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# THE STATE OF YOUTH RESEARCH IN SOUTH AFRICA

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## Three centuries of fractured morality

Antjie Krog, in her celebrated book *Country of My Skull*, a memoir documenting the proceedings of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), describes the history of South Africa as ‘three centuries of fractured morality’ (Krog, 1999, p. 68), a theme expounded in the first volume of the report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC, 1999, p. 25) when it locates apartheid within a framework on ongoing and systemic violence from the importation of slaves to the Cape in 1652 by Dutch traders, the many ‘wars of dispossession and colonial conquest’ beginning with the war against the Khoisan in 1659; the ‘hunting and elimination’ of Khoisan by Boers and British in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the *Mfecane* - the violent Zulu expansion of the early nineteenth century during which many other ‘black’ tribes were displaced or killed, and the incarceration of Boer women and children by the British during the Anglo-Boer war of 1899-1902, which lead to the death of at least 20,000 people. To this list contemporary South African historians Davenport and Saunders (2000) adds the skirmishes between Portuguese trading ships and local inhabitant from the mid-fifteenth century onwards (p. 8), and the likely (but not proven) existence of ‘slaving chiefdoms’ in the early nineteenth century (p. 17), while colonial historian Edward Roux alludes to the ways in which Bantu tribes “conquered, absorbed or annihilated” (1948, p. 4) the Khoisan in their early migrations southwards.

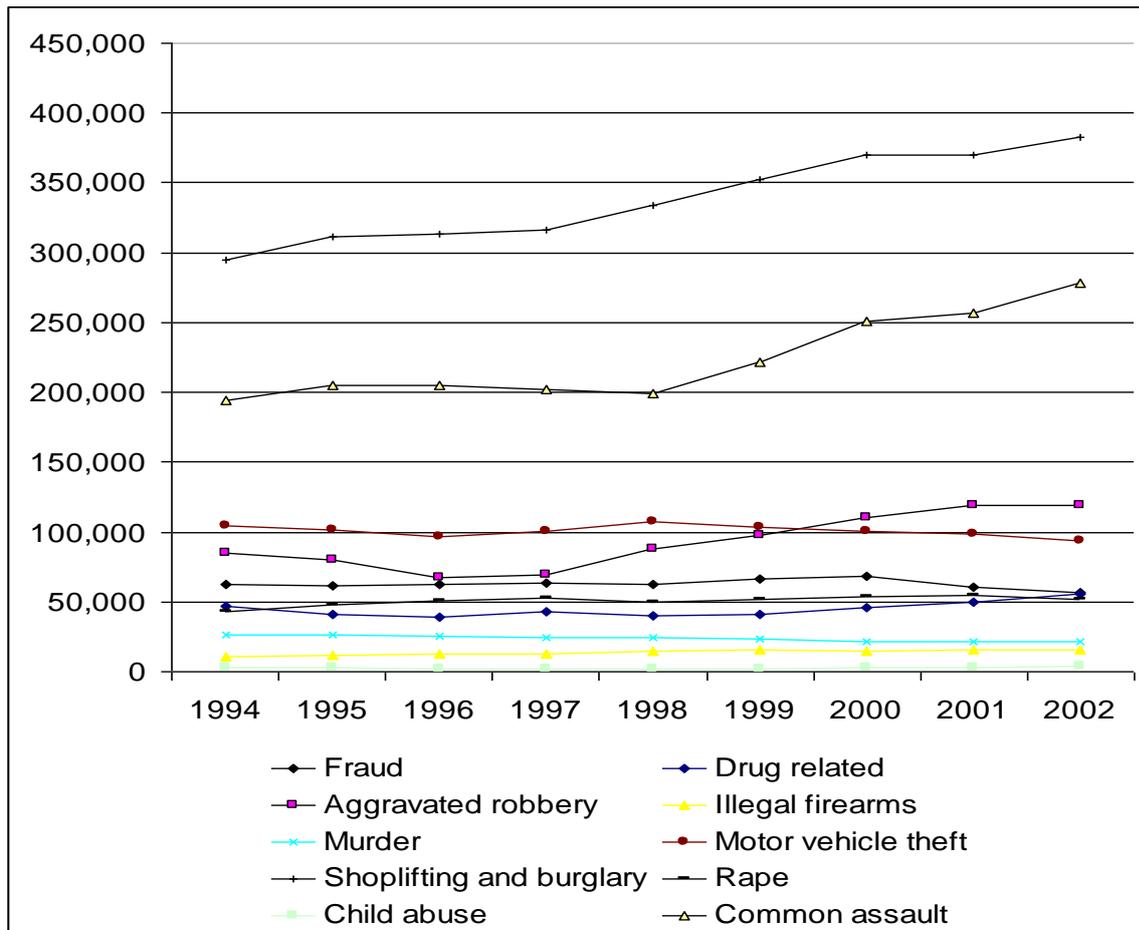
Nelson Mandela said of the state of the youth in South Africa during the apartheid years:

Poverty and the breakdown of family life have secondary effects. Children wander about the streets of the townships because they have no schools to go to, or no money to enable them to go to school, or no parents at home to see that they go to school, because both parents (if there be two) have to

work to keep the family alive. This leads to a breakdown in moral standards, to an alarming rise in illegitimacy, and to growing violence which erupts not only politically, but everywhere. Life in the townships is dangerous. There is not a day that goes by without somebody being stabbed or assaulted. And violence is carried out of the townships in the white living areas. People are afraid to walk alone in the streets after dark. Housebreakings and robberies are increasing, despite the fact that the death sentence can now be imposed for such offences. Death sentences cannot cure the festering sore (Mandela, 1964).

