, Laura, by living out her social life within a work environment, maintained the integral connectedness of the different activities. Valerie knew Laura as a co-worker and not as an intimate social friend. In accordance with local understandings of knowledge via participation, Laura showed Valerie her work face but not her personal one, even though it was right under Valerie’s nose. How a wife and her husband’s extra-marital love-affair became friends and co-conspirators in finding employment for the former will be taken up in the following chapter on “corporeal intentions.” Let us turn now to Ishmael and his teachers’ withholding of information from him.

Ishmael collected formal information relating to the running and objective history of the schools, e.g. budget, curriculum, class schedules, and Bantu education policies. However, teachers kept him in dark about personal issues. In a diary entry,

Ishmael claims to have accepted the teachers' exclusion of him from personal intercourse: "Day 2 [of keeping diary] – No school. No one told me that. Not really mad about being left out of the communication chain, I've gotten use to it." Upon eavesdropping once on a conversation among several teachers at Huko Primary School, Ishmael whispered to me that he thinks Mrs. Gugunyana has a sore tooth. He followed by asking me rhetorically why the teachers acted like this tooth ache was a secret to be kept from him. More a part of the "communication chain" than Ishmael was, I had known about the tooth issue for days, and particularly about Mrs. Gugunyana's speculation that witchcraft was involved. I was also "in the know" for weeks about Thomas' termination from his teaching post when Ishmael stumbled upon the information. Ishmael said he had mixed feelings about Thomas' termination. Ishmael was happy that "Thomas, his arch rival, is gone but sad he had to lose his job." Attempting to further gauge Ishmael's efforts at getting to know his colleagues, I asked him, though I already knew, if Thomas had family who might also be affected by his termination. Ishmael said he thinks Thomas does have a family and that while he has never heard Thomas speaking of a wife he is sure he has a child. In fact, Thomas had an unemployed wife living in village hosting Huko Primary School and two children, one of whom Ishmael knew about because she attends Huko and the other a two month old baby.

## **CONCLUSION**

The grassroots workers *negated* participation; that is, in expecting volunteerism, they idealized participation at the expense of material considerations. Such sphere-ization of participation is more than just resonant with the grassroots workers' bodily perceptions; it is their bodies, which, because they have shown to be fundamentally *No-ing bodies*, worked to make their own and others' bodies—or materiality, in the

case of the social activity of participation—dead to sensuous connectedness. It was thus an embodied ideological stance to experience their knowledge as either religiously pure, withdrawn from sources of sensuous, social constitution. Their sentimental frustrations with what they perceived as lazy and reward-hungriness in locals sensed, better than their consciousnesses, the existential threat to their personal and social senses of themselves as autonomous; and these sentiments expertly precipitated the grassroots workers into actions which re-substantiated their culturally constitutive negation of desire for connectedness. This act of psycho-social preservation manifested as heated rebuffs of locals' demands for material compensation as well as superficial integrating into local life, which, while they are culturally distinct activities, commonly encode for a reification of ideal over material, mind over body.

Meanwhile, Limpopo villagers, whose *Yes-ing (Affirming) Bodies* orient them toward unmediated forms of individuality, experienced no discord between ideal and material aspects of participating in the aid projects. Indeed, they clamored for their unity, attempting to pull grassroots workers into material, as well as ideal, relationship. Their efforts rebuffed by what they viewed as partially constituted and, thus, immature foreign guests, villagers chagrined over of their developers' self-distancing and felt cornered into seeing them as permanent strangers, as so far untamable nature, undomesticated autonomy. Their interactions with autonomy, and particularly with such an uncompromising brand of it, menaced villagers' sense of interconnected selfhood and identity, and so they distrusted and capably out-manuevered it. Structurally, villagers asked why they should participate with half-participating individuals. We can empathize with this dilemma, intimated elsewhere (Rahnema 1992: 127): To represent the true voices of villagers, the grassroots workers would have had to have “gone native” or become local social persons and, by

definition, reconstitute the very motivational forces which inclined them to go and help people; meanwhile, in order to stimulate their benefactors into unbridled action on their behalves, villagers would have to “go Cartesian,” proving themselves self-starters yet sacrificing the foundational basis of their agency. What Pauline Peters writes makes sense regarding the three grassroots aids projects in rural Limpopo: “Participation is a political process involving contestation and conflict among different people with different interests and claims rather than a methodology or set of facilitating techniques” (1996: 24). Villagers had their own ideas about how to participate.

Clearly, embodiment and intersubjectivity have as much to do with the failures of participatory development as larger structural issues, such as non-representative chiefs and the idealizing of communities. Further, while previous analyses have tended to blame the naivety and arrogance of Western organizations and aid workers for failing to take local knowledge into account, my data and interpretation show that these analyses seriously underestimate locals’ own agency in the matter. On the one hand, Limpopo villagers tried repeatedly to domesticate their foreign benefactors, calling on them to acknowledge material aspects of participating and to open-up their seemingly untouchable knowledge to local influences. On the other hand, as they began accepting and anticipating the lack of responsiveness from the grassroots workers, villagers, far from having their perspectives sidelined by Westerners, withheld their own voices from the development processes. Understanding development phenomenologically has indeed born much fruit.

As a final point, however, and as has been stated elsewhere, we must take care to not romanticize about how modernity’s peripheral and oppressed people resist modernity’s agents of progress, for these resistances occur in the context of imbalanced power relations. There was a time in Southern Africa when nary a single

identifiable institution of modernity could be found on the landscape. When those institutions did come, they came in large forms, such as the state and mining companies. Modernity's grassroots organizations, such as hospitals and schools planted by missionaries, became part of the lay of the land and had historical efficacy but were relatively few. With the neoliberal era now heralding the NGO-ization of states, modernity is moving ever more grassroots. In this context, Sergeant, Valerie, and Ishmael have either planted or assumed some control over existing institutions of modernity. When their local Limpopo counterparts make their socializing moves, they are doing so within the orbit of already established institutions of modernity, with their [Yes-ing] "backs against the wall." The next chapter discusses precisely the sense in which one of the primary consequences of the work of Western change-agents is to further disarticulate or "No" culturally distinct arenas of local life into fixed logics.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

### CORPOREAL INTENTIONS

An intriguing discussion within Development Anthropology relates to the problematic of side-effects, also called instrumental-effects or unintended consequences or outcomes or repercussions. The general idea is that while development, as either a hegemonic discursive force or particular NGO instantiation, tends to fail in its stated objectives, it nevertheless produces regular side-effects. What is more, the unintended outcomes of development normally help the powerful and hurt the needy. This chapter subjects this problematic to a particular phenomenological empiricism, arguing that the discussion of side-effects produces its own side-effects, namely, the further theoretical entrenchment of the very phenomenology of expertise it intends to undermine. Phenomenology of expertise refers to experiencing life in terms of ontological binaries (Boyer 2005a-b), such as mind / body, culture / society, and discourse / practice. Timothy Mitchell calls this same experience the “peculiar metaphysic of capitalist modernity” (1991). After critically reviewing anthropological uses of the notion of unintended consequences, this chapter, in line with the dissertation’s attention to interpersonal relation in development contexts, demonstrates ethnographically how Sergeant, Valerie, and Ishmael experience or perceive side-effects in everyday contexts. Their Limpopo interactants engage these side-effects in their own corporeal terms.

Nearly all scholars identify the further entrenchment of state ideology as the primary side-effect of development. For James Ferguson (1990) and Arturo Escobar (1995), institutional discourses name a need for development into existence, identifying the needy versus the helpers and a range of expert knowledge practices to scientifically diagnose and solve problems. Although modest developments occur

(Escobar 1995: 145, Ferguson 1990: 251), they rarely fulfill the objectives of aid organizations; what happens with regularity, however, involves the further entrenchment of the state. The planners of the Thaba-Tseka project in Lesotho (Ferguson 1990), for example, intended to decentralize policy-making and integrate the administrative system to facilitate the delivery of agricultural services to Basotho farmers. However, while the farmers gained little from the process, a new road connecting Maseru, the capital, with Thaba-Tseka and the centralization of district authorities undermined planners' intentions, broadening rather than curtailing the reach of government authority, or governmentality, in Maseru. In Columbia (Escobar 1995), similarly, two government programs meant to alleviate hunger and malnutrition for farmers instead facilitated their subjectification to a range of techno-scientific discourses and social categorization, at once created by and used by development for governmentality.

More than Ferguson, Escobar begins to suggest the complexity of modern rule and its side-effects (1995: 146-148), but both ultimately leave the impression of a one-way, North-colonizes-South phenomenon (Bending and Rosendo 2006). Erica Bornstein's work provides greater insight into the contingencies of unintended consequences. According to Bornstein, although two Christian NGOs understand themselves as a-political through a discursive "politics of transcendence" (2003: Ch. 4), their political complicity proves self-evident in practice. The Zimbabwe state, politically and economically weakened by neoliberal policies, sought to siphon NGO funds for national projects and to use these organizations as platforms for trumpeting state development successes. While the net effect of NGO / state relations resulted in the entrenchment of the state, the NGOs found themselves in positions at times to deny state functionaries the funds and platforms they requested without compromising peaceful coexistence. Thus, although NGOs ultimately facilitated state-rule in

Zimbabwe as in Lesotho and Columbia, development and its side-effects of rule amounted less to a mechanical imposition the West on the Rest than to a contest between historically situated agents and agencies.

The scholarship of Dorthea Hilhorst and Tania Li further attests to the round-about, fits-and-starts nature of “unintended” governmentality. Hilhorst (2001) followed a group of rural women whose understanding of diverse local and exogenous discourses and social relations enabled them to secure foreign funding for an NGO literacy project in a Philippine village. While failing to instill literacy in the elderly female participants, the project nevertheless produced “unintended repercussions” (2001: 411): “By defining the women as lacking something, namely the ability to read and write, and by turning the project into a vehicle for education about modern values, the project contributed to an erosion of the status of older women and underlined a widening gap between educated professional and peasant women” (2001: 411). Thus, governmentality may be named into power by “them” as much as by “us.” Li (1999) finds something similar in her research on Indonesia’s resettlement programs. Rather than development unproblematically silencing politics and thereby depositing state-rule on everything it touches (Ferguson 1994: xv), unwillingness of “peripheral people” to participate and their evident cultural resistance to subjectification to the state precipitated development officials to compromise, though not completely stall their plans. Compromise is a side-effect of *how* development facilitates state entrenchment and rule.

A tension over subjectivity inheres in these discussions of side-effects. On the one hand, and from the vantage of a dissertation stressing the intimacies of foreign aid, these scholars give discourses far too much power, first by centering them as the chief object of study and second by using already articulated, reified versions of them. A sense of producing discourses into recognizable cultural constitution during

intersubjective interchange exists nowhere in these works. Even in the cases where Hilhorst and Li attend to the multiplicity and flexibility of discourses it seems only that development discourse takes a circuitous rather than a mechanistic route to categorical domination. When Hilhorst [rightly] attempts to wrestle agency away from hegemonic development discourse and give it to individual villagers, villagers end-up acting like instrumental agents picking from a buffet of local and foreign discourses. Witness a phrase such as, “Local development actors master multiple development notions and use these for their own ends” (2001: 411). For her part, Li does not unsettle hegemonic depictions of development discourse by countering it with instrumental agents but by attributing compromises made by development personnel to a vague idea of “culturally informed action” (1999: 315). Reified uses of discourse silence rather than displace its binary partner, social structure or, linguistically, *la langue* (Turner 1994). The individual is either overly determined or set too free from constraints.

