

SECOND CARNEGIE INQUIRY INTO POVERTY  
AND DEVELOPMENT IN SOUTHERN AFRICA

Crime and poverty

by

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Carnegie Conference Paper No.93

Cape Town

13 - 19 April 1984

ISBN 0 7992 0824 8

## CRIME AND POVERTY

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"A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit,  
neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit.  
Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit  
is hewn down, and cast into the fire  
Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them."

Mathew 12:18-20

## INTRODUCTION

1.1 Over the last few years, newspaper reports have devoted many columns to the reportage of violent crime in Cape Town, ranging from: "Kaapse Misdade : rede vir kommer"; "Misdade : dringende aandag nodig" (Burger); to "The most violent city in the West" (Cape Times); and "Crime in Cape Town is increasing, Council told"; or "Crime capital, SA" (Argus). Some of the comments were: "Cape Town has earned a horrifying image of the most crime-ridden centre in the country. A quarter of the total crime in South Africa is committed in this city, although it has only 18 per cent of the population"<sup>1</sup> and "Cape Town has the highest crime rate of any large city in the Western World due chiefly to the social and economic conditions in the black and coloured townships"<sup>2</sup>. These comments are substantiated by the table below. The Cape Flats figures are 77,8%, 954,5%, 26,9% and 26,8% higher, respectively, for murder, rape, robbery and assault than the highest figures in any of the other columns.

TABLE 1 : COMPARATIVE INTERNATIONAL CRIME (PER 100 000) FOR 1979

Category	West Germany <sup>3</sup>	United Kingdom <sup>4</sup>	South Africa <sup>5</sup>	Cape Flats <sup>6</sup>
Murder	5,8	1	27	48
Rape	10,7	not available	63	116
Robbery	378,8	27	178	481
Assault	278,4	176	1047	1328*

1.2 Criminal behaviour of the scale that Cape Town experiences suggest serious ills in the population's environment. The increase in criminal behaviour and activity holds out the frightening threat of deviants developing a self-supporting sub-culture which negates the fear of social ostracism from the broader community as well as the fear of legal sanctions. In order to understand crime, therefore, it should be situated in as broad a context as possible. Thus Lopez-Rey's conceptualization is considered to be the touchstone by which crime should be approached, namely "The extent of crime and the variety of social groups involved refute the thesis that it can be explained by causal generalizations, or that as a problem it can be dealt with as part of socio-economic planning. In order to be understood, it must be viewed in the light of such an ensemble as socio-economic change, the structure of the general population, political organisation and stability and political-social values".<sup>7</sup>

\*This figure has been estimated. The assault category includes both "assault with the intention of doing serious bodily harm" as well as "common assault". Yet, Hansard only published the former. It is more than likely that the actual figure will be higher.

1.3 The conditions, therefore, under which people live have a determining influence on their patterns of behaviour. It is the intention of this study to focus on conditions of deprivation or low levels of living as they are found in Cape Town and its environs. It is felt that levels of living would be a good proxy indicator for poverty. The reason is that poverty can either be conceptualised in absolute or relative terms, which renders consensus difficult. An absolute definition of poverty has defied researchers since they first began to examine the phenomenon. Relative poverty however, is intrinsically a more flexible concept with greater application to the varying conditions which people live under. At the same time, since it is being examined in relation to crime in the manner laid out above, it is considered to suit the purposes of the study more effectively. Thus poverty, or a low level of living, is defined as "That section of the population whose resources are so depressed from the mean as to be deprived of enjoying the benefits and participating in the activities which are customary in that society".<sup>8</sup>

#### IDENTIFICATION OF SPATIAL DEPRIVATION

2. Spatial variations of deprivation have previously being identified.<sup>9</sup> This identification was done across all suburbs within Greater Cape Town. Essentially two approaches were adopted for the identification of deprivation. While the findings of that study do not offer fundamentally anything new, the value lies in the fact that all areas were measured relative to one another. Thus, from an a priori position one could have named the poor areas with reasonable accuracy. The facility now exists to determine from among the poorer areas which are the worse off, that is, it is possible now to speak in terms of the degree to which areas differ.