On 27 April 1994, for the first time in her fractured history, South Africans voted for a democratically elected government. But in the past ten years South Africa has become known as the most violent country in the world (Review, 1999). Non-politically motivated violent crime including robbery, murder, the abuse of women, children, xenophobia (Morris, 1998; Vale, 2002) and baby rape have increased dramatically since the end of apartheid (Anderson, 2000; L. M. Richter, 2003). Figure 1 provides a graphic representation of these trends between 1994 and 2002 and will be discussed in more detail later in this chapter. Violence in schools (Harber, 2001), households and on the streets have also increased. So if these brutish statistics are the symptoms of the current social milieu in South Africa, what are the causes behind the breakdown in the moral fabric of society? Dixon attributes rising crime levels to “the combined effects of higher levels of relative deprivation, the rise of individualism and endemic feelings of ontological insecurity”(Dixon, 2001, p. 211) in postapartheid society. Most find the root cause in the ongoing economic disparity between ‘black’ and ‘white’, and poverty in which the majority of ‘black’ South Africans are still mired. And while the TRC “is on record that the restoration of the moral order through truth-telling... must be accompanied by a commitment to economic justice” (Boraine, 1998), the economic justice has been slow to materialise. Others point to the moral breakdown of society which apartheid and the ensuing struggle precipitated.

Ongoing violence had numbed people to violence; the line between making the country ungovernable in order to force political change, and common looting and violence for violence sake was often blurred (Seekings, 1993, see especially p. 65-7). Of course it would be naive to assert that no crime or violence for its own sake existed before the advent of the apartheid struggle. To be sure, that violent street gangs existed before, during, and after the struggle for liberation is undisputed. Mokwena (1991) for example, reports the rise of township youths known as ‘jackrollers’ who abducted and gang raped young women for



**Figure 1** South African crime statistics 1994-2004 (Source: South African Police Services, 2003)

sport. Also undisputed, is the fact that apartheid contributed materially to exacerbating problems of both crime and violence. This legacy of violence on children and youth has been the subject of two important works by Dawes (1994; 1994) and Straker (1992).

With regard to crime, a ‘black’ journalist covering the TRC poignantly states: “I grew up with the notion that stealing from whites is actually not stealing... you whiteys came and accused us of stealing – while at that very same minute you were stealing everything from

us!” (Mondli Shabalala in Krog, 1999, p. 19). This anecdote is often repeated by petty criminals and gangsters who have decided that the houses and jobs which they had anticipated with the ending of apartheid has not materialised, and so they were taking the initiative in providing these material benefits of themselves. ‘Surely this cannot be stealing?’ they argue. Similarly, there are those who remain distrustful of the current police force, who have been slow in being retrained from a force trained not to ensure the safety and security of a country’s citizens, but to be a vehicle suppression in a totalitarian state (Swarns, 2000). This police force (or ‘service’ as it has been renamed) remains in the process of transformation, and corruption and violence have been difficult to root out (Roshan Samara, 2003; Swarns, 2000). South Africans have often reverted to taking the law into their own hands with subsequent miscarriages of justice as people are wrongfully accused or harsh sentences meted out without due process.

A further contributing factor to the loss of moral order has been the corrosion of community structures and inbuilt community sanctions against crime and deviance, achieved through the apartheid state’s infamous ‘forced removals’<sup>1</sup> of ‘black’, ‘coloured’ and ‘Indian’ people into new, usually barren areas, away from ‘white’ suburbs. One of the results of the dislocation and upheaval of communities was that street gangs proliferated and went unchecked. Another controversial revelation of the TRC concerned the illicit gun running and drug smuggling used by both sides to finance the armed and third force<sup>2</sup> struggles (Krog, 1999, p. 264). While no longer associated with the old or new governments, these elements have restructured themselves into profitable crime syndicates, aided by an influx of organised international criminals into the lucrative market (Roshan Samara, 2003, p. 286, 304), who in turn have taken advantage of the relaxation of what were once draconian immigration laws (Morris, 1998, p. 1118-9).

The end of apartheid has not miraculously turned South African citizens into completely racially tolerant people. The struggle produced Africanist and ‘black’ consciousness activists who were against a negotiated settlement. Similarly vast numbers of militarily trained ‘white’ and ‘black’ males have struggled to make the transition from an ideologically indoctrinated hatred of each other, into living and building a unified nation together. Racist incidents litter

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<sup>1</sup> Between 1960 and 1984 2.9 million black people, 83,691 ‘coloured’ people, and 40,069 ‘Indian’ people (Slabbert, Malan, Marais, Olivier, & Riordan, 1994, p. 42) were forcibly moved from their homes to create ‘whites only’ areas.

<sup>2</sup> The third force were government-instigated groups of vigilantes used to disrupt negotiations in the nineties.

the daily newspapers, often in rural areas. The nine million licensed guns (Cock, 1997; Economist, 1999) and many more unlicensed<sup>3</sup> handguns and semiautomatic AK47s and R4s in circulation in South Africa attest both to deep insecurity and the potential use of firearms for criminal intent.

### **The postapartheid context of South African youth**

South Africa in 2004, not unlike other developing countries, is a youth-filled country with 53% of its population under the age of 24 (STATSSA, 2001). Those youth who are fifteen years old in 2005 have been called ‘Mandela’s children’ (L. M. Richter & Barbarin, 2001, p. 1). They were born in the year that Nelson Mandela was released from prison, and were singled out as a symbol of the hope Mandela’s release was to bring to a country racked by three centuries of racial oppression, fractured morality and, for its ‘black’ population, extreme poverty. These youth would have been between four or five years old during the country’s first democratic elections and would never have known apartheid or the struggle for South Africa’s liberation. They were still children during the proceedings of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. Their parents in turn were more likely to have been in primary rather than high school during the school boycotts of 1976, and although some may have been involved in the student and youth political struggles of the eighties and early nineties, they are just as likely to have been spectators in the struggle.

Seekings (1993) estimates that one out of four youth were politically active in the struggle against apartheid in any ideological sense, although many more may have participated in mass action, stayaways and consumer boycotts. In addition there was an initial sharp divide between the well educated politicised youth who have subsequently grown up into political leadership in the ANC and those who have been marginalised by the struggle because of their more radical political ideologies, or because they were uneducated, or only incidentally caught up in the struggle, or only involved in the criminal violence and looting which sometimes accompanied struggle action. With the exception of a limited few whose parents have moved into the ‘black’ middle class<sup>4</sup>, the majority of ‘Mandela’s children’ are united in

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<sup>3</sup> The South African Police Services reported 15,839 cases of illegal possession of a firearm in 2003 (SAPS, 2003).