On the other hand, “There is a contradiction here: Are these effects intended or are they not?” (Bending and Rosendo 2006: 230). Bending and Rosendo correctly puzzle over how these side-effects of rule can manifest with regularity and predictability and still pass as unintended? “Regularly from nowhere,” scholars seem to invest side-effects with this nature: e.g. Ferguson writes of “authorless ‘strategies’” (1990: 20) and of how the Tsaba-Tseka project “unintentionally played what can only be called an instrumental role” (1990: 254); Escobar, after asserting that development discourses “do not presume any kind of conspiracy” (1995: 145), nevertheless concludes, “they produce similar results [worldwide], particularly in terms of governmentalizing social life” (1995: 146); while Bornstein observes, “NGO workers operated as impartial interpreters, as agents of change” (2003: 108), she further notes, “in practice it [apolitical NGO work] involved remaking (or unmaking) the

postcolonial state” (2003: 108); regarding individual manipulation of multiple discourses, Hilhorst generalizes, “The use of particular notions may partly be strategic but has unintended repercussions for confirming, accelerating, or altering social change” (2001: 411); and Li insists, “Compromise is [not] planned or preconfigured in the plan, engineered by an omniscient and very subtle state for the purpose of rule. Its consequences for rule are, instead, the unintended outcome of “culturally informed action” (1999: 315). Do side-effects of rule really come “regularly from nowhere?”

This postmodern scholarship seeks to de-center state power and instrumental agency in individuals. Yet the regularity of expanding governmentality strongly suggests intentionality. Something or someone somewhere and somehow appears driven to shape-up the world into ever finer social distinctions, to naturalize these distinctions into pure objects and their corresponding subjects within them. Timothy Mitchell (2002) identifies this intentionality as techno-scientific expertise but qualifies this intentionality in terms of its own emergence in historical indeterminacy. Boyer (2005b) finds corporeality around this sort of expertise, and I have identified *No-ing Bodies* as the preobjective source of a phenomenology of expertise. Bodies socialized to feel a need to gesture away irreducible connectedness cultivate the existential experience of atomized individuality, a series of discrete bodies each housing its own subject. Culturally motivated and stabilized by their foundational negation of desire for relatedness, *No-ing Bodies* account for governmentality as the regular side-effect of development interventions and their experts; these bodies fully intend to reshape the world according to their own psychosocial perceptions—intersubjectivity cleft in two, objectivity and representation on one side and subjectivity and reality on the other side. The concept of discourse as an ontologically distinct subjective force over society and individuals personifies *No-ing Bodies*. Thus, the “side-effect scholars”

unwittingly entrench the psychosocial shape of governmentality even further into social theory.

Binaries, such as discourse and practice and politics and economy, are what must be studied, not assumed or used as organizing principles for analyses. This chapter does precisely this. In their routine activities of aid work, Sergeant, Valerie, and Ishmael each unwittingly worked toward producing artifactuals, or the institutional instantiations of Western dualisms (Mitchell 2002: 36). Exhibitions exemplify artifactuals, for they at once appear to stand apart from their historical construction, i.e. object from subject, and cultivate and perhaps reinforce senses of autonomous individuality for onlookers (1991). While Mitchell focused on the effects of completed artifactuals-as-exhibitions, however, this chapter witnesses their construction in the forms of Sergeant's Tuvo Christian Church, Valerie's Kurisanani NGO, and Ishmael's Pfukani and Huko Primary Schools. Attempts at *No-ing* (*Negating*) these institutions into discrete entities occurred through the simultaneous use and practice of many bifurcating imaginaries, too many, in fact, to practically account for here. Still, the historicity of each project stressed certain bifurcations and these will receive highlighted attention below. Living and dead, individual and group, and work and play acted as core, perhaps foundational dichotomies for the respective development efforts of Sergeant, Valerie, and Ishmael. Let us see how this played out, noting along the way how the interpersonal grounds the production of modern institutions associated with development.

### ***NO-ING* the LIFE out of DEATH**

Before moving it to its current location, Sergeant operated Tuvo Christian Church (TCC) from the neighboring primary school. The school administration demanded rent from Sergeant for his use of a classroom and Sergeant and some of the congregants,

including Winny, the girl who kept her pregnancy a secret (Chapter Six), felt financially hamstrung and used. Winny's father, Mr. Sathekge, offered Sergeant some land for erecting a rent-free church off of school premises. Mr. Sathekge died years prior to my arrival but his widow said her husband felt a visitor, especially a white man, should "feel free" in the village, not burdened. Reminiscent of the way early colonists and missionaries fenced-off land given to them by headmen for temporary use, Sergeant, in his own words, immediately "made sure that the [land] deal was written down, signed [by him and the headman], and photocopied three times." While living with the Pelesi family in Mines Village, Sergeant learned how survivors fought over a deceased person's property, some claimants alleging an ancestral spirit entered their dreams, confirming their right to land and valuables. He did not want similar dynamics occurring at his church.

Sergeant emphatically rejected the idea of death's presence at his church, which he characterized publicly as God's house of eternal life. As Sergeant explained during a Sunday service, "Spirit man is dead until he finds Christ." Sergeant publicly and often construed TCC as an engine for churning out spirit men, alive to Godly abstraction, dead to social obligations. Engaging Mr. Sathekge's social motivation for lending land, formalizing independent ownership of it, and discouraging church grounds as pure life surrounded by the death of social constraints in the village—this is how Sergeant began building up his artifactual, an institution appearing like an inert object in the middle of social and historical space. Like his colonial missionary counterparts, Sergeant planted discrete gardens, which he viewed, like the church writ large, as autonomous arenas for the production and nurturing of life. He imagined, he once told me, Brian and other congregants "caring for life instead of chasing after death" as they tended the gardens. Congregants jumping up and down in the angular volleyball sandpit resembled flowers and vegetables growing in the gardens—dead

earthen structure from which life bursts forth. Sergeant meant to disarticulate life from death, to cultivate an experience of absolute distinction between the two as opposed to perceiving them as irrevocably intertwined.

For Sergeant, ancestors “are evil spirits, fallen angels representing the Devil.” By contrast, Tuvo villagers tend to experience these forces simply as the beneficent spirits of their deceased relatives who guide, critique, and sometimes feel abandoned by the living (Chapter One). The living and the dead, subject and object mutually constitute and contain something of the other. In the context of hegemonizing Christian discourse, villagers, besides a few stalwart converts, in Tuvo and throughout the Limpopo Province increasingly equate ancestors with Christianity’s angels and thus as servants of God, decidedly not Satan. This domesticating of Christianity’s agents of a purely subjective God prove blasphemous to Sergeant, whose strident public demonizing of ancestral practices raised the ire of many elders in the village. David told me how he and Solomon felt compelled to ask Sergeant to tone down his anti-ancestor rhetoric after elders, who viewed the church simply as a safe place for their children to socialize, threatened to keep their children from church services. While Sergeant compromised (Li 1999) by subtly more than overtly accosting ancestral activities, he continues to loathe and avoid Sangomas, who specialize in part in calling ancestors, as well as funerals and homes consecrated to ancestor spirits. Sergeant’s very movements, his safe-spots and avoidances, further mark off TCC as life apart from death.

Concomitant to negating into existence an imaginarily succinct boundary around TCC, Sergeant also works to transform his congregants into subjects who will recognize, embrace, and reproduce this life / death, subject / object boundary. Feeling the need to instill Christian principles in relatively impressionable youth, Sergeant made his first task to funnel children into church premises from their disparate

hangouts. Sergeant explained, “[Village] elders put pressure to conform but leave children alone because they’re not important.” Critical of what he sees as poor parenting, Sergeant, like his missionary comrade Nancy, nevertheless viewed this situation as an opportunity to gather together and attempt to Christianize dozens of “parent-free” children. When Sergeant says, “We are a children’s church,” he speaks to the success of drawing in youth; however, he also uses this phrase to mean, “Children and elders are equal in the sight of Christ.” When he tells his congregants this, Sergeant self-consciously tries to empower village youth to stand up and against the requests of their guardians to perform ancestral rituals at home, to experience the sensation of pure life by saying, “No,” to unmediated mixings with death. Consider some excerpts from discourses from the pulpit:

*“I believe we’re all the child of God. God wants everyone to come to know God and have eternal life. I want everyone to pray where you stay in your village home. You’re God’s ambassador where you are staying. After you can pray for other villages where other congregants stay. There’s a spiritual blindness over people’s hearts. We’re praying that the veil will be broken. It’s a spiritual thing. God wants everyone to be safe. Let’s pray with the authority of Jesus.” – (Sergeant, Sunday Church Service)*

*“In our church, stand up for Truth. At home, when our parents say, ‘Let’s go and worship the ancestors,’ say, ‘No, Mom and Pop. I can’t do that anymore. I’m a child of God. You’re standing on a shaky foundation.’ I can’t tell you how it [feeling God’s spirit] works, but it works. It’s great we’re here worshipping God but when our friends and family tell us to do bad things, what will you do? Are we Christians only on the outside or deep on the inside?” – (Sergeant, Sunday Church Service)*

Occurring on different Sundays, Sergeant’s comments prove quite ordinary for him. He voluntarily gives the congregants God, the whole Truth. Swelling his congregants’ heads with the Truth and its promise of eternal life, Sergeant expects

them to persevere in this Godly discourse and to perceive everything external to it as death, the enemy, Satan, including and especially the ancestral practices of their own parents and guardians. Congregants should return home, walking manifestations of the life / death, mind / body, spirit / world, bifurcation of the church artifactual, and resist what they ought to now see as the temptations of their parents to engage the ancestors. As part of this spiritual “modernity package,” Sergeant even gives the youth the *No-ing* words to use against their parents: “You’re standing on a shaky foundation.” Organic relations between the living and the dead, the past, present, and future, or subjectivity and objectivity do indeed shake the foundations of *No-ing Bodies* whose experiences of autonomy depend existentially on gesturing away evidence of its social emergence. Anticipating pressure on youth to “do bad things,” Sergeant prefigures their ideal response in terms of choosing God over ancestors, parents, and friends.

In addition to lecturing congregants into experiencing life and death as ontological distinctions, Sergeant also used sports, choir, and drama for the same end. In one skit, for example, Sergeant, taking the place of a girl who did not show up for church, acted the part of a pastor. At Sergeant-the-pastor saying, “What good is it for a man to gain the whole world and lose his soul,” two boys acting as police officers stormed in demanding, “Confess you’re not a Christian or die!” Four congregants, two boys and two girls, consecutively and respectively said, “I’m not a Christian. I’m just a visitor,” “I’ve got a good job and a lot of money. I’m not a Christian,” “I’ve got a beautiful daughter and I love my family, I don’t want to die,” and “I just like the music in the church.” A few congregants acted the part of pious Christians who faced death rather than denounce their Christianity. After some unsure giggles from the audience members, Sergeant, speaking as himself, translated the skit into frank language:

*“How strong is your love of Jesus? Is he just a spare wheel to call on when you’re in trouble? If you don’t know where you’re going, you’ll*

*be afraid to die. Don't forget, there's a life after this world. One person rejected God because of family. Scripture says if we love our fathers, mothers, sisters and brothers more than God, you are not worthy of the Kingdom of Heaven. The people who stayed behind we're not ashamed. If that happened to you, what would you do?" – (Sergeant, Sunday Church Service)*

Written by Sergeant, this skit signals this-worldly activities in numerous ways, e.g. quest for money and professionalism as end goals, unreflective adoration of family, and an aimless love of music. In his interpretation of the skit, however, Sergeant singles out the issues of family and death, making the point in a different way that loyalty to family is loyalty to death and Devil, whereas Jesus offers perpetual life after death.

Sergeant used various means to binarize TCC and the village as discrete spaces of life and death, respectively, and a few congregants seemed particularly moved by these efforts. For instance, Marlon, a church keyboard player and “suck up” to Sergeant according to other congregants, refuses to propitiate (Pedi / Tsonga: *ku pahla*) his ancestors, including his father’s deceased spirit, with his mother, Mhani Malati, at home. This pains Mhani Malati. She said in Pedi and Dean translated, “Lucky and his older brother are failing to remember the ancestors. If Marlon dreams about his dead father or another ancestor, I wouldn’t know because he doesn’t share.” This worries Marlon’s mother because she fears, “They won’t remember me when I’m dead—the same way they don’t go to the father’s grave to ask for guidance and ways to succeed.” She hoped Marlon would be like his father who “used to read the Bible but didn’t go to church. He still respected tradition. I love that so much.” To reemphasize the stakes, Mhani Malati told this story: “I was with my sister (a Sangoma) at her place. A group of ZCC people visited for consultation with my sister. As they left, I asked them, ‘Why are you taking this medicine if you pray to God?’