2.1 The one approach developed a composite indicator of well-being from seven constituent independent variables. These variables include income (below a minimum level), worker's educational levels, persons per habitable room, shared accommodation (more than one family per house), unemployment rates, single mothers with dependent children and households with no cars. The second approach took head of household income throughout the same region and measured the deviation of income from an equality point on a special scale, thereby, deriving an index of income inequality. These two indices produced almost identical patterns of well-being as the following two figures illustrate, while Table 2 shows the actual scores of some of the suburbs selected from among the poorer and more affluent areas.

TABLE 2 : COMPOSITE INDICATOR OF LEVELS OF LIVING AND INDEX OF INCOME INEQUALITY FOR SELECTED SUBURBS

COMPOSITE INDEX

HIGH SCORES (POOR)

Hanover Park	50,57
Heideveld	41,24
Lavender Hill	61,13
Manenberg	52,94
Parkwood	53,16
Retreat	45,95
Guguletu	46,90
Langa	44,67
Elsies River	48,82
Bishop Lavis	47,97
Bonteheuwel	59,07

LOW SCORES (GOOD)

Camps Bay	3,92
Newlands	2,25
Rondebosch	4,05
Bishopscourt	1,05
Welgemoed	2,30
Eversdal	1,52
Platteklouf	0,00
Bantry Bay	3,36
Llandudno	1,19
Panorama	1,79
Bellville Central	3,90

INEQUALITY INDEX

LOW (POOR)

- INDEX

HIGH (GOOD)

+ INDEX

Hanover Park	- 3996,7	Camps Bay	+ 6256,0
Heideveld	- 3791,7	Milnerton	+ 4937,9
Lavender Hill	- 4370,3	Kenilworth	+ 4178,7
Manenberg	- 4283,0	Newlands	+ 8184,9
Parkwood	- 3693,2	Constantia	+ 9387,5
Retreat	- 3709,6	Bishopscourt	+10041,4
Guguletu	- 4907,8	Pinelands	+ 5178,4
Langa	- 4786,0	Eversdal	+ 7344,1
Elsies River	- 3911,5	Platteklouf	+11695,1
Bonteheuwel	- 4088,3	Welgemoed	+11999,7
Bishop Lavis	- 4221,8	Akasia Park	+ 8653,2

Source:

Technical Management Services, City Engineer's Department, Cape Town

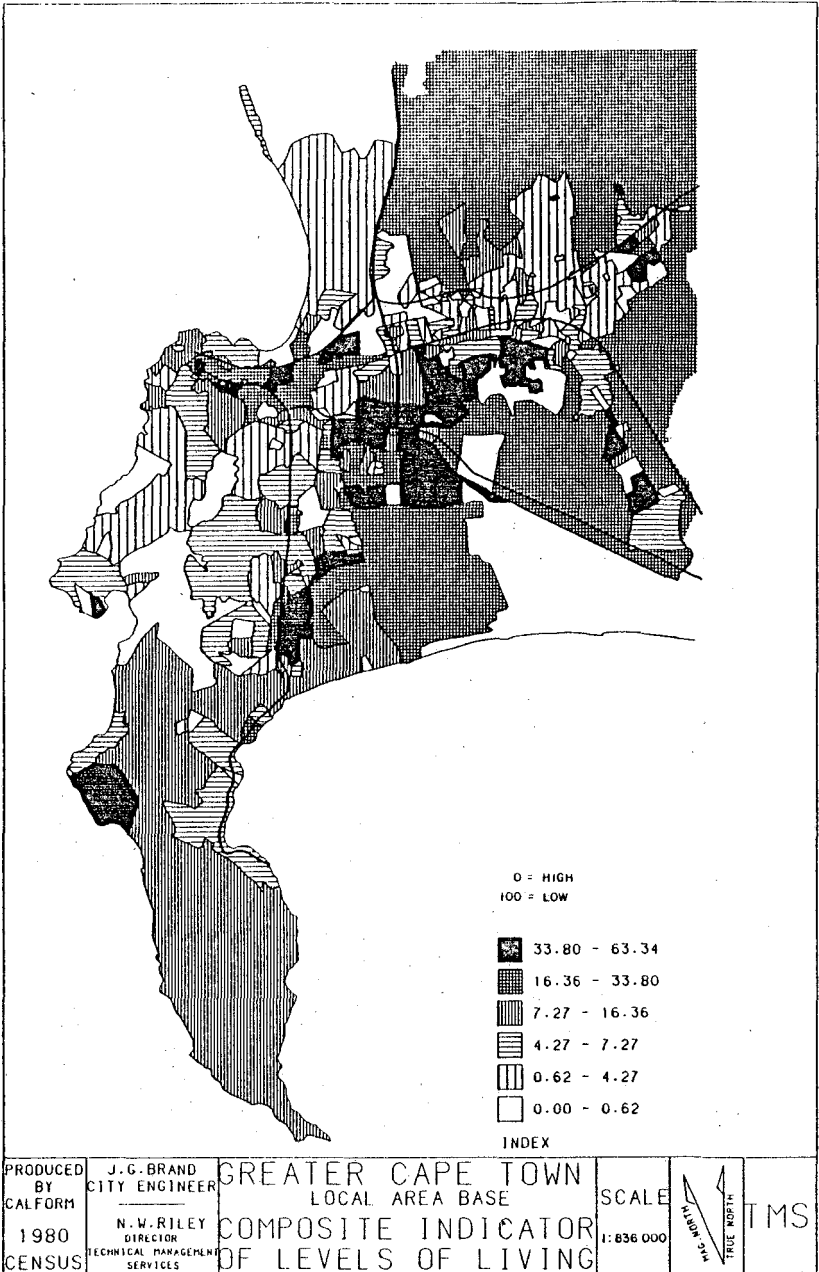


Figure 1



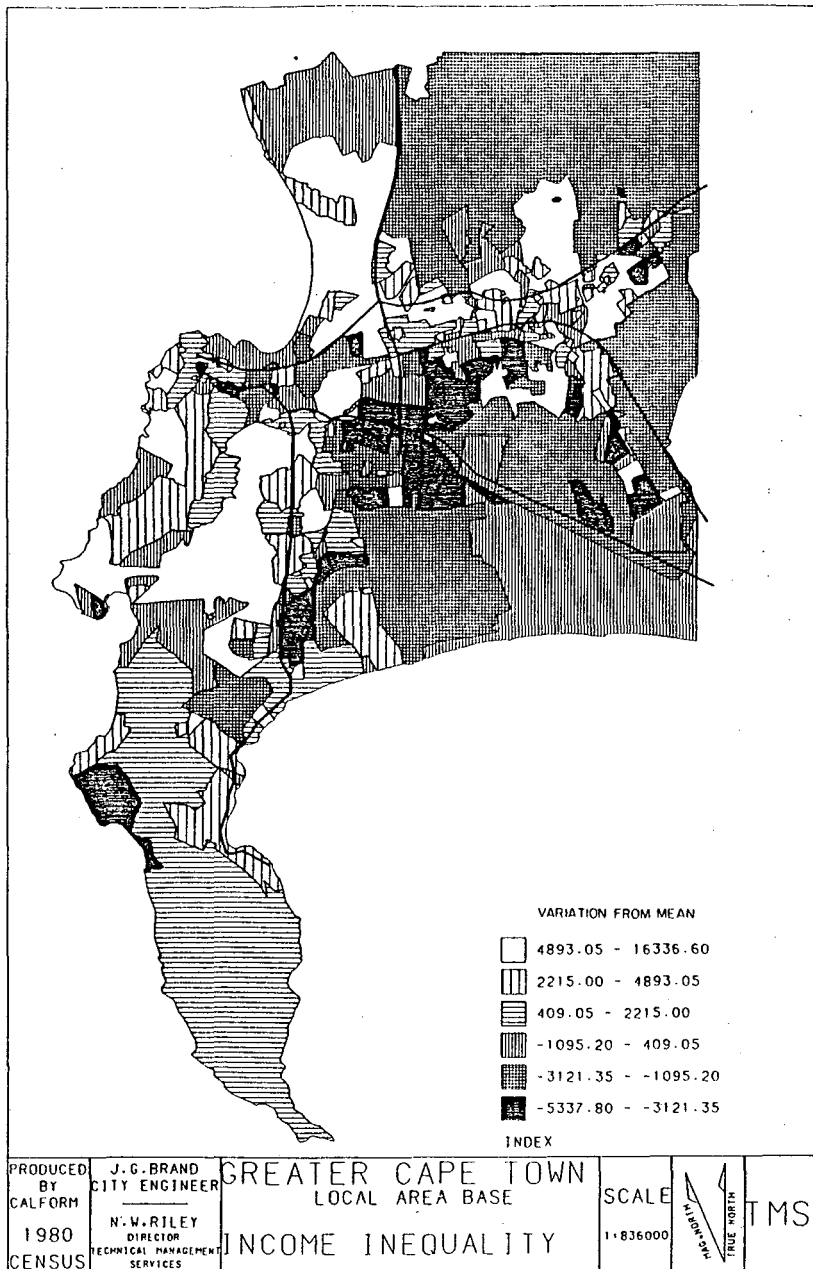


Figure 2

## SOME CONSIDERATION ON THE EFFECTS OF DEPRIVATION

3. While statistics are of invaluable assistance in the understanding of one's environment, all too often they remain at the level of "cold facts". It should be understood, profoundly, that ultimately they are mere abstractions of real phenomena; in social analysis they characterise people. People breathe clean or foul air, they have hopes and aspirations, they feel pain and suffer misery - all things that defy measurement. It is those grey areas of subjectivity, the intangibles, that highlight the limitations of pure quantification. It is for this reason that the following dimensions be understood not purely quantitatively but also qualitatively.

## Housing

- 3.1 The minimum estimated backlog of housing in Greater Cape Town is estimated to be in excess of 50 000 residential units. At the same time, some 8 500 dwelling units should be built every year just to keep pace with the increase in population (natural increase and net migration).<sup>10</sup> The backlog is not being diminished nor is the estimated target for annual production being met. This situation in turn gives rise to doubling up and tripling up of families in single dwellings. Figure 3 shows the spatial distribution of shared accommodation in the metropolitan area.