<sup>4</sup> The Economist (2001) reports that the richest tenth of the South African population, which was 95% white in 1975, by 1996 was 22% ‘black’, 7% ‘coloured’ and 5% Indian., while The Guardian (Carroll, 2004) reports that black people have moved from zero to 10% of company ownership and occupy 15% of skilled positions.

having always known poverty (measured by the World Bank as subsisting on less than \$2 a day). The majority are in Grade 9 in a ‘black’<sup>5</sup> South African township school in 2004.

### *School*

Currently there are 11.7 million learners enrolled in schools in South Africa, with the official ratio of educators given at 34:1 but with many schools, especially those in townships, having a ratio as high as 60:1. There is universal primary school enrolment, and an average 86% enrolment for secondary school (GCIS, 2003, p. 227). There are less than half the number of youth enrolled in Grade 12 as there are in Grade 8 (DOE, 2003, p. 13). The drop off rate is sharpest between Grades 10 and 11 (24%) and between Grades 11 and 12 (47%). Only 40% of learners who begin school in Grade 1 endure through to Grade 12 (DOE, 2003, p. 16). There is still educational disparity between suburban and township schools regarding class size, quality of teaching and physical facilities, although remarkable progress has been made since 1994. Learning how to integrate is a major challenge faced by South Africa youth and has been well documented (Dolby, 2001; Nkomo, McKinney, & Chisholm, 2004).

Although education is highly valued by South African youth, there are many regions in the country where the standard of education is extremely poor and youth choose to migrate to large cities, often without parents, in search of quality education. Because of this ‘migration for education’, child-headed homes<sup>6</sup> are increasing, with subsequent lax discipline due to lack of adult supervision. South African youth are expected to complete nine years (Grades 1-9) of compulsory education, which although not free are subsidised for the poor, and no child is excluded through an inability to pay school fees. Grades 10 to 12 are optional, although 76% of youth continue to Grade 11 and 53% to Grade 12. The matric<sup>7</sup> pass rate has increased from 53% in 1999 to 68% in 2002 (GCIS, 2003, p. 227), although there have been continual incidents of exam fraud during matric exams because high achievement is seen as a key to escaping worklessness and poverty.

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<sup>5</sup> Due to the demographics of South Africa, township schools are uniformly black, although schools in the suburbs have been integrated.

<sup>6</sup> In the recent HSRC study ‘National Household HIV Prevalence and Risk Survey of South African children’ it was found that about 1.5% ( $\pm 0.5$ ) of all households is headed by children aged 12 to 18 years, an increase from 0.25% found during the 1999 household census. (Brookes, Shisana, & Richter, 2004, p. 23). Personal communication (2001) with youth who head homes in Gugulethu and Khayalitsha cite migration for education as a primary reason for their being without family supervision in the Western Cape.

<sup>7</sup> Grade 12 Senior Certificate – the end of formal schooling. Grade 10 to 12 are non compulsory and are known as Further Education and training (FET).

The curriculum comprises eight<sup>8</sup> learning areas at secondary school, one of which entitled 'life orientation' includes career guidance, general life skills (including basic banking and accounting procedures, design, and entrepreneurship), health, religion, sexuality, citizenship, physical and moral education. While 8% or 2.2 hours per week of the timetable (DOE, 2002, p. 20) is devoted to life orientation in total, with an additional 5% available as discretionary flexitime, this most likely translates into 35 minutes a week for in the Senior Phase of General Education and Training (GET) (Grades 7-9) of moral education in the guise of citizenship, religious and sexuality education.

The Revised National Curriculum Statement provides a description of the kind of learner that is envisaged through the provision of the new South African national curriculum:

The promotion of values is important not only for the sake of personal development, but also to ensure that a national South African identity is built on values different from those that underpinned apartheid education. The kind of learner envisaged is one who will be imbued with the values and *act in the interests of a society* based on respect for democracy, equality, human dignity, life and social justice. The curriculum aims to develop the full potential of each learner as a citizen of a democratic South Africa. It seeks to create a lifelong learner who is confident and independent, literate, numerate and multi-skilled, compassionate, with a respect for the environment and the ability to participate in society as a critical and active citizen (DOE, 2002, p. 8 emphasis mine).

Unlike the Verwoerd Education Act, Act no 47 of 1953 (TRC, 1999, p. 455), which stated that 'black' people shall be educated only for servitude, the new South African national curriculum makes its values of democracy and communalism ('act in the interests of a society') explicit. Besides schooling and a progressive national curriculum, there are many other factors which significantly shape 'Mandela's children'. The influence of popular

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<sup>8</sup> The eight learning areas are Languages, Mathematics, Natural Sciences, Social Sciences, Arts and Culture, Life Orientation, Economic and Management Sciences, and Technology. In the GET band, Life Orientation is one of seven learning areas, which excludes Economic and Management Sciences (DOE, 2002).

culture, crime, poverty and unemployment, HIV/AIDS and youth religiosity are among these, and are topics to which we now turn.

### *Kwaito music – youth popular culture*

‘Black’ township youth are proud to be South African. Many talk township *tsotsitaal* (gangster slang), wear street credible clothes replete with *spottis*<sup>9</sup> (floppy sun hat turned into an icon of street culture), listen to kwaito<sup>10</sup> music and hang out on the streets in *All Stars* (cheap canvas shoes, sometimes known as three-fives, because they cost R35). On Saturday nights they attend street bashes where they dance to the raucous beat of kwaito music – a mix of slowed down European house music with African urban rhythms and sounds liberally sampled into the mix. The dancing is sexual and the lyrics sexually explicit, often misogynist, but not as violent as American gangsta rap, although robbery and drugs form part of the poetics of kwaito). These youth showcase the youth street culture so closely interwoven with kwaito music as to be indistinguishable from each other. Followers of kwaito music are a *de facto* youth subculture<sup>11</sup>, one that provides youth with the means for creating an identity, establishing new societal norms and even economic opportunities.