One of them answered, ‘It’s great to pray to God, but if you want to live and not die, you must know your ancestors.’ Surely, Marlon receives courage to deny an organic relationship to his ancestors, death, and history in part from Sergeant’s ministering; he seems, however, to situationally conform to Sergeant’s wishes, for Marlon stands as one of the few brave youth who dares to secretly date a girl within TCC. He and his girlfriend join others in their incredulity about Sergeant having no wife or children (Chapter Six).

Mr. and Mrs. Selope’s family further illustrates the fractiousness with some families over spiritual matters. Mr. Selope, recall (Chapter Three), refused to greet me for five tense minutes because he associated me with Sergeant, whom he and his wife suspect for turning their children away from the ancestors. During a conversation I had with Mrs. Selope, her daughter, Francis, her son, Teeky, and their relative and my friend-informant, Dean, Mrs. Selope said her ancestors (Tsonga: *swikwembu*) refused to allow her to go to her church, ZCC. She explains, “One day I tried to force [myself] and go to church but got sick when I came home. Swikwembu said I must become a *n’anga* (Pedi / Tsonga: *sangoma, traditional doctor*) before going to church,” and Mrs. Selope prepares herself to do just this. For Mrs. Selope, “Ancestors are not Satan [as Sergeant says]. They are good and are the same as God. There are two god things, God and gods. Some ancestors even want us to pray for them.” However, her daughter, Francis, a long-time TCC congregant and likely virgin according to her church members, acknowledges the existence of ancestors but states firmly, “They cannot protect me.” Francis admits she used to *pahla* to her ancestors with her parents and even that it worked. But now she says she believes in God and fears her mother will go to Hell. “She’s doing evil things by following Sangoma things,” Francis said, even as her brother, Teeky, also a long-time TCC congregant, regularly uses Sangoma medicines.

Teeky looks sick, with Downs Syndrome-type symptoms. If Mrs. Selope and Francis disagree verbally regarding the virtue of God and ancestors, they both accept witchcraft as the agent responsible for Teeky's illness. Dean translated for Mrs. Selope saying, "Teeky's sickness came from [Sergeant's] church. Youth can be jealous because Teeky was leading something [youth ministry]. They can tell their parents and parents can say, 'Okay, give him this.' Teeky announced he was going to Joni [Johannesburg] to work—his father found a job for him. People were jealous—he was going to have money. He was going to drive a tractor." While Sergeant labors to remove death from his church, his congregants, even the apparently loyal ones, experience TCC as suffused with bedeviled poisons and witchcraft practices. The Selope family case further demonstrates the capricious nature of the congregants' loyalty to Sergeant and TCC. Two weeks prior to my conversation with the Selopes, Teeky fell down during a church service, which everyone agreed was the result of witchcraft. Mhani Selope complained, "Teeky is taking medicines of *ti-n'anga* and it's working. Sergeant never came to Teeky to pray for him so now he's deep into cultural things." As a target of church witchcraft and disturbed about Sergeant's perceived insensitivity, Teeky found it relatively easy to withdraw from TCC. Complaining about how she feels Sergeant favors some church girls over others, including herself, Francis also wishes to leave the church. Like many other congregants, however, she finds it difficult to tear herself away because she has attended TCC since its inception.

Like every other of the dozens of congregants interviewed, Francis will unequivocally leave the church if her parents demand it. As Ema, a twenty-something male congregant who, by his age, "of course," but behind Sergeant's back, engages in sexual activities, says, "One must listen to one's parents." By far, most congregants remember and depend on their ancestors for protection from witchcraft. Unsettling correlations between the apparently Christian behaviors of some congregants and the

influence of Sergeant's church, Teres, a twenty-something known virgin at TCC, says, "I am devoted to God and gods." Teres described how his sister, who likewise seeks the protection of both spiritual forces, "goes a bit crazy in church because God and the gods are meeting." Unlike Mhani Selope, who spoke of the two spiritual entities as "the same," Teres keeps them distinct but equally good and agentative. Dean and his friend, Paul, just prior to my arrival, approached Dean's paternal grandfather's sister, a *n'anga*, requesting "medicine for [getting] girls." The *n'anga* finally consented, making incisions in the boys' hands and foreheads and inserting medicine therein. Both boys say the medicine works, Dean pointing to his "deflowering activities" (Chapter Six) as proof. Death, in the interrelated forms of *n'anga* incisions, medicines, and ancestor-spirits, creep up onto church premises and into the church, despite Sergeant's disgust and prohibition of it.

Even the Sathekge family, on whose land Sergeant erected his church artifactual, steadfastly embraces the ancestors, i.e. unmediated relations between the living and dead, between the present and past. Ipona, Mrs. Sathekge's sixteen year old son, had recently fallen sick. Too young to visit a *n'anga* himself, Mrs. Sathekge went for him and returned with a witch-protecting rope, which Ipona now wears constantly around his waist—even as he plays keyboard at Sergeant's church. Once when Mrs. Sathekge herself entered Sergeant's church, "I stepped on a cancerous spot in the ground [in front of the church doors] and got a lot of pain. The next day, the leg was swollen. The Sangoma said, 'People don't want you at the church.' Now I'm healed." Mrs. Sathekge no longer enters TCC grounds; she makes sure, rather, that her children *pahla* regularly to their ancestors, including their deceased father who felt moved to allocate land for Sergeant's church as a way to care for a guest. Thus, in addition to violating one of Sergeant's Christian injunctions by engaging in premarital sex on the table behind the pulpit at TCC (Chapter Six), Bapela Sathekge furthermore seeks

protection from ancestors as well as from God. Indeed, the vast majority of congregants resent Sergeant's flagrant denunciations of ancestral practices and particularly of their parents and grandparents who engage in them. Instead of openly protesting against Sergeant, which amounts locally to disrespecting an elder, congregants, as Ipona says, "ignore Sergeant's hating the ancestors. I go to church to get protection from God and also follow my parents' ancestor things."

Despite the pretensions of Sergeant's church as a space of "forever autonomy" and eternal life, locals inhabit it as a social space where subjectivity is never pure but always vulnerable and where life and death co-exist organically and not as ontologically distinct realms. The development of Christian institutions and spiritual outlooks is thoroughly an interpersonal and not simply a discursive affair.

### ***NO-ING* INTERSUBJECTIVITY in TWO**

Valerie believes in the sanctity of the individual, if necessary over and above family relations and friendships. Her vow of chastity embodies this stance: Recall Valerie said in an interview that she "never experienced a desire for children. I like helping people I don't know because it's part of our religious call, religious life. It's the Christian response to life." Here, Valerie's prioritizing her "true" Godly self above the worldly desires to marry and bear offspring, while noble and selfless to her and surely to many others, provides implicit testimony to her experience of individuality as purely subjective, disconnected or partable from others. Her approach to NGO activities confirms this testimony. When Valerie became the leader of Kurisanani, she promptly cleared out community possessions from one of the church's smaller roundavils. In their place, Valerie put food parcel items, which she and her local co-workers deliver to HIV+ clients on weekly bases. Gaul used this example among others to say, "Valerie behaves as if the church is hers instead of belonging to the

people.” Yet in pushing community materials beyond the bounds of church premises and filling in space with “NGO-only” objects, Valerie began to solidify her artifactual, resignifying the church’s contours in terms of formal charity “within” and community “without.” Valerie’s unilateral decision-making at once modeled the spirit of voluntarism (Chapters Four, Six) she expected of herself and her NGO counterparts and reinforced the NGO as a phenomenological space of discrete subjectivity poised to heal an external world of objects, ranging from individually ailing bodies to whole communities. Kurisanani binarized into existence according to an individual over community, subjectivity over intersubjectivity divide.

Concomitant to concretizing into existence an outer boundary of the Kurisanani artifactual according to an ontological distinction between NGO-subject and community-object, Valerie sought to convert her local colleagues into subjects with new senses of autonomy set apart from the “weight” of social relations. For the NGO to sustain its impression as a self-standing institution, a leadership team of local *No-Bodies*, and certainly not Valerie-the-visitor alone, must drive it. To this end, Valerie promptly peppered the walls inside of the main roundavil with maps and paraphernalia related to HIV-AIDS, artifactuals in their own right: their entire physicality appeared, with two exceptions explored below, fixed and authorless, inviting onlookers to feel like pure subjects ogling lifeless materials; and the expert knowledge written on the canvasses seemed to speak from the materiality with unquestionable authority. Two wall mounts particularly interest me: First, a village map of the Ofcolaco Parish figured prominently on the wall. While all of the local NGO workers navigated expertly throughout this parish “on the ground,” they struggled to read the map. Map-reading involves a certain kind of phenomenological expertise, namely a comfort with objectifying place into space. Like Mitchell’s exhibition, the map congeals the intention to *No* its spectators into feeling discretely

individual and “over there,” yet local workers perceived the map not like rigid objectivity but as part-subject “speaking back and knowing more.” The map signals the extent of local conversion to the peculiar metaphysic of capitalist modernity and shows perceptions of subject-object interrelations continues to prevail over their perceptions of their division.

Second, a list of NGO administrators recorded Valerie, Laura, and Gaul as Kurisanani’s Program Coordinator, Director, and Education for Life Leader, respectively. At the bottom, someone scribbled, “Volunteer Coordinator – Lateef,” in anticipation of visiting health inspectors asking why Lateef receives so little recognition. Now the inspectors asked about the penciled-in entry. Understanding what her response meant to her co-workers, Lateef said, “I’m not a coordinator. I just came and saw my name there. I make a volunteer’s wage.” The hand-writing speaks to the unpolished nature of the Kurisanani artifactual—it is still in the making for its objects cannot yet silence their relationship to subjects. A phenomenology of intersubjectivity still prevails over Cartesian, mind over body, subject over object, experiences. Further, the scribble makes the larger point about the historicity of all artifactuals and their inevitable instability, despite their rigid personas to the contrary (Mitchell 2002).

In addition to trying to *No* her local colleagues with wall-hung artifactuals, Valerie further attempted to cultivate self-motivation in her local colleagues in other ways. Gaul used to complain to me and to Valerie herself about Valerie overworking him, despite his protests about his poor physical health. In his words, “I was operated on in 1983, and I told Sister Valerie I don’t want to work like a horse. Sister Valerie didn’t understand because when I’m well, she drives me like a horse—but she’s not working!” Valerie’s impatience with what she sees as under-zealous counterparts stems from incidences such as this one: “Once there were some [inspector-type]

people who came to the office and the staff failed to explain what in the hell they're all about and this Kurisanani organization," fumed Valerie. Starting to feel sorry for her village co-workers, Valerie continued, "I scolded them for this because it was a shame on them that they couldn't even answer the questions." For Valerie, demonstrating individual ability to pull away mentally from the daily grind of NGO work in order to speak abstractly about it with a sense of distance avoids shame and exemplifies her ideal of an intelligent worker. She routinely attempted to shame and shout her colleagues into grasping the invisible planning and structure behind the quotidian activities of the NGO.

In Kurisanani's Friday administration meetings too, Valerie tried to massage away the objectivity of her workers and the working environment in routine ways. Consider the following conversational excerpt from a typical Friday administrative meeting, for instance. Here, Valerie, Gaul, and Laura discuss "Call to Serve," a multiple-month program for training Kurisanani care-working volunteers.

- Valerie: Another thing is the 2007 "Call to Serve." Who to send.  
Gaul: Let me give an example: We said "four." When we go, we're not supposed to say so-and-so "go" without having informed them. There are questions they need to ask.  
Valerie: That's why I asked Tom the question on Saturday—who do we send and how many? Another lady said—we'd hate not to send representatives from Ofcoloca but...  
Laura: Are you suggesting we don't send anyone?  
Valerie: It's an option. There's no point in sending people who aren't going to put things into practice when they get back. The option is, we don't have to, maybe the parish is not ready. I think we'd be missing out but if as you said...  
Laura: But we're supposed to call all people to elect each other...  
Valerie: No, it won't work like that.  
Laura: So how do we find them? I know you'll say "Laura" because you're always with me. But maybe I'll be committed.  
Valerie: We don't have to send anyone. It's serious. It's like saying, "An amount of finance has been used to train these people. Now what are

you going to put back in?” Next year’s program is very intensive. There’s still time to consider and plan and decide who we’re sending.