- 3.2 The critical shortage of housing which gives rise to shared accommodation has a further detrimental effect on lifestyles. Undesirable ratios of persons per habitable room have come about. Figure 4 below shows the extent of unacceptable room occupancy

rates. However, since it has a upper limit of 1,5, it does not adequately represent the high ratios that are to be found in the region. It is reasonable to assume that, since man occupies space, much of human behaviour is affected by and oriented to spatial features of physical environment. When his spatial and physical environment conflict fundamentally with the principles underlying his human existence (integrity of family life, satisfying social relationships, self-expression as an actor in a broader community), this can led to a breakdown of sociability. Thus in an experiment on overcrowding, it was found that "times spent in aggressive behaviour increased with the crowding of larger groups into the same space".<sup>11</sup> This observation is borne out by the table<sup>12</sup> below which has a correlation coefficient of 0,663 and is significant at 98% level of confidence. The table shows expected levels of violent crime in relation to room densities for deprived suburbs. This table was derived from actual police records for 3 months (see Appendix for areas surveyed).

TABLE 3 : CORRELATION BETWEEN ROOM DENSITIES AND THE INCIDENCE OF VIOLENT CRIME

Density (persons per habitable room)	Trend incidence of crime
1	1 099
1,5	1 168
2	1 353
2,5	1 566
3	1 812

Source :