Kwaito is the largest contributor to ‘black’ economic empowerment since the end of apartheid. The R850 million per year industry is almost entirely ‘black’ – artists, record labels, production companies, clubs, and Yfm, an almost exclusively kwaito radio station – are all ‘black’ owned. Says Newsweek, “the [kwaito] industry offers a way out of the

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<sup>9</sup> The *spotti*, a floppy sun hat, is a mainstay of South African urban street wear that has been given new meaning, along with new colours, price tags and attitude. A typical unbranded *spotti* retails for around R20-30. It is culturally significant for two reasons: for that which it parodies and because of what it is not. Essentially the *spotti* is a cricket fielding hat – a symbol both of British colonisation and a sport of the (previously) dominant upper class ‘white’ elite. Using the *spotti* as an icon of kwaito culture, serves to “to take the piss out of the image” (Clarke et al., 1997, p. 109) of the previous British settlers. It is also noticeably and unmistakably *not* the ubiquitous American baseball cap — an almost a global icon of youth culture - another way in which South African youth are attempting to distance themselves from, and challenge the hegemony of American culture.

<sup>10</sup> No one is quite sure of the origins of the word *kwaito*. Some say it means ‘cool’ or ‘angry’ from the Afrikaans *kwaai*, or that it is named after a legendary Soweto gang of the fifties – the *Amakwaitos*.

<sup>11</sup> Kwaito is in fact the *de facto* pop music of South Africa by virtue of the fact that black youth comprising 79% of the country’s population, are united in their enthusiastic support of it. The South African television series *Yizo Yizo* now in its third series, has been a vehicle for popularising kwaito music, defining street culture and most definitely established kwaito as the soundtrack to young urban lives in South Africa. While there are many parallels with the function that hip hop plays in the lives of urban black Americans, kwaito *is* a local style, one which meets the need of young black South Africans for a coherent, unique identity as they await “a better life for all” (broadcast speech, Nelson Mandela, 1994).

township and into the money” (Pan, 2000, p. 72). There are more ways in which kwaito is ‘complicit with consumerism’ (Rose, 1994). There is an almost exclusive domination of the genre by a very small number of producers, who ‘manufacture’ new groups by bringing together artists, singers and dancers and training them to fill vacant market niches. Established artists like Oscar, Arthur and M’Du constantly form and reform groups and find new talent. Arthur manages 15 kwaito bands which he founded and who are currently recording. ‘Black’ empowerment aside, large corporations such as Pepsi and Vodacom are also ‘colonising’ kwaito, by recruiting artists for the marketing of their products. The image of success for many young ‘black’ South Africans is the kwaito star with numerous Sandton homes, a fleet of German cars, and lengthy commercial contracts - an image not recently occupied by the ‘white’ oppressor.

South African ‘black’ youth, denied an identity of which they can be proud through the economic legacy of apartheid, and not having been part of the struggle for liberation itself, have found in local style and kwaito music an identity which opposes the ‘colonisation of mind and identities’ (Hebdige, 1979; Liechty, 1995). While many older ‘black’ South Africans played a part in the struggle for liberation, it is the younger South Africans who are experiencing political, if not economic, freedoms. But without the privileges of a shared culture or access to the economic benefits of a free country, they are creating their own identity, through commodities of which kwaito music is an enormous part. Kwaito “is about showcasing our African-ness, about showing off our continent, our culture and our country” contends Thandiswa of Bongo Muffin” (Pan, 2000, p. 72). Kwaito music has become one of the axes around which political and social change rotates (Dolby, 2001, p. 63).

Youth claim that kwaito is apolitical and that they like it that way. They are tired of politics - although most have never been politically active - the beat is all that concerns them, they say. But there are many ways in which kwaito is in fact an act of politics. After the South African democratic elections in 1994, kwaito emerged in welcome relief to the political struggle. But with it came a drive for economic prosperity, a fact which “disturbed black South Africans over 30, who grew up on protest songs, [and who] found kwaito’s apolitical materialism disturbing” (Economist, 2000, p. 85). A local kwaito radio station manager captures the drive: “There’s no young person in this country who didn’t start the millennium thinking: How am I going to get f---ing rich?” (Economist, 2000, p. 86). This drive for prosperity and identity is a political act. It is an attempt to reclaim that which was stolen and to rebuild a

country ravaged by separatism, inequality and injustice – but the rebuilding is occurring on the terms of ‘black’ youth, who while making concessions to all of South African ‘race’ groups, are firmly positioning themselves as the dominant group in the pantheon of groups. The kwaito industry wields a lot of control, not only financially but also by the manner in which it employs language, a site where power is both found and contested.

An interesting feature of kwaito music is the multiplicity of languages used. Most South African languages find a place in kwaito, with the notable exception of English. When kwaito artists sing and chant in indigenous South African languages, they reverse the cultural hegemony of English. If ‘white’ South Africans want to be part of this new street culture, they have to finally do something about their tacit refusal to learn indigenous languages. The language of kwaito makes ‘white’ people feel uncomfortable, out of place and perhaps even second rate citizens at a township bash. They know neither the moves, dress code nor the (street) language that is kwaito. It is an ironic reversal from apartheid days, and perhaps even more ironic that Afrikaans but not English is incorporated into kwaito street language.

### *Youth religiosity*

As popular as kwaito music is, in a survey conducted by the Community Agency for Social Research (Everatt, 2000), an established and respected research organisation that has served the progressive movements of South Africa for over twenty years, it was found that *gospel* was the most popular music genre among South African ‘black’ youth, while kwaito came in second, and rhythm and blues was rated as third most popular (Everatt, 2000, p. 89). A

related finding concerning popular role models found that ‘black’ youth ranked Nelson Mandela first, Rebecca Malope (a *gospel* singer) second, Felicia Mabuza-Suttle (a TV talk show host) third and Dr Khumalo (a soccer player) fourth (Everatt, 2000, p. 102). These findings, when considered together with other current and reputable research findings, begin to paint a picture regarding the religiosity of South

Christian churches – excluding AICs	55.6%
African Initiated Churches (AICs)	24.3%
No religion/no answer	17.5%
Undetermined	1.3%
Islam	0.2%
Other beliefs	0.6%
African traditional belief	0.4%
Hinduism (16, 426 adherents)	0.0%
Judaism (11, 978 adherents)	0.0%

**Table 1** Religious affiliation of ‘black’ people in South Africa (Source: Census 2000, STATSSA).

African ‘black’ youth, a picture congruent with the findings of the South African Census 2000 (provided in Table 1), regarding the extent and affiliation of religiosity amongst ‘black’ South Africans.