Over the course of my research, I learned that Laura likes helping people through her work at Kurisanani. Yet, as I also realized, she experiences no contradiction in seeing “Call to Serve,” Kurisanani, and volunteer care-working in general as a rare, if poorly compensated, route to employment for needy women and their families, especially ones she knows and feels for personally, in the surrounding communities. It perplexed her then to hear Valerie’s willingness to quash this infrequent opportunity for the parish’s needy, including some of her friends such as her boyfriend’s wife-turned-friend whom we met in the previous chapter. Valerie’s concern, by contrast, involved filling-up Kurisanani with “true believers” in the NGO’s mission, individuals voluntarily eager to help others regardless of material compensation or relationships to current staff members. Her no-nonsense objection to recruiting undedicated villagers—i.e. “No it won’t work like that”—modeled the passion-driven worker in the utterance. Thus, in both the detail of her speech and in her personal example, Valerie sought to naturalize the “Kurisanani worker” as the self-motivating, autonomous individual psychically untied to material rewards and social relations into the imaginations of her colleagues.

In addition to wall ornaments, meetings, and everyday conversations, formal events also served to shape consciousnesses into resolving the world into ontological distinctions between representations and reality, structure and agency, sociality and individuality. Consider the spatial configurations of props and the processions of an HIV-AIDS candlelight vigil held inside of the church roundavil at Kurisanani. Upon entering the roundavil, the viewer sees three pieces of furniture opposite the church doors: A small table and same-sized pulpit sit equally spaced to the left and right of a larger table in the center. A large table cloth covers the large table nearly down to the

floor while a perpendicularly positioned smaller, white table cloth lay elegantly atop the table. A white pillar candle, roughly a foot in height, stands in the center of the large table on top of the smaller table cloth, with two equally-sized pans filled with sand several inches to the right and left of the candle. A cross grafts onto the front of the white candle and each of the four numbers in “2006” positions itself in one of the right angles of the cross. Next to the church doors, a table sits to the left. Nine smaller white candles rest on this table. Rows of backless benches curve with the contours of the roundavil walls, meeting at the church doors at one end and at the three pieces of furniture at the other end. In this way, a visual and physical line connects the doorway and the tables and pulpit.

What is striking about this arrangement, which I helped to coordinate, is its effect of perfect symmetry. If the whole church roundavil could be folded in half along a line from the door to the furniture, the big table would fold directly in half, the same-sized pulpit and small table would land on top of each other, as would the rows of benches and sand-filled pans. Even the table next to the door does not perceptually throw off the symmetry, for being unadorned with table clothes and looking more earthy brown than glossed for display, it is apiece much more with the inner walls of the roundavil than with its wooden kin performing in the candlelight vigil. The symmetry naturalizes autonomous space (Mitchell 1991) for its components so that shifting a table a little to the left or right or circling one set of benches closer to the doors would make the whole ensemble of furnishings seem “off.” Naturalized spacing seems now to be the reference point for judging transgressions; perfect individuality for judging the intrusions of social pressures. This equilibrium of spatial organization intends to cultivate in its inhabitants the same orientation toward ideological autonomy as its producers, namely Valerie and me. Although Laura and Gaul helped with arranging the candlelight vigil “stage,” I could not help but notice that Valerie and I

would follow-up their efforts, more perfectly aligning benches and tables into the effect of an overall, internally referencing system of impossible balance of pure objectivity.

Valerie envisioned the candlelight vigil as a way to objectify HIV-AIDS into open and respectable discourse, thus leeching from it its subjective force as an embarrassing and stigmatizing agent across rural Limpopo. The vigil opened with the following procession: With Kurisanani care-workers and clients seated in the benches, Bill, who stood at the pulpit and took timing cues from Valerie, called the name of a South African province. Laura and Lateef began singing solemn songs as a pre-selected Kurisanani client, dressed in new Kurisanani t-shirts, entered the church doors, picked up a small candle from the back table and walked slowly between the benches to the large table. Here, she (all participants were women) lit her candle with the flame of the large candle, turned to her right and stood in front of the pulpit facing the door. Bill called the names of the remaining eight provinces in timed intervals, precipitating the same events, except that clients alternated turning right and left after lighting their small candles. In the end, nine Kurisanani HIV-AIDS clients, each representing a different province, stood in a banana-shaped line, their backs to the three pieces of furniture and faces toward the benches and church door. When signaled, they then walked one by one to the big table where they drove their candles into the pans of sand and sat down. Speeches from the pulpit ensued.

Far from innocent or neutral, this procession, like the arrangement of the room, congealed *No-Body* intentions to naturalize autonomy as a given ontological order and interconnectedness as a breach of the given. Calling provinces one by one reinforces their phenomenological authenticity as unquestionably given, autochthonous entities, silencing their historical, often violent and recent constitution. Calling the names of the provinces according to perfectly timed intervals further encourages the

imagination to press apart the provinces into independently bordered realms of existence. These very acts of calling and timing do not stand outside of the historical “cover-up,” however. Scholars understand measurable time as an artificial state—Henri Bergson (2001[1913]), for example, noticing the abruptness of counting, “1...2...3.” What happened to “1.5,” “2.3,” and the other infinite subdivisions? Measurable time spatializes history, thereby muffling it. Johannes Fabian finds in anthropological texts a similar phenomenon, namely, scholars eliding the real history of their encounter with “others” by recasting them textually in spatial terms as “over there.” Jacques Derrida (1976[1967]) understands this sort of history extraction and silencing as “violent,” using anthropology’s tendency at the time to dismember writing (“space”) from speech (“time”) to exemplify his point. As my research shows, emasculating history also occurs in everyday situations; the acts of calling and quantifying time congeal within them the violence of objectifying history and disarticulating time from its social origins. Succinctly, saying “Limpopo” or “South Africa” and marching according to abstract time are violent acts, even if performed in the name of de-stigmatizing, empowering, and praying for the nation.

An important sub-text here is that even as village clients were drawn-in and implicated in the totalized *No-ing* event, the primary motivation for “volunteering” to hold candles and represent provinces was to get those new and limited Kurisanani t-shirts. Indeed, the t-shirts were the topic of conversation among Kurisanani clients who gathered in the courtyard before the event started. Non-participating clients, upon hearing of the t-shirts, ranged in their responses from being happy for participating clients to being envious of them. While Valerie later said the candlelight vigil “touched me deeply” because “seeing so many sick people together was like a spark of hope,” locals’ hope was lodged as much in material acquisition as in ideals of happiness; they participated according their own intersubjective, embodied logic. Let

us turn now to excerpts from two of the speeches made from the pulpit during the candlelight event, for they further seek to convince villager participants of the naturalness of separating subject from object.

*In a few minutes we're going to light candles and think about all of South Africa. I encourage you to pray for yourselves and your families. I hope today when you leave, we have a little present—it's not a big present—it's very, very simple. We're going to give each of you a white candle. I hope as you came you received a little red ribbon. I'm asking you to light that candle once a week. When you light it in your house, thank God for the life you've been given and that you'll remember those that have died. So I thank you once again for coming, for making this journey. I want you to make new friends with each other today just as Luke made friends. – (Valerie, Candlelight Vigil)*

*“Very good to be here. Good to see so many familiar faces, It's easier to talk when a lot of people know you. It's been very good for me to participate in Kurisanani. It's been a blessing from God. I think what we must know is that the program started before the government program. The government program started in 2004- and this program started before then. At that time, there was no treatment for people of this country. This is a big help for people across the country. Just to say something about SA. We have six million people infected. That's such a big problem. We are such a small community but we have such an important responsibility. For everyone who knows about it, they have a responsibility. Not just carers, Sisters, etc. but each and every person has a responsibility. If there's any here who hasn't been tested, they have a responsibility to get tested. For those who've got tested they have a responsibility to tell one or two people to get tested.” – (Dr. Botes, Candlelight Vigil)*

In the first vignette, Valerie reifies the state and individuals as distinct entities when she announces the upcoming prayer for “all of South Africa.” Here, politics is not seen as a social relationship to headman, kings and queens but rather as a distinct sphere of activity apart from the individuals doing the praying. Valerie also intends to structure alone time for villagers by asking them to return home and pray over the

candles, as she told me she sometimes does. She twice distinguishes individuals from families, once by “asking *you* to light that candle” and once by asking clients to “thank God for the life *you*’ve been given” and, as a separate act, to “remember those who have died.” Much like Sergeant above, Valerie here intends to empower the individual in relation to the family, including the power to transform the deceased from playing a part in intersubjective exchange as ancestor spirits to appearing fully objectified or dead, like the physical arrangement of the furniture inside of the church roundavil.

In the second vignette, Dr. Botes, the privately hired doctor responsible for Kurisanani patients, reifies the state like Valerie when he speaks of the “government program.” His reference to the South African state is further illuminating, however, in mentioning it in relation to Kurisanani. As a nongovernmental organization, the Kurisanani is a key binary partner for the state, a private / public bifurcation. In stressing the role of individual responsibility, Dr. Botes adds the lone, rights-bearing individual to civil society and the state, completing the trifurcation. Surely, Valerie and Dr. Botes can be said to be working toward the further entrenchment of the state-idea. But before it can be entrenched, it must be imagined and, rather than coming alone, it brings its binaries, such as the autonomous individual and society. Naturalizing life into ontologically distinct spheres, disarticulating subjectivity from intersubjectivity, reifying autonomy as a starting point for action instead of as a peculiar end-product of history—this is the fundamental and existentially embodied side-effect of development interventions.

While Valerie and her NGO project clearly embody an intention to objectify Kurisanani work space and workers into artifactuals—phenomenological autonomies and distinctions effaced of interdependent origins—her Limpopo colleagues continued to socialize the workspace on their own embodied terms. Laura, especially, lived her social life within the Kurisanani space Valerie intended to make repellent to what the

Catholic Nun considered the “selfish concerns” of family and friends. Navigating the NGO according to social as opposed to altruistic logics and showing it to Valerie proved tantamount, in practice, to male TCC congregants dating amongst the church’s females in front of Sergeant’s eyes (Chapter Six)—both required daring. If Dean styled himself as “The disease of the church,” then Laura acted in structurally analogous ways at Kurisanani, and she even, like Dean, appeared to Valerie as the pivotal local person whose charismatic voice and influence promised to facilitate mass conversions to her preferred way of life. As discussed previously, Laura first domesticated Kurisanani’s intended autonomy into social responsiveness by steering Valerie and the Catholic leadership of the Tzaneen Diocese to run the NGO from Bonketsi’s Catholic Church, catechized by Laura’s brother-in-law, Gaul. In this, Laura boosted Gaul’s personal earnings and made him and his wife, Laura’s sister, a two-income family, for her sister was a teacher. Kurisanani’s geographic location encodes thus for a voluntary wish to assist unknown others and the domestication of this wish toward assisting family members first.

Laura further worked to socialize Kurisanani’s *No-ing* intentions when she manipulated the “Call to Service” program to employ the wife-turned-friend of the police officer who became her boyfriend. Chapter Six looked briefly at this affair. Let us look more closely here. According to Laura, Officer Mopani used to leave his and many children in their home at Tapenda Village and drive to Laura’s house nearly every morning. Laura would then drive him to work and make use of his car for the day. Laura left Kurisanani in the afternoon to pick up Officer Mopani, who would go with her to her house before returning to his family in Tapenda. Laura and the officer arranged these meetings and changes in them by telephone and, one day, Officer Mopani’s wife, Susan, found Laura’s phone number on her husband’s phone and dialed it. Her husband protested but Susan assured him she would be civil. When

Laura answered, she received a hurl of insults from Susan, to which Laura responded by simply saying, “Thank you,” intermittently. The next day, Susan phoned again, telling Laura she wanted to meet her in person. Against the advice of Officer Mopani, who thought Susan would try to kill his extra-marital partner, Laura consented and arranged to pick up her “rival,” who did not drive, from her home in Tapenda Village. I will let Laura’s paraphrased words relate the rest of the drama:

“The wife wasn’t at the roadside so I followed the husband’s directions. I met only one woman on the road. I stopped and said, ‘I’m looking for a certain woman who doesn’t know me.’ The woman said, ‘It’s me,’ and got in the car after I opened the door for her. All of this is on the roads between Rita and Mafarana, although the wife and husband live in Co-op. As we were driving they reached a valley point and I joked that, ‘What if we fall in and die?’ The wife said, ‘Our husband won’t be able to take care of himself and the family so we musn’t die.’ We went to my house. The wife wanted to open the gate but I refused [in the spirit of the “cheated on wife” shouldn’t open the gate for the mistress.] and opened it myself. We sat down and I greeted the wife respectfully and it was returned.