In a publication of the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) in 1994 it was reported that “religion plays a central role in the lives of [South African] young people. Findings revealed that religion affects the social, familial, economic and political aspects of young people’s lives, and is not seen just as a body of metaphysical beliefs and practices” (Slabbert et al., 1994, p. 85-6). The study cited three sources, including the landmark study *Growing Up Tough* (Everatt, 1993) conducted with youth aged between 16 and 30, CASE found that South African youth (no ‘racial’ breakdown provided) were “highly religious... only 9% of the youth never attend church at all. More than half (53%) of the younger age category, aged from 16 to 20, attend church once a week or more” (Everatt, 1993, p. 8). In addition youth are three times more likely to be involved in a church or a sports club than in political organisations (Everatt, 1993). Seven years later, in a follow up study CASE found that the top three organisations (ranked in order) to which youth belonged were *church*, sports, and youth clubs (Everatt, 2000). These are staggering statistics given the trends showing far lower evidence of youth religiosity in countries like United Kingdom, Australia and USA as depicted in Table 2.

<i>Country</i>	<i>Age</i>	<i>Never attend*</i>	<i>Attend once a week or more</i>	<i>Source</i>
<b>South Africa</b>	16-20	9%	53%	(Everatt, 1993)
<b>United Kingdom</b>	12-19	42%	9%	(Roberts & Sachdev, 1996).
<b>Australia</b>	15-29	34%	6%	(Bentley & Hughes, 1998)
<b>USA</b>	12-18	15%	31%	(C. Smith, Denton, Faris, & Regnerus, 2002)2)

\* besides the occasional rite of passage service for weddings, funerals or baptisms

**Table 2** *Measures of youth religiosity by religious service attendance in four countries (no racial breakdown provided).*

While very little research exists in South Africa, regarding how religious service attendance is related to a belief in God (however conceived), or how religiosity affects social life, a study undertaken among 538 Grade 11 learners in a mixed school in South Africa found that

“students who favour socio-economic equality specifically are to be found among the more religiously inspired and motivated students” (Van der Ven, Dreyer, & Pieterse, 1999, p. 22), and that “religious affiliation correlates positively with a regard for civil, political and environmental human rights” (Van der Ven, Dreyer, & Pieterse, 2000, p. 275).

Yet in spite of these positive findings and reports of high youth religiosity there are various factors which do not correlate with what might be expected of religiously committed youth. Teenage pregnancy is high with 43% of young women with children reporting that they were still at school when they became pregnant, a figure that rose to 49% in 2000 (with 52% of first time parents being under 20) (Everatt, 1993; 2000, p. 6), and 68%<sup>12</sup> of youth saying that racial hatred still existed in SA (Everatt, 2000, p. 101). The same study found that only 49%<sup>13</sup> of youth think homosexual people should have the same rights as heterosexual people (Everatt, 2000). Finally, although not directly<sup>14</sup> related to religiosity, unemployment, crime and HIV/AIDS are the top three problems for youth in South Africa (Everatt, 2000). So despite the high degree of religiosity amongst South African youth, it has not ameliorated the dire issues with which the country must deal. But whatever the influence of religiosity on South African youth, its pervasiveness does suggest that it cannot be ignored in a study on the moral culture of youth.

### *HIV/AIDS*

South Africa currently has a 24% rate of HIV infection throughout its population, while the infection rate for youth between ages 15 and 24 is 18% (25% for young men and 11% for young women), figures though high, have remained constant for the past three years (UNAIDS, 2003). The economically active population is diminishing due to death from AIDS related illnesses, and the average life expectancy is a low 50.7 years (WHO, 2002). Dire as these statistics are, how does the AIDS pandemic affect the moral fabric of a society? Most obviously the need for fidelity, monogamy, self restraint, protective behaviour (i.e. the use of condoms) and abstinence in sexual relationships is paramount if the pandemic is to be halted. Some would consider these to be moral issues. But personal sexual relationships,

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<sup>12</sup> The figure by ‘race’: ‘black’ 64%, ‘coloured’ 75%, ‘Indian’ 90% and ‘white’ 93% (Everatt, 2000, p. 101).

<sup>13</sup> The figure by ‘race’: ‘black’ 47%, ‘coloured’ 48%, ‘Indian’ 69% and ‘white’ 66% (Everatt, 2000, p. 58-9).

<sup>14</sup> Religious communities may promote sexual fidelity which might stem the spread of HIV; they would certainly discourage criminal activity, and perhaps provide counselling services for those traumatised as victims of crime, while some would provide a social safety net for the unemployed.

important as they are, are only one of many components of the moral morass that is the AIDS pandemic in South Africa.

The government has long been embroiled in a battle over providing anti-retroviral therapy for those who are infected, due to its high cost, although implementation has now begun. Placing a financial value on human life is a moral issue. The current state president has repeatedly questioned whether the HIV virus does in fact cause AIDS, an intellectual debate that has resulted in confusion amongst many uneducated people who subsequently refuse to take the action necessary to protect themselves from the disease. There are also a growing number of children who have been orphaned by the loss of parents or care givers to HIV. Although not as acrimonious as in the USA, sex education and making condoms available to youth have been controversial in South Africa. Denying youth access to information and prophylactics that may in fact save their lives, has moral implications.

The infection route through South Africa roughly follows the trucking route from the northern part of Africa and sex workers who ply their trade to truckers are at high risk of infection, but continue their practice for economic reasons. The so called 'virgin myth' (having sex with a virgin will cure you of HIV) has been cited as one of the reasons for the "near-psychotic wave of sexual and other violence against children (also against women) which runs counter to the values and traditions of every section of society" (Mercury, 2003), which includes baby rape. On the one hand while the virgin myth is unjustified, it could also be seen as the rational choice of men to choose younger partners who have not been sexually active and are therefore at limited risk of contracting the HIV virus. These examples show that the AIDS pandemic is not only a medical disease but also an urgent site of moral debate.

### *Crime and risk*

As indicated in Figure 1, crime in South Africa is high. While the South African Police Services (SAPS, 2003), report that murder, fraud and motor vehicle theft have decreased slightly since 1994 at 21,738, 56,824 and 93,606 incidents per year respectively, the current rates remains frighteningly high. Aggravated robbery, the possession of illegal firearms, drug

related crimes, rape, and child abuse<sup>15</sup> have all increased since 1994. There is widespread corruption in government, especially in the awarding of lucrative tenders and contracts, although to the government's credit, most of the cases which are reported in the media have been discovered by government officials themselves (GCIS, 2003). Much of the daily violence experienced in South Africa is related to a fear of losing jobs to foreigners from the north, who intrude on the few opportunities people have to eke out a livelihood (Morris, 1998).

Figure 2 provides a sample of the rate at which South African youth between 12 and 18 engage in risk behaviours as determined by the first South African Youth Risk Behaviour Survey (Reddy et al., 2003). While the figures for males are generally higher than for those of females, the graph tells its own story and will not be considered in detail. But the YRBS is in fact a very detailed study. It is possible to extract data for youth by age group, by school grade, by province and by 'race' group (or any combination of these). For example 13.6% of Grade 10 youth (12.5% of 'black' Grade 10 youth) carried a weapon in the past month and a similar number are members of gangs. 6.4% (7.5% 'black') youth forced someone to have sex with them. 28% were involved in a physical fight in the past six months and 16% have made one or more suicide attempts in their lifetime. 22.3% (18.7% 'black') have engaged in one or more incidents of binge drinking in the past month, with binge drinking being described as consuming five or more units of alcohol in quick succession. Over 10% report ever having used heroin, inhalants or marijuana (dagga). 43.3% (45.6% 'black') youth report ever having had sex, although a lesser percentage (31% all, 33.4% 'black') are regularly sexually active (defined as having had one or more partners in the past 3 months). These figures provide important base line data for youth workers whatever their context and they are ignored at our peril.

But the behaviour these figures represent also provides the evidence for South Africa's current 'moral panic'. Unlike the often perceived rising but unfounded 'moral panic' in the West (Springhall, 1998; Ward, 1996), South Africa does have an increasing crime problem, which while not constituting the whole of the moral panic in South Africa, forms a meaningful part of it. Of youth crime, although less is known, the YRBS survey has provided

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<sup>15</sup> A new publication by the HSRC (L. Richter, Dawes, & Higson-Smith, 2004) provides a research-based resource book for people working with survivors of child-abuse as well as evidence-based programmatic interventions.

cause for alarm, although comparative figures over time are not yet available. The moral regeneration movement (MRM) in South Africa, whilst not exclusively targeted at youth, is its primary focus. Similarly while stating that its concern is not only with crime and violence but with the rebuilding of a nation ravaged by apartheid, and instilling moral character into her youth, cynics have framed the MRM as more concerned with creating a competitive neo-liberal economy, rather than with morality at all ([Dixon, 2001](#); [Roshan Samara, 2003](#)). The two aspects are however related. Without addressing the economic plight of young South Africans, crime is likely to continue to be considered a legitimate means for wealth redistribution.

## Youth Risk Behaviour Survey 2002 National Data

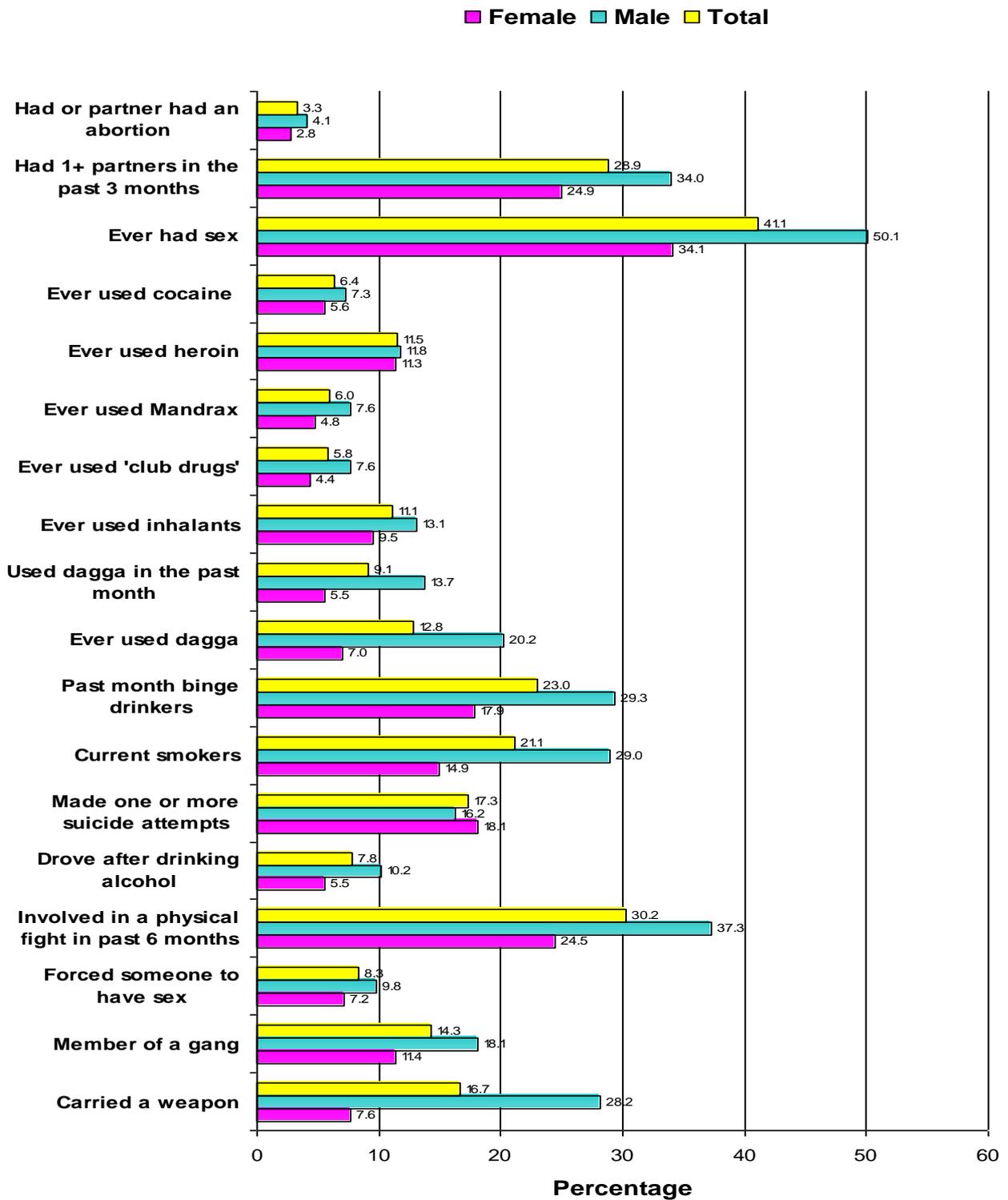


Figure 2 Selected indicators of the South African Youth Risk Behaviour Survey (Source: Reddy et al, 2003)