“The wife apologized to me for insulting me on the phone. She said she realized I was a good person because I only said, ‘Thank you,’ and because I never phoned back to continue the fight. I apologized for having an affair with her husband. The wife said she wasn’t there when the affair started so she can’t do anything about ending it. She said I should phone her if I ever had problems with the officer or in life generally.”

“I then received a phone call saying I must fetch someone [work related] from Hoveni. I asked the wife if she wanted to go along. The wife said, ‘Yes.’ On the way, they spotted the officer in his [police] vehicle, though I pretended not to recognize the vehicle. The wife said, ‘Isn’t that our husband?’ and I said I didn’t know. When we got closer and it became obvious that it was him, I honked the horn and the officer honked back. The officer then phoned the wife and asked her where she is and she said she’s around. He then phoned me and asked me where I was. I said, ‘We’re around Hoveni.’ The husband asked, ‘Who are you with?’ I said, ‘Your wife.’ I think he was so nervous. In the end, the wife asked me to drop her off right at the gate of her house.”

“A few days later, I brought an outfit for the wife. The husband offered to take it to her. Before I met the wife, I used to send clothes along with the husband to give to his wife and children. I am aware that

he has a family to support so he shouldn't be spending all of his money on me. But I refused. I said, 'I'll give it to her myself.' But time passed without seeing her so I gave it to the officer to give it to the wife. She later phoned me with her husband's phone, telling me how well the clothes fit and how beautiful they were. [Lateef chimed in, here, saying, 'You see this situation is no good for Laura, spending so much money on a wife and children of a younger man just for sex.']. But I always make him wear condoms."

Consciously trying to employ Susan as a favor to an enemy-turned-friend-turned-co-spouse, Laura has subsequently forwarded Susan's name to Valerie as a choice recruit for Kurisanani's "Call to Service" program. Valerie has accepted the proposal, knowing Laura and Susan as friends; she does not know that she is using her power as the Kurisanani Program Officer to help cement a quasi-polygamous marriage involving her chief local agent of Catholic and abstinence-before-marriage messages. Still, Valerie's push to transform Bonketsi Catholic Church into a Kurisanani artifactual has had successes, such as arranging the premises, workshops, routine meetings, and special events according a history-effacing spatial logic (Bergson 2001[1913]). The content of the NGO discourse also hegemonize formal dialogues, suffusing pamphlets and the air with images of Kurisanani as an altruistic mission led by passionate volunteers "in here" poised to assist needy communities and ailing bodies "out there." More significantly, the discrete contours of the discourse itself are highly imagined into an isolated realm of expert knowledge—the expertise Valerie was disappointed to see as lacking in her local co-workers—apart from an ever objectified field of every practice. Discourse is thus only secondarily the cause of development's production of social distinctions; epistemologically, it is gestured and emoted into existential possibility by *No-ing Bodies* whose immediate and resonating intention involves covering-up evidence of its history and social connectedness. Let us turn lastly to Ishmael, for his work at the school further testifies to how interpersonal

relationships, grounded in identifiable corporeal regimes, impacts development aid from below.

### ***NO-ING WORK from PLAY***

The Pfukani and Huko Primary School institutions exist, and while most of their stakeholders understood them as cultural phenomena they did not experience them as artifactuals, i.e. a distinct place of work set apart from broader social relations and activities. First, Chapter Two has already surveyed the manifold kith and kin relations existing among teachers within each of the two schools as well as between them. These relations did not become silenced at work but expressed, significantly influencing the school experience. Sisters-in-law, for example, avoided each other and relatives and friends of Ishmael's host parents, Mr. and Mrs. Shikibana, resented Ishmael's withdrawal from the family. Pfukani Primary School's principal, Mrs. Rhandzo, said, "Whenever two or three educators are arguing, you find it's got something to do with what happened at home." Second, teachers regularly asked students to wash their vehicles and received phone calls and visits from family and friends during school and class time; they did not perceive these as distractions from teaching but as matters of course. Finally, teachers and parents, who may be relatives or neighbors, give respect to each other as equivalent human beings and not for their reified titles as educators and guardians (Thornton 2005). When respect appears violated, parents may sometimes storm into school to fight teachers or renege on promises to help the school. Teachers, meanwhile, may avoid appearing to act in opposition to parents even as they regard them as uneducated and backward. Sentimentally-based social relations cultivate a perceptually soft and fluid line between school and community.

Ishmael and other PCVs experienced the blending of work and sociality of Limpopo's rural schools as unprofessional and even chaotic. Once, for instance, I conversed with Mint, the PCV who shared with me the host village of Poolo, in the principal's office at Poolo Primary School. "Do you want to see chaos?" Mint asked me. I said, "Absolutely," and she led me outside to see students dragging old desks out and new desks, brought on this day by a government truck, into their classrooms. Through the loud screeches and bangs of desks, Mint continued, "This ['chaos] happens everyday but the reason also changes everyday." On a subsequent day, Mint identified "feeding learners" as the reason for the "chaos." A couple of elderly women from Poolo Village cooked a bean-corn mix called stamp in large black pots. As students pushed toward the food, their collective body shaped into an oblong formation. A teacher wielded a stick and a smile at the students as she shoved them into a straighter line. Of the smile, Mint said cynically, "Uh-oh, mixed messages." She continued, "The thing I can't stand is that the kids aren't being taught individual responsibility; they don't get the chance to think for themselves that they should get in line." Pressing forward, Mint explained, "The problem is that tomorrow the teachers will have the same problem and will have to use the same disciplinary methods to control them [the children]." Mint went on, "The teachers don't appreciate rules; they'll have a problem today that is similar to yesterday's problem but they won't connect the two and come up with a rule to cover the patterned behavior. They treat each case separately and don't generalize, which undermines the use and place of rules." The same "lawless" flowing of school bodies and activities that seemed unremarkable to teachers and learners wreaked havoc on Mint's embodied comfort with discrete orderings.

This was true for Ishmael as well. Ishmael once expressed tremendous concern over "kids running all over." The context for this comment involved teachers "saying

they're marking exams" and having no time therefore to watch over the students. Ishmael's use of the word "saying" shows he did not quite believe the teachers' excuse. Regarding the "chaos" Mint experienced, she once said, "I like to revel in *not* being part of the chaos," and we moved, just the two of us, from the "chaos" to the predictability of the empty principal's office. Using different words, "I'd rather be home drawing or reading," Ishmael wished to end-up in the same state as Mint when faced with the school's perceived disorder, alone. In another case, Ishmael, as part of a school fundraising project, suggested and oversaw a "movie day." Assuming it targeted the students only, "movie day" startled Ishmael when he realized non-participating teachers left their students unattended to come and watch the films. Not wanting to appear too bossy, Ishmael "compromised" (Li 1999), asking uninvited teachers to ask other teachers to "at least watch your students while you watch the movie." Indeed, Ishmael, Mint and many other PCVs worked to reconfigure school from a space privileging social connections to a social-sacrificing space of individual responsibility, rules, and professional expertise. The binary, work "in here" and play "out there," significantly structured Ishmael's corporeal intention to recast Pfukani and Huko Primary Schools as artifactuals.

Ishmael sought to purify Pfukani and Huko Primary Schools as work spaces "in here" as opposed to play spaces "out there" by modeling an "all-business" demeanor while volunteering at the schools. A triangulated set of practices cultivated this demeanor. First, Ishmael, to the behest of the teachers, stayed alone in the teachers' lounge and principal's office while waiting for teachers to show interest in him or to demonstrate math or English lessons for various educators; there would be teaching, talking about teaching, or silence, nothing else. When the time came for him to model a lesson, Ishmael arrived at the classroom with precise punctuality. If Ishmael found a teacher unprepared to receive him, he walked back to the lounge or

principal's office and waited for the teacher to send a student to call him. Ishmael seemed to experience hanging around while the teacher organized him or herself as condoning the unprofessional delay. When he entered the classrooms, Ishmael often skipped the customary greetings with the host teacher and students and proceeded directly with the lesson. His occasional salutations of teachers and students must be understood in the context of Ishmael feeling that all of the fuss about greetings and visiting relatives wasted valuable time. When class ended, Ishmael stopped teaching as crisply as he started, leaving the classroom post haste, often without formally taking leave. This is, for Ishmael, a proper school teacher—sacrificing everything, including keeping up relations, for the sake of a purified focus and commitment to students.

Ishmael sometimes fought back against what he felt represented intrusions on bounded places of learning. Once while teaching Dr. Seuss' *Cat in the Hat*, for example, a teenaged-looking boy came to the door selling newspapers. Ishmael's eyes jumped back and forth from the students to the newspaper boy, expressing a concomitant wish to attend fully to the learners and to chase away the seller. Unable to contain himself any longer, Ishmael moved toward the door; he spoke harshly to the teen, telling him that school time was learning time and not business time. Ishmael similarly cocooned students and the entire schools with a "work-only" imaginary on school field trips. On a Huko school trip to Polokwane, the capital of the Limpopo Province, to visit a snake-park, TV studio (SABC), airport, and casino, street salesmen infuriated Ishmael. He explains in a diary entry:

*"The street salesmen just swooped down on the kids to try and sell the kids stuff. They know the kids have money and that if they can sell to them they can make a bundle. Who cares that they're selling junk or that the kids will buy so many sweets they puke (which happened right on the steps of SABC). But the salesmen were vicious. There were lots of groups that come through on these tours and the salesmen see them as a lucky break. At one point (we were waiting outside SABC), the*

*principal told the salesmen to wait until we came out. Then she went inside to confirm our tour and as soon as she went in the salesmen tried to sell to the kids. So I stopped them, and they [i.e. salesmen] got really offended. Then when we came out the principle rushed us all to the car and the salesmen didn't get a chance to sell anything but they took the time to yell at us (me, mainly, for lying and saying they could sell to the kids when they came out)" – (Ishmael, Fieldtrip)*

Ishmael viscerally imagined a sealed border around school children and he defended it as if sacred. Notice how Ishmael reported the difference between his and the principal's response to the salesmen: Whereas Ishmael stopped their advances cold, the principal rather deflected them, telling them to wait until she returned and then hurrying the children away when she came back. When the newspaper seller and salesmen brushed up against Ishmael, they brushed up against a *No-ing Body*, manifesting at these times as an "all work, no play" perceptual bifurcation. Ishmael perceived work and play as education and business, respectively; and he sometimes fought to maintain their rigid distinction.

In addition to modeling his ideal of a professional teacher as an "all work, no play" subject, Ishmael further attempted to cultivate this demeanor in the teachers by structuring them into maximizing their individual potential. For instance, when I asked Principal Bayana of Huko Primary School if I could ask select teachers to keep diaries for me, she said she would help me and then asked me to help bring computers to the school. I personally understood her response as blackmail—"diaries for you, computers for me"—though theoretically Mrs. Bayana intended simply to establish a relationship with me, and material connectedness and exchange, as observed earlier (Chapter Six), proved vital to this. Further, while Ishmael busied himself at the time empowering teachers to write letters of formal request for computers, Mrs. Bayana attempted to short circuit his approach by accessing computers via a reciprocal, long

term relationship with me. Establishing this relationship with Principal Bayana would facilitate my research and pad my wish to feel African (Introduction, Chapter Three); yet it would undermine the work Ishmael was trying to do. What should I do? I decided to confess this dilemma to Ishmael and he compromised (Li 1999): I could tell the principal I would help find computers for the school but the teachers must still formally request them. Through letters of request, Ishmael would teach educators to write and be self-motivated. He advised me, “Say you’ll help the fundraising committee do it. We are supposed to be doing it. Teachers need to get their asses in gear and finalize the plan for the end of the year dinner first.” For Ishmael, schools represent a space of teaching and learning, nothing more or less, and teachers waiting for development-through-exchange-and-relationships exhibit an objectivity and dependence contradictory to this imagined environment. Ishmael thus tried to transform teachers into single-minded subjects of work who prioritized their standardized identities as teachers over relationships of family and friendship, formality over informality.

In another case, Ishmael held a fundraising meeting to discuss an end-of-the-year dinner. But he started the meeting by, in his words, “pissing people off.” Mrs. Bayana of Huko Primary School, who attended this fundraising meeting, absented herself from school the previous week. The teachers, according to Ishmael and my eye-witness observations, seemed to take advantage, showing up late and leaving their classrooms for long periods of time and the students unattended. I admit to socializing routinely with the teachers during school hours of this week. Ishmael reported to me that he scolded the teachers, saying he “does not want to see these things again.” With the Koran’s insistence on patience and Ishmael’s regretful memory of chasing away the newspaper boy at Pfukani both in mind, Ishmael said he consciously tried speaking to the educators calmly. As the meeting neared its end and with only Principal Bayana

showing interest, Ishmael asked what each teacher planned to contribute to the fundraising dinner. No one responded, so Ishmael decided to direct the question at Evelyn Petenenge, the second grade teacher. She kept quiet. Ishmael responded by asking her more assertively, “Mrs. Petenenge, is your second grade class prepared to put on a dance or sing?” With tears welling up in her eyes, the teacher whimpered, “No.”

William and his maternal aunt, Mrs. Potwisa, became agitated and vocal. According to Ishmael, the teachers appeared scared, saying, “Our mother (Principal Bayana) will want to talk with us.” He believed the teachers feared losing their jobs. Mrs. Potwisa and her nephew demanded from Ishmael the public airing of the names of the faulty teachers. Ishmael said he responded, “You know who you are. If you made a mistake, correct it. You’re adults.” Whereas Ishmael expected individual teachers to voluntarily identify and reprimand themselves in the abstract space of “you know who you are,” and indeed Ishmael associated maturity with this self-conscious process, the teachers worked to domesticate his abstraction. As Africans elsewhere respond to the forces of nation-states and global capital (Smith 2006), these Limpopo teachers felt a need, in a quotidian moment, to socialize what appeared to them as an authorless source of power. Ishmael’s generalized accusation lost social traction in teachers’ eyes. They wanted to know “Ishmael accuses *who*” in order to connect the social dots. A newly hired teacher, Mr. Nwanga, finally calmed everyone, leaving Ishmael with mixed feelings: “I certainly had no intention of threatening people’s jobs or even making them cry. On the other hand, I’m still pissed off that the teachers had selfishly made the issue about themselves and their jobs instead of seeing their behavior as hurting the children’s chances for a good education and future.” Principal Bayana later spoke with me about this incident, saying she told Ishmael he must “lengthen his heart” (Tsonga: *ku lehisa mbilu*) because we’re all family.” Ishmael

experienced patience as speaking softly to prevent “blowing up”; for villagers, it means endlessly empathizing with others as if they are your family members.

In spite of his embodied efforts to cut an artifactual out of the two primary schools, Ishmael had a tall task. The manifold kin relations among the teachers alone stacked against Ishmael’s endeavor. His withdrawal into isolated spaces made him all the more unaware of these relationships, although he knew Mrs. Shikibana, his host mother and one time teacher at Pfukani, related to Mrs. Malamulele, the 1<sup>st</sup> grade teacher at the same school, as full blood sisters. He probably did not know, however, that these two sisters were part of the Bayana family, into which Principal Bayana of Huko also married. In any case, Mrs. Malamulele only reluctantly worked with Ishmael, for she resented his treatment of her sister and family. Also, Ishmael either did not know or did not understand the significance of Mrs. Gubama, with whom he worked best, relating to his host mother as a sister-in-law. Mrs. Gubama’s father and Mrs. Shikibana’s husband’s father were full blood brothers. When Ishmael’s host mother thus married Mr. Shikibana, she effectively married Mrs. Gubama’s brother. A sister experiences many rights over her brother’s home in Southern Africa (Krige and Krige 1943), including the right and, really, expectation to dislike the in-coming sister.

Pfukani teachers suspect Mrs. Gubama encouraged a student to report Mrs. Shikibana for using corporeal punishment on him. The boy’s mother came to school enraged and even filed a lawsuit against the teacher. This tense situation coerced Mrs. Shikibana to find employment elsewhere. Similarly, Mrs. Gubama and Mrs. Mushwana do not talk, except to greet. In addition to demonstrating how a lack of fluidity and specifically talking between individuals marks a relationship as bad, this case again speaks to sister-in-law relations: Mrs. Mushwana’s husband’s mother is the sister to Mrs. Gubama’s husband’s mother, relating the two teachers as sisters-in-law, however distant the biological relations. Principal Rhandzo called them “cousin-

sisters,” adding, “They can fight and it’s always a family affair.” In fact, Pfukani teachers feared Mrs. Gubama for her perceived harsh manners, which they uniformly trace to the loss of her husband in a 1970s car accident; they say Mrs. Gubama vowed never to remarry or engage in sex, thus blood clots her head and makes her harsh (Chapter One). Speaking on behalf of Mrs. Ngobeni and herself, Mrs. Malamulele said, “I’m scared every time she’s (Mrs. Gubama’s) around. I just hide,” by which she meant “shutting up and saying nothing but ‘Yes’ to everything Gubama says.” Teachers see Mrs. Gubama’s personality, shaped by shirking sociality, as driving her sister-in-law relations to the worst possible end. Predictably now, Ishmael formed one of his closest relations with an insider’s outsider (Rabinow 1977), a teacher, in this case, whose strategic reversal of an orientation toward sociality increased her personal space and decreased her responsiveness to others, at once threatening to teachers and attractive to Ishmael. Similar dynamics occurred at Huko Primary School. Anthropologies of development, because of their usual privileging of discourse, miss these sorts of crucial dynamics.

If sentimental relations among teachers governed school logic in general, they also unsettled specific activities initiated by Ishmael. For example, Ishmael frequently complained about teachers’ apparent lack of interest in his workshops: Paraphrasing him, Ishmael told me, “It’s annoying when the teachers just sit and stare at me at workshops, especially when I ask questions. I’m sure the answers are ‘out there’ in the heads of one or more of the teachers. I don’t understand why they don’t answer.” Fearing to speak in front of Mrs. Gubama formed part of the reason for their long silences. Others added an under-confidence in English as a rationale for withdrawing from participation. Speaking English fluently signals the high status of modernity (Chapter One), which most if not all teachers wanted but few felt they had achieved. In addition to treading carefully on sister-in-law relations, then, teachers expressed

themselves in consideration of how their peers and Ishmael might perceive their social statuses. Still other teachers, such as Mrs. Nwanga of Huko Primary School who concludes, “If someone [i.e. Ishmael] doesn’t talk, I won’t talk,” refused to participate in Ishmael’s workshops to protest his unwillingness to “openly” and “freely” engage them in easy-going, let’s-get-to-know-each-other-personally conversations.

Teachers domesticated school relations and Ishmael’s workshops, sensitizing them both to the priority of social relationships; their orientation toward intimacy further takes responsibility for what Ishmael considers his greatest development success as a PCV, namely, his fundraising projects. Ishmael provided me with a schematic contextualization for his fundraising success. Below, I share how I traced Ishmael’s schematization in my fieldnotes, which surely says as much about me as him. Recalling the fieldnotes as they were recorded gives a strong sense of Ishmael’s voice, since I tried to recapture in them as many of his phrases as possible. The schematic contextualization of his fundraising activities breaks down into twelve, easy-to-read blocks. For now, pay special attention to how Ishmael’s thinking over time has shifted from open-ended questions to personal observations, larger to smaller scale meetings, from abstractions to details, and from relative frustration to relative happiness according to the interests and responses of the teachers.

1. First 2 months, i.e. October to December, which is the end of the school year in SA. PC gave PCVs a vague job description; Ish. didn’t feel he fit anywhere; schools didn’t know what to do with him; cultural expectation of what a white guy is supposed to do.
2. Ish. tried having meeting with teachers. “What do teachers want?” Wasn’t successful. Teachers (Ts) just wanted water, electricity, i.e. big vague things having little to do directly with education. Ts didn’t give a lot of useful information that Ish. could use to get started on education projects.
3. Ish. rescheduled for a week or two later with Ts. Meanwhile, Ish. gave Ts surveys to specific information on policy, teaching methods in order to get away from their

“build me a stadium” needs. This second attempt wasn’t that great but Ish. got something out of it.

4. From the second meeting, Ish. compiled things given from the surveys. He added his own ideas about what he could do. Used the list to get things moving. But this didn’t work either because their response was simply that they wanted all of it, showing no discerning thought about what should be prioritized, etc—another indication of lack of interest. Ts wouldn’t prioritize.
5. Ish. had a third end-of-the-year meeting with Ts. This meeting corresponded with the end of the school year (December). They decided they’d start the next school year with an alternative to corporeal punishment workshop. Ish. got one or two teachers using new things, i.e. star charts / stickers.
6. January going—Ish. knew he needed much more information. He decided to change methods. He slowed down on workshops—[in which he was wrongly] trusting Ts to offer good information—and started classroom observations.
7. Ish. found that what they need most is help with teaching methods and the classroom observation helped Ish. discern what will work and won’t work with Ts. He occasionally gave feedback to Ts but he basically was saying, “I don’t know much about your school. I want to know more, please.” I.e. He changed methods from being an outside expert to being a needy foreigner who knows nothing.
8. End of March—Ish. further changed from focusing on teaching methods (what Ish. strongly believes is the core problem with the schools) to fundraising. He made this switch to see how it works...But Ish. needed to be personally satisfied going this direction because he doesn’t think money is the main problem with the schools.
9. Here’s why Ish.’s satisfied with fundraising direction: will get community more involved in school; opens-up door for discussion about particular classroom needs as opposed to just water, electricity, etc.; enables discussion with schools about business / finance. He said he’s not formally trained in these things but he’s good at it. School needs it; not enough money in Dept. of Ed.; helps Ish. personally. Helps him get a lot of information. What supplies do they have, what do they want and why. Helps him get in their heads.
10. So far: Pfukani (P)—series of three workshops on fundraising. Huko (H)—only gave part of the first workshop. He completely reworked it since the Pfukani experience in that he focused exclusively on practical steps instead of reasons behind the fundraising steps such as inventory and budgeting.
11. More rethinking fundraising workshops from P to H as Ish. learns how to get things done: At P, Ish. held 3 workshops which were mostly theory based and not

practical based. Ish., himself, and he supposes most Americans in the same positions would want the theory. That is, he would want to know ‘why’ but the Ts at P and H don’t react so it seems to Ish. that they’re not interested. He doesn’t want to treat them like kids. They’re adults, Ish. says. Ish. speculates that Apartheid trained them to take instructions.

12. At H, Ish. stressed the practical side of the workshops. Part of this shift is reflected in that when Ish. needs the whole staff (for a fundraising matter) he has a large meeting but otherwise he only works through the fundraising committee. Meeting with just a few Ts doesn’t feel like a workshop. It’s empowering to Ts, Ish. feels, because Ts participate more. He makes smaller meetings more practical.

First, Ishmael’s entire briefing of the history of his fundraising project must be understood as encoding for a general emotional trajectory from frustration to feeling relatively satisfied, granting idiosyncratic ups and downs throughout the process. He speaks here with a sense of “finally succeeding” at something.