## *Poverty and unemployment*

When Thabo Mbeki gave his ‘two nations’ speech to parliament in 1999, he was highlighting the huge and systemic inequalities which exist between the majority of ‘black’ and most ‘white’ people in South African society. While South Africa’s GDP per capita is the highest in Africa, the gap between the rich and poor is wide. According to the CIA World Fact book, South Africa's Gini coefficient, a measure of income inequality in its population, places South Africa among the five most inequitable nations in the world with a measurement of 0.59 (CIA, 2003). Countries that have perfect equity would have a measurement of 0 on the Gini scale and those who have perfect inequity have a measurement of 1. The Gini coefficient for the United States is 0.41. Australia has a Gini coefficient of 0.35, Kenya of 0.45 and Egypt 0.29. Sierra Leone has the highest Gini at 0.63 while Sweden has the lowest at 0.25 (CIA, 2003).

Critics of South Africa continue to lament the choice of a neoliberal economy over redistribution of wealth in South Africa ([Dixon, 2001, p. 224](#); [Roshan Samara, 2003, p. 292](#)), but government is adamant that the primary way in which to alleviate poverty is to grow a strong economy, rather than merely redistribute wealth, since so much wealth (and therefore the potential for further wealth creation) lies in the hands of ‘white’ business. As a result the many ‘white’ beneficiaries<sup>16</sup> of apartheid have not had to relinquish their privileges although increased taxation of the wealthy (e.g. capital gains tax), limited land restitution (of mainly unoccupied land), affirmative action policies, and increased social spending on water, housing, education and healthcare have begun to address these disparities.

But the well of poverty runs so deep, that in spite of these changes, the majority of ‘black’ South Africans remain indigently poor. 50% of South Africa’s citizens live below the \$2 a day poverty line, 37% are unemployed<sup>17</sup>, and frustration abounds. Many have expected material changes and relief to their crippling poverty, but there has been no quick delivery subsequent to the dismantling of apartheid. The most scarce resource in South Africa is jobs. In order to address youth unemployment, a national Youth Service programme<sup>18</sup> has been on

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<sup>16</sup> “In South Africa there are a few perpetrators, but lots and lots of beneficiaries” (Krog, 1999, p. 169).

<sup>17</sup> The rate for black youth unemployment is higher at 50%.

<sup>18</sup> The South African Youth Service initiative envisions that unemployed youth between the ages of 18 and 30 will spend a period of one to two years engaged in meaningful work at the community level, during which time

the national agenda since 1993 (taken up by the National Youth Commission<sup>19</sup>) when research conducted by the Community Agency for Social Enquiry (Everatt, 1994, p. ix) highlighted youth unemployment<sup>20</sup> as a key challenge for the future, and youth service as a strategy by which to address it. While government departments and NGOs alike are in favour of the initiative, and funding for these programmes are available from the Department of Labour, the National Skills Fund, the Sector Education and Training Authorities (SETAs) and the well endowed Umsobomvu Youth Fund (Marock, 2003), availability of exit employment opportunities is the key limiting factor to full scale implementation.

South Africa is not alone in experiencing these traps of poverty and unemployment, but the situation is aggravated because rich and poor live side by side that (albeit separated by a railway line or highway). Not unlike other developing countries, South Africa is a victim of the cultural hegemony of the West, especially the USA. The media has flooded homes and young lives with materialism and acquisitiveness, in a country where it is simply not possible to live the American dream since the rate of structural unemployment is so high, the number of economically active individuals so low, and disposable income scarce. Young people, are doubly frustrated, not only by the US materialism they see on celluloid, but also by the swimming pools and German cars they see across the railway lines and highways, behind alarmed security fences and two metre high walls, belonging to the (mainly) ‘white’ middle class beneficiaries of apartheid, in whose homes they still cook, clean, garden and child-mind. While constituting less than 10% of the country’s population, ‘white’ people still own and consume the lion’s share of its wealth.

So with the gap between rich and poor having been made that much more obvious through the increased contact between ‘race’ groups after the end of apartheid ([Dixon, 2001, p. 216](#)), it is not impossible to see why for many young ‘black’ South Africans stealing from ‘white’ people is not stealing at all: “Poverty was understood to be a product of apartheid. Tsotsis had their own moral order of sorts. In the business of crime, robbing people in town (that is, white

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they will learn technical and life skills, gain work experience and be considered a resource by their communities.

<sup>19</sup> The South African National Youth Commission is a national statutory body responsible for policy and advocacy on issues that concern youth. Established in 1996 and located in the Office of the President, it has developed an integrated national youth policy and a national youth development plan in order to redress the inequalities of the past, operationalised primarily through inter-sectoral and governmental collaboration.

<sup>20</sup> The CASE study *Growing Up Tough* estimates that fewer than 5% of school leavers are absorbed into the job market (Everatt, 1993).

people) was a risky though more or less morally neutral enterprise” ([Chabedi, 2003, p. 362](#)). Poverty, crime, greed, materialism and unemployment have all conspired to rob South African youth of the hopeful future they anticipated ten years ago. Short of an overnight economic miracle in South Africa, is there perhaps some way in which youth can be helped to thrive?