Second, teachers expected to establish an unmediated informal and interpersonal-based relationship with their coming PCV, who ended up being Ishmael. This becomes clear with the understanding that teachers felt self-righteous about “their” community, via the Shikibana host family, for making a foreigner, especially a white one given South Africa’s history, feel at home. In return, they anticipated this foreigner, who they now knew concretely as Ishmael, would “of course” submit locally as a son and / or brother. Rather than expecting this new family member to make his mothers, fathers, sisters, and brothers “jump through hoops” to access development, the teachers obviously wanted him, as they would any child who returned home after learning valuable skills abroad or in a big city, to use his advanced skills and simply get them the classrooms, computers, etc. to which they felt historically entitled. Ishmael dodged relating to the teachers in terms of long-term, holistic reciprocity, rejecting outright material exchange bases of their association—he would not feel “tricked” into “enabling” the teachers just because they and the

community received him so well. He rather backed out of friendships (Chapter Four) and living with the host family (Chapter Three) to underscore his perception that the teachers should expect nothing from him except as a facilitator of their empowerment and self-motivation.

Third, the teachers' "just get it for us if you know how to do it" attitude proved unacceptable to Ishmael, so he changed tactics, deciding to pull out of abstractly discoursing with teachers to observing the details of their teaching habits and environments. While Ishmael succeeded in deflecting holistic exchange relations with the teachers based on familial sentiments, the teachers forced the volunteer to move a step closer to their comfort zone. He concluded from his up-close classroom observations that what the teachers needed most were not the material markers of modernity for which they clamored but improvement in their teaching methods. Through teaching methods, Ishmael could empower teachers to produce a generation of learners who would have the skills to bring modernity to these villages. As part of his new on-the-ground approach to gathering information and facilitating participation and improvement, Ishmael strategically changed his persona from one of expert foreigner to one of needy outsider who has to learn as much if not more from the teachers as the other way around. Ishmael successfully changed public discussion at the schools from "stadium projects" to "teaching methods," yet the disinterest and poor implementation of the new focus is apparent in that he only "got one or two teachers using new methods, i.e. star charts / stickers." Through disinterest, half-hearted participation, and occasionally wondering out loud about material improvements, teachers managed to steer Ishmael, if not toward intimate sociality, at least back toward a focus on the acquisition of modernity's materialities. Ishmael turned thus to fundraising, an idea he borrowed from Dennis, the PCV-turned Christian missionary from the previous PCV group (Introduction).

Fourth, although Ishmael reluctantly conceded to a “materials” project, he agreed to go forward only after structuring it up in his mind as an avenue for teaching what he now felt was a bare minimum requirement for his continued work, namely, “discussion.” By opening up discussion between community and school, which Ishmael here conceptualizes more distinctly than villagers, about particular classroom needs, and school finances, Ishmael could open teachers’ consciousnesses to these concerns as distinct problems in need of being systematically addressed.

Fifth, teachers, while excited about the idea of fundraising, did not enthusiastically embrace Ishmael’s high-handed, theoretical approach to it. Their palpable disinterest in the abstractions of theory shaped the economy of pragmatic calculation in such a way as to lead Ishmael to focus “exclusively on practical steps.” Ishmael hoped to show teachers the “whys” of fundraising, whereas the teachers desired the “how to-s.” Ishmael perceived teachers’ disinterest in abstraction and theory as childish, but proceeded in the hope that he could bring them around to it after a practical immersion in fundraising projects. Finally, to boost interpersonal interaction, especially so as to spark teachers into discussing their relationship to their own development, Ishmael began replacing large, workshop types of formats with smaller groups composed of select teachers.

In the end, the teachers *Yes-ed* Ishmael’s original expectation to simply stimulate development through high-level discourse about teaching methods into what was for them a more comfortable, relatively interpersonal, detail- or history-oriented, and “materials” project. In place of development through a long-term, sentimentally-based relationship with Ishmael, teachers forced the exchange they anticipated into a different form: If Ishmael would not spontaneously submit to the role of “returned skilled son and brother” and thereby assist the schools, the teachers, whose individuality, choice, and strategy was buoyed by *Yes-ing Bodies*, would make his

socially alienating projects work for their interests in acquiring the material signs of modernity. The exchange would go on, whether Ishmael liked or even knew it or not. This is how “his” success was structured more fundamentally by “their” success. Both sides compromised (Li 1999), Ishmael consenting to fundraising and hoping, through it, to find his way back to teaching methods; and the teachers putting up with the value of autonomy, in the embodied form of Ishmael, as a guide to development. Additionally, the pride teachers felt in successfully fundraising worked toward rigidifying their identities as teachers as distinct from community and family, however ephemerally and situationally. *No-ing* and *Yes-ing* values compromised, yet both on their own terms, underscoring the tentativeness of their perceptual union.

### **CONCLUSION: CORPOREAL INTENTIONS**

This chapter has engaged the notion of “side-effects,” a key problematic within Development Anthropology. The term “side-effects” and its analogous concepts, such as “unintended consequences,” signal a space apart or behind the backs of consciousness. This hard split between consciousness and unconsciousness already raises an alarm given the above discussion of bifurcating developments. Of course, individuality exists and the good will of the grassroots workers and villagers appear similarly noble: both deplored selfishness, valuing instead the extension of the self beyond its self, whether up to God and principles, over to others, or some weighted mix of both. Individuality is always socially oriented, never free, however (Fajans 2006), and this chapter explored this dynamic, finding wide perceptual discontinuities between good will and corporeal intentions.

This chapter has argued for bifurcating as the elementary effect of international development work. Bifurcating, binarizing, or splitting refers here to the ideological act of imaging the world in terms of an ontological division between subjectivity and

objectivity, e.g. mind and body (Boyer 2005b), agency and structure (Mitchell 2002), spirit and system (Boyer 2005a). Bifurcating materializes as artifactuals (Mitchell 2002), structures, ranging from formal institutions to bounded texts and time keeping, appearing as inert objects set apart from the subjects who use, manipulate, and inhabit them from the standpoint of pure intentionality. The *No-ing Bodies* of Sergeant, Valerie, and Ishmael oriented their good intentions toward producing and rigidifying artifactuals into ideological and institutional existence on the respective bases of living-dead, individual-community, and work-play bifurcations.

As categories or terms, binaries such as these at first appear like mental or intellectual property. Yet this interpretation spins itself on a mind-body duality and misses the sensuous nature of binary practices. Social emotions or sentiments (Fajans 2006) manifest even at the relatively high analytic level of institutional building. Thus, Sergeant, Valerie, and Ishmael rebuked, shouted, and chased away death from life, community from individuals, and play from work. *No-ing Bodies* socialized to spontaneously gesture desire for connectivity into silence from the existential ground of bifurcating practices. Resolving personal interaction into “my space” and “your space”(Chapters Three-Five) leaves a discrete body and internal subject as the phenomenological basis for individual and social identity and action.

The existential need to feel oneself through experiences of discrete individuality explains the emotional force as well as the consistency and persistence behind the binarizing missions of Sergeant, Valerie, and Ishmael. In laboring to produce artifactuals, the grassroots workers worked to institutionalize themselves, i.e. their peculiarly shaped bodily relationship to desire, to make the interconnected Limpopo world safe for phenomenological autonomy. Whereas certain anthropological scholars speak of rule as the *side-effect* of development, I argue that *No-ing* intersubjectivity into perceptual halves represents the chief intention of aid

workers and their projects. This intention occurs not so much behind their backs as with their backs—bodies unnerved by radical intersubjectivity. Christianizing, destigmatizing, and educating may congeal this purpose.

Li (1999) asked, “How is governmentality accomplished?” My research data and interpretive frame lead me to ask the amended question, “What is accomplished and how?” An ideological or, better, bodiological motivation toward the social value of autonomy impregnated and oriented the conscious activities of the grassroots workers. Thus, while Sergeant, Valerie, and Ishmael attempted to establish and concretize their artifactuals with fits and starts, rebukes and silent protests, they each compromised on tactics but never their merged existential missions to *No* the life out of death, intersubjectivity in two, and work from play. Their successes included their mere presence in Limpopo villages, normalizing their rejection of obligatory reciprocity, hegemonizing public discourses and their binary structures around the aid projects, and, in Sergeant’s case, unwittingly fomenting antagonism between social groups his mission helped to cultivate.

As observed elsewhere (Smith 2006), an outline of a Western-styled civil society also began to form, in the case of Sergeant’s original church, and to solidify, in the cases of the Valerie and Ishmael’s preexisting church and schools. Africanized civic practices based on kinship and / or ethnic relations certainly exist (Karlstrom 1999). But efforts of the grassroots workers to carve out independent, artifactual space for their projects reveal their Western liberal lineage (Comaroff and Comaroff 1999) as well as their contradiction: namely, “that the autonomy of civil society from the state, the very autonomy on which the Idea is predicated, is entirely chimerical. It, too, rests on a series of idealized separations, starting with that of political authority from private property. But this separation is, de facto, unsustainable” (ibid). The contradiction originates not in an Idea but in sensual bodies socialized to negate desire

and proves unstable because *No-ing Bodies* depend on [the negation of] others for their sense of independence.

A bodiological orientation toward interconnectedness suffused the consciousnesses of Limpopo villagers in their engagements with the development initiatives. Most villagers accepted the development discourses in general. Thus, worshipping God, preventing HIV-AIDS, and improving schools sat well with rural residents. However, in contrast to the intentions of their foreign benefactors, villagers *Yes-ed* all of these objectives, first domesticating their autonomous pretensions and second experiencing them fundamentally as social as opposed to ideological projects and spaces. Embodying a value of sociality in post-apartheid South Africa meant, in part, feeling a need to show respect for foreign guests by *indirectly* opposing some of their unappealing practices. Consequently, villagers usually socialized the TCC, Kurisanani, and Pfukani and Huko Primary Schools artifactuals either clandestinely or in visible ways aimed at keeping peace (Thornton 2005).

Certain scholars have argued for “further entrenchment of the state” as the “side-effect” of development discourses. This argument, I contend, while obviously true in part, reifies discourse whereas discourse should be an object of inquiry. Discourse is itself an artifactual, making a set of language practices appear bounded and internally coherent, set apart ontologically from practice. Arguing for multiple discourses, even indigenous ones, only multiplies the number of language-sets rather than challenges their ontological status and binary bases, as Mitchell (2002) has done. As artifactuals, I hasten to add, discourses personify *No-ing Bodies*; they repress connectedness with their binary, practices, and the bodiological line forming between the two congeals a sentimental repudiation of a desire for organic or unmediated forms of interpersonal relatedness. Using “discourse” unproblematically further entrenches the *No-Body* metaphysic in social theory. I hope it is now clear what a focus on

interpersonal relations and corporeality brings to anthropological studies of development.

## —CONCLUSION—

### ANTHROPOLOGICAL SIGNIFICANCES

Bringing phenomenology to bear on the study of development has born much fruit. Its general impact has been to further magnify a focus on development as fundamentally about interpersonal relationships, as opposed to discourses and / or institutions. The heightened focus on the interpersonal encouraged us to “move in” with a number of grassroots aid workers, helping us gain valuable perspective on the significance of residential and friendship dynamics in cross-cultural development activities. To be effective, the study needed to be up close and personal, emphasizing the countless spaces and moments of interaction between developers and villagers as opposed to quantity of each type of social person. A sweeping survey would have nullified the intimacy. The study is intended as a microcosmic look at the rudimentary components of a macrocosmic development dynamic, widespread throughout rural areas of South Africa’s Limpopo Province and arguably germane to many colonial and post-colonial experiences of other development personnel, missionaries, and anthropologists.

Finding social significance in the residential and friendship dimensions of aid work has worked toward objectifying and overhauling a work versus leisure, public versus private dichotomy thus far latent in anthropological studies of development. Attention to living space and amicable relations has further generated a problem. Grassroots workers from Western cultural backgrounds and their respective Limpopo hosts and colleagues could not live together or befriend each other to anyone’s satisfaction. Agencies motivated by opposed socio-cultural values explained the interpersonal disconnect. Whereas the grassroots agents of change sought comfort and trust in autonomy, villagers sought the same in connectedness. Chapters Three and Four documented their self-perceived differences. The problem arose: What do we do

with real, historically-experienced difference? How can people perceive comfort in opposed values and still be understood to be fundamentally each other?

I argued: The participating Limpopo villagers embodied a sensuous motivation toward connectedness while the missionary, nun, and PCV embodied a sentimentally-marked orientation toward autonomy (Chapter Five). The bodies of the villagers and grassroots workers had been evidently socialized to respectively and spontaneously gesture with and against the grain of a universal psychic desire to fit-in not fit-out, to be social not anti-social, even if some individuals are socialized to imagine away this felt-need. I called these perceptual gestures *Yes-ing Bodies* and *No-ing Bodies*. Their divergent corporeal perceptions oriented but did not determine the conscious detail of their consciousnesses and choices regarding residential life (Chapter Three), friendship (Chapter Four), participatory development practices (Chapter Six), and “side-effects” of aid work (Chapter Seven). Thus the grassroots workers negotiated independent living spaces as home bases and comfort zones, whereas their village hosts, agitated by this push for disarticulated autonomy, sought to domesticate their foreign benefactors as fictive kin; and where villagers tried to socialize their friendships with the development workers through regular gift-exchanges, the aid workers, seeing this gesture as a superficial basis for a “true” relationship, withdrew from such material reciprocity.

The economy of corporeality also structured work relations and outcomes. Thus, the missionary, nun, and PCV experienced themselves as socially distanced facilitators who anticipated locals voluntarily participating in the missions and working selflessly toward their own progress (Chapter Six). The interpersonal reluctance disturbed villagers, who perceived forming fictive kin relations or at least friendly “openness” with their benefactors as constitutive of development. Villagers tried to socialize participation, on the one hand, and, on the other hand, to

clandestinely practice what they felt their foreign helpers failed to respect enough to discuss and try to understand. Regarding “side-effects” (Chapter Seven), the *No-ing Bodies* of the missionary, nun, and PCV, in spite of yet through their conscious goodwill, intended to remake rural Limpopo according to their shared phenomenological experience, discrete objectivity set apart ontologically from subjectivity. This occurred through the cultivation of church, NGO, and school artifactuals formed respectively upon living-dead, individual-group, and work-play binary oppositions. Villagers responded by domesticating the autonomous intentions intrinsic to these institutional practices.

This argument proffers two major and interrelated theoretical contributions to anthropology. The first involves the producers and products of modernity’s now nefarious binarisms. Many scholars have critiqued the use of categorical oppositions, such as civil society and state (Comaroff and Comaroff 1999, Karlstrom 1999) and ethnographer and others (Clifford and Marcus 1986, Fabian 1983), within academic writings. The contention is that the bifurcations are culturally particular to the West and thus inevitably bias interpretations of non-Western people and places. Note the enduring antimony between “Western categories” and “Others’ categories” even within this postmodern criticism. How “our” and “their” categories are implicated in each other is part of the second intervention made below. For now, this study has turned the corner of criticism as well as efforts to reconcile binaries (e.g. Bornstein 2005); instead, it aligns with scholarship seeking to understand Western binaries on their own terms. While Western in cultural origin, discrete dualities nevertheless exist meaningfully for certain subjects and must, therefore, be explained as much as criticized. Explaining them proves challenging (Holmes and Marcus 2005), for in studying intellectual knowledge practices, we ultimately study ourselves. How do we

get a mental grip over something so elemental to who we are and how we perceive the world?

Through his studies of colonial and post-colonial Egypt, Timothy Mitchell has increased our understanding of what he terms the “peculiar metaphysic of capitalist modernity,” where the world appears resolved into ontological distinctions between reality and representation, content and structure, mind and body (1991). Expert knowledge practices craft these distinctions and shape up their own perceptual autochthony vis-à-vis “unprofessional” intellectual activities in the process (2002). Dominic Boyer has worked towards domesticating the metaphysical or idealist air of Mitchell’s work by discerning corporeality around experiences of mind / body bifurcations (2005b). My first contribution involves discerning the existential basis for Cartesian experiences and representing this preobjective ground with the concept of *Negating Bodies*. Bodies socialized to spontaneously gesture themselves into intersubjective distance leave the impression of a series of inert bodies containing equally discrete, contingent-free minds. Likely exaggerated in contexts, such as rural Limpopo, where individuals positively value unmediated social intercourse, *Negating Bodies* experience and, indeed, work toward producing ontological duality and contradiction on moment-by-moment bases; they make experiences of discrete individuality and metaphysical sphere-ism ontologically possible and perceptually thinkable.

*Negating Bodies*, I have argued, take shape by negating an unconscious desire to connect with others, to fit-in and be social (Chapter Five). Social emotions or sentiments thus linked inextricably with negating gestures to form affective schemas motivating toward autonomous imaginings. Like anthropological fieldworkers from colonial and post-colonial eras (Chapters Three and Four), the grassroots workers of this study overwhelmed, stressed, disgusted, and discomforted into postures of rigid

singularity. Their frustrations with Limpopo practices and pressures of connectedness infused the residential, friendship, and intersubjective thoughts and choices made by the grassroots workers. Concomitantly, their frustrations proved foundational for the structuring up of artifactuals along the bifurcating lines of living and dead, individual and group, and work and play (Chapter Seven) as well as public and private (Chapter Three) and kin and friend (Chapter Four). Thus, in addition to the “metaphysic of capitalist modernity” receiving its intellectual structure from *Negating Bodies*, its intellectual artifice also bears their sentimental antagonism toward irreducible interdependence. The production of binaries, as well as the discursive and institutional products themselves, orients sentimentally toward bodio-logical autonomy and against the grain of desire, thus personifying their *Negating Bodies* of origin. The imaginary line itself between subjects and objects congeals an abruptness (Bergson 2001[1913]) and violence (Comaroff and Comaroff 1999, Derrida 1974).

In addition to elaborating a corporeal basis for the “peculiar metaphysic,” my research data precipitated a second theoretical contribution as well, namely the development of a global interpretive framework (Chapter Five). In spite of an academic context largely and understandably skeptical of universals claims (Bell and Coleman 1999), apparently irreconcilable “difference” experienced by the grassroots workers and their Limpopo hosts themselves necessitated a willingness to question and ultimately challenge postmodern criticism. Why couldn’t they live together or establish sincere friendships, and why did their spontaneously expressed sentiments and body comportment contradictorily value intersubjective exchange? Tracing their oppositional embodied orientations to respective social contexts does not solve the problem of practically experienced difference as much as it projects difference from a smaller to a larger scale. To avoid naturalizing difference and, thereby, re-empowering dated and morally suspect divisions, for example, between “us” and “them,” blacks

and whites, civilized and uncivilized, my interpretive challenge involved understanding grassroots workers and Limpopo interactants as fundamentally similar and connected in the immediacy of their interpersonal relations, even as their bodies motivated them into distinct corporeal compartments.

I have argued that the bodies of the villagers and their grassroots benefactors were respectively socialized to positively and negatively evaluate their common desire for social inclusion; that is, one learned to affirm and the other to negate preobjective or organic experiences of interconnectedness, as manifested in routine gesturing. Their individual and collective identities, as well as the institutions they practice, developed around their respective perceptual assessments of desire, at once explaining the sentimental and tenacious qualities of their value orientations. Rather than feeling able to switch social value loyalties at will, the villagers and grassroots workers seemed, following their social emotions, increasingly beholden to their social values of personal constitution. The mutual implication of their *Affirming* and *Negating Bodies* explains this phenomenon: To experience preobjective intimacy as normal and comfortable, the bodies of Limpopo villagers embraced the desire for connectedness negated by the bodies of the grassroots workers to feel self-complete. Within the development contexts studied here, the elemental dynamic involved *Affirming Bodies* reaching out for intimacy, *Negating Bodies* fighting off the gesture and institutionalizing its negation, and *Affirming Bodies* producing intimacy within the artifactual structures. The social evaluation of desire, experienced existentially and publicly as preobjective body perceptions, underscores the radical historicity, as well as the organic unity of psycho-social dimensions of agency, of this theoretical frame. Every gesture, as well as every institutional personification of it, takes a definitive position on a universal urge to connect. Embodying divergent social assessments of a

common desire—this is how Limpopo villagers and their grassroots guests were each other despite and in the midst of their emotionally tense encounters.

But this is to turn the matter inside out, to objectify what occurred immanently. In everyday time, it would be difficult to observe bodies *Yes-ing* and *No-ing* behind a bricolage of hand-shaking, niceties and kindnesses, unremarkable conversations, work-shopping and praying together, welcoming language of villagers, empathetic language of foreigners and, often enough, shared ideological details. An abundance of scholarship has indeed stressed the utter messiness, bricolage, indeterminacy, ambiguity, incoherence, polyvalency, inchoateness, and miscellany of post-colonial social life (Baudrillard 1989, Bhabha 1994, Derrida 1974, Greene 2002, Lacan 1977, Lyotard 1986, Nietzsche 1979), and the “alternative modernities’ scholarship” (Comaroff and Comaroff 1993, Eisenstadt 2000, Gaonkar 2001, Geshiere 1997, Hanchard 1999) is apiece with this paradigmatic orientation. Activities around the three aid projects in the Limpopo Province would have conformed well to these characterizations were it not for the steady predictability of spontaneous gestures and sentiments. Many if not most participating villagers proved adept and even emotionally invested in modernist discourses and their binaries, such as Christian versus heathen and modernity versus tradition (Chapter One). In this, they shared an interpretive language, which indeed facilitated social distinguishing, with the missionary and the nun. Interestingly, however, the PCV, who shared an embodied orientation with the other two grassroots workers, distanced himself from them and many locals by refraining from or working consciously against such bifurcating language. Yet being joined in linguistic detail did not change the corporeal difference between the two spiritual agents, on the one hand, and villagers, on the other hand; similarly, the PCV parting linguistic company with the missionary and the nun did not nullify their embodied unity. Villagers *Yes-ed* as they used binary language,

expressing it in conformity with local understandings of interpersonal respect and conviviality (Nyamnjoh 2002, 2001).

In its “Epoche,” phenomenology has bracketed off all truth claims, especially the a-historical kinds associated with intellectual modernism. Phenomenology has instead replaced “arm-chair” or “ivory tower” generalizations with a disciplined radical empiricism, emphasizing the irreducible historicity of all human actions and constructions. The “Epoche” implies the acceptability of historical or practiced generalities, however. I hope to have taken off the bracket while satisfying radical empiricism. *Yes-ing* and *No-ing Bodies* are, I have argued, as historical as your current gesture. Each gesture is an evaluation of a common psychic desire for interpersonal, linguistic and other forms of inclusion. Bodies perceptually and thus constantly philosophize; they judge and debate the ontology of human relationality, rendering them inescapably political. These corporeal evaluations impregnate consciousnesses, actions, and institutions, meaning that none of them is ontologically discrete or finished and that each of them congeals and tries to concretize, even in their apparent stillness and permanence, a socio-cultural judgment of desire. Producers and their products, at every scale, attempt to hold desire in one shape or another, attempting to maintain it in that formation. Structure is as historical as detail, only sturdier due to its existential linkage between identity and felt-ontological security.

Finally this study depends on and confirms the findings within Development Anthropology scholarship, complicating rather than negating its insights. For example, ethnographies and their interpretive frames repeatedly confirm the further entrenchment of the state, as well as increasing social distinctions (Korff and Schrader 2000, Pigg 1992), as the chief “side-effects” of development discourses. I tried to show how Western binaries, such as state and civil society and even discourse and practice, are fundamentally embodied and sentient; in particular, they personify or

instantiate or “are” *No-ing Bodies*, which produce the existential or blueprint binary, mind set apart from body, by viscerally gesturing bodies and their apparently discrete subjectivities into their own phenomenologically distinct spaces. Where some development scholars would say that development discourses and practices effectively produce ever finer social distinctions, I would simply say they are *No-ing*. Further, while the details of discourses and “discourse” itself certainly imagine impossibly complete dichotomies between people and people and things, focusing on residential and friendship aspects of development recovers the sentimental quality of these processes. The missionary, nun, and PCV comforted their ways into establishing residential-private spaces apart from work-public spaces; and they disappointed themselves into more refined senses of autonomy apart from others whom they felt offered only insincere friendships. They *No-ed* their personal social spaces, giving them phenomenological breathing room to discursively and institutionally *No* their host environments, including cultivating the distinction between discourse and institution.

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