### **The 40 Developmental Assets**

The forty developmental assets (Leffert, Benson, & Roehlkepartain, 1997; Scales, 1999; Scales & Taccogna, 2001) are a tool developed by The Search Institute as a way of helping communities to build particular assets into the lives of youth aged 12 to 18. Figure 3 provides the full list of assets which are divided into external and internal assets. External assets are those which a community can provide to youth such as support, boundaries, expectations, and creative activities and programmes which allow youth to make constructive use of their time. They include the role of schools, family, church, peers and civic engagement in bring up youth. Internal assets are the skills, capabilities and social competencies youth need to ‘bring themselves up’.

The church as an agent of social and spiritual change can be central to developing and nurturing both external and internal assets. But it is an enormous task, one in which ‘church’ must become concerned with more than local programmes, and more thoroughly invested in social contexts and structural, systemic factors which mitigate against the development of youth. And while the forty developmental assets are not a quick-fix recipe for success, they provide an excellent basis for holistic youth work. The way in which to effectively utilise the list is to contextualise it into local communities, working out through consultation whether these factors (in the dosage prescribed) are protective, and how best to operationalise them.

DISPLAY 1

## Search Institute's Framework of Developmental Assets (Ages 12 to 18)

This publication presents research on developmental assets, which are positive factors in young people, families, communities, schools, and other settings that have been found to be important in promoting young people's healthy development. Further details on developmental assets are available at [www.search-institute.org/assets](http://www.search-institute.org/assets).

### External Assets

#### SUPPORT

1. **Family support**—Family life provides high levels of love and support.
2. **Positive family communication**—Young person and her or his parent(s) communicate positively, and young person is willing to seek advice and counsel from parents.
3. **Other adult relationships**—Young person receives support from three or more nonparent adults.
4. **Caring neighborhood**—Young person experiences caring neighbors.
5. **Caring school climate**—School provides a caring, encouraging environment.
6. **Parent involvement in schooling**—Parent(s) are actively involved in helping young person succeed in school.

#### EMPOWERMENT

7. **Community values youth**—Young person perceives that adults in the community value youth.
8. **Youth as resources**—Young people are given useful roles in the community.
9. **Service to others**—Young person serves in the community one hour or more per week.
10. **Safety**—Young person feels safe at home, at school, and in the neighborhood.

#### BOUNDARIES AND EXPECTATIONS

11. **Family boundaries**—Family has clear rules and consequences and monitors the young person's whereabouts.
12. **School boundaries**—School provides clear rules and consequences.
13. **Neighborhood boundaries**—Neighbors take responsibility for monitoring young people's behavior.
14. **Adult role models**—Parent(s) and other adults model positive, responsible behavior.
15. **Positive peer influence**—Young person's best friends model responsible behavior.
16. **High expectations**—Both parent(s) and teachers encourage the young person to do well.

#### CONSTRUCTIVE USE OF TIME

17. **Creative activities**—Young person spends three or more hours per week in lessons or practice in music, theater, or other arts.
18. **Youth programs**—Young person spends three or more hours per week in sports, clubs, or organizations at school and/or in the community.
19. **Religious community**—Young person spends one or more hours per week in activities in a religious institution.
20. **Time at home**—Young person is out with friends "with nothing special to do" two or fewer nights per week.

### Internal Assets

#### COMMITMENT TO LEARNING

21. **Achievement motivation**—Young person is motivated to do well in school.
22. **School engagement**—Young person is actively engaged in learning.
23. **Homework**—Young person reports doing at least one hour of homework every school day.
24. **Bonding to school**—Young person cares about her or his school.
25. **Reading for pleasure**—Young person reads for pleasure three or more hours per week.

#### POSITIVE VALUES

26. **Caring**—Young person places high value on helping other people.
27. **Equality and social justice**—Young person places high value on promoting equality and reducing hunger and poverty.
28. **Integrity**—Young person acts on convictions and stands up for her or his beliefs.
29. **Honesty**—Young person "tells the truth even when it is not easy."
30. **Responsibility**—Young person accepts and takes personal responsibility.
31. **Restraint**—Young person believes it is important not to be sexually active or to use alcohol or other drugs.

#### SOCIAL COMPETENCIES

32. **Planning and decision making**—Young person knows how to plan ahead and make choices.
33. **Interpersonal competence**—Young person has empathy, sensitivity, and friendship skills.
34. **Cultural competence**—Young person has knowledge of and comfort with people of different cultural/racial/ethnic backgrounds.
35. **Resistance skills**—Young person can resist negative peer pressure and dangerous situations.
36. **Peaceful conflict resolution**—Young person seeks to resolve conflict nonviolently.

#### POSITIVE IDENTITY

37. **Personal power**—Young person feels he or she has control over "things that happen to me."
38. **Self-esteem**—Young person reports having a high self-esteem.
39. **Sense of purpose**—Young person reports that "my life has a purpose."
40. **Positive view of personal future**—Young person is optimistic about her or his personal future.

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Figure 3 The 40 developmental assets of The Search Institute.

## Conclusion

Youth ministry in South Africa is in desperate need of accurate and current youth research. Although much research does exist it is often hidden between academic disciplines and in the archives of both not for profit and profit making research agencies. A critical absence exists in understanding and documenting the experiences of youth and religion. Chris Smith's multi-year National Study of Youth and Religion (Christian Smith, 2003a, 2003b, 2003c; C. Smith et al., 2002; Christian Smith, Faris, Denton, & Regnerus, 2003) has much to teach us, and provides a model for a much needed similar undertaking in South Africa and Africa.

But there are also many ways in which social science research and 'religious' research needs to inform each other, and they seldom do. Ongoing research into contextualising the developmental assets for South Africa and Africa, investigating after school programmes for youth (Noam, 2003; Perkins-Gough, 2003; Roffman, Pagano, & Hirsch, 2001) and one-to-one mentoring programmes like those of *Big Brother* and *Big Sister* (DuBois & Neville, 1997; Parra, DuBois, Neville, Pugh-Lilly, & Povinelli, 2002; Pasi, 1997) that have been shown to work, and which are good for youth and mentor alike are urgent tasks for anyone interested in youth work.

Of course research only matters if we are concerned with youth as whole people in complicated contexts, rather than with merely getting their souls into heaven in the hereafter, in which case persuasion techniques will probably be enough!

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