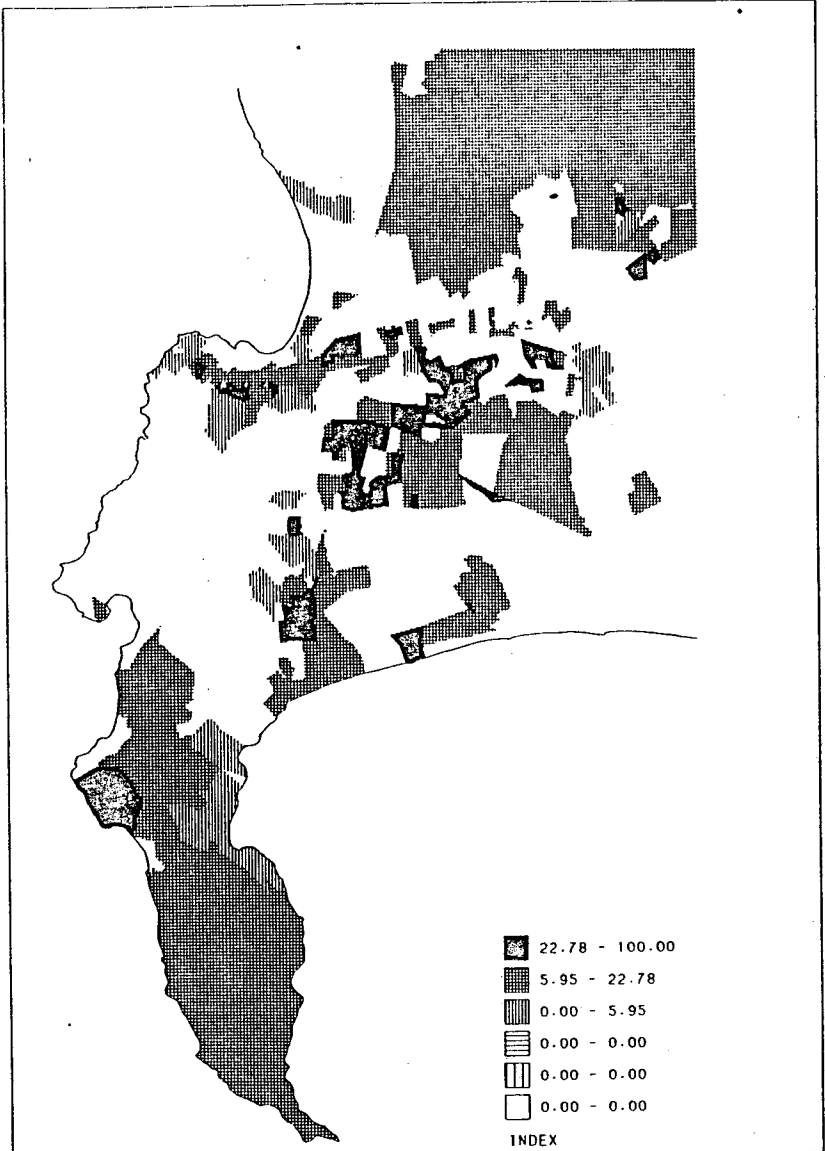
Technical Management Services, City Engineer's Department, Cape Town

3.3 The housing problem has been further exacerbated by the effects of the Group Areas Act. Under this Act, hundreds of people have had their community life disrupted, willy nilly, by proclamation. The loss in material terms can be measured to a certain extent, for instance, the difference between properties' municipal valuations and market prices. But the losses in human terms cannot. There was no attempt from a social engineering point of view to provide for a restructuring of communities. With the destruction of community cohesion, the grounds were laid for deviancy to flourish.

#### Health

4. In the field of public health, the prevalence of disease has been associated with crowding, on the general theory that disease-bearing germs and pollutants have a greater opportunity to build up under such conditions. In keeping with this general theory, Greenble maintains that "The grim statistics of poverty have long showed a correlation between certain kinds of disease and low socio-economic status".<sup>13</sup> The table below, which lists community health care clinics, in areas identified as deprived\* both by the composite indicator and the index of income inequality (refer to Figures 1 and 2), shows the prevalence of tuberculosis over a 4 year period (the base year is 1980 = 100).

\* These areas have high scores on room occupancy rates and shared accommodation



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LOCAL AREA BASE  
SHARED ACCOMMODATION

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Figure 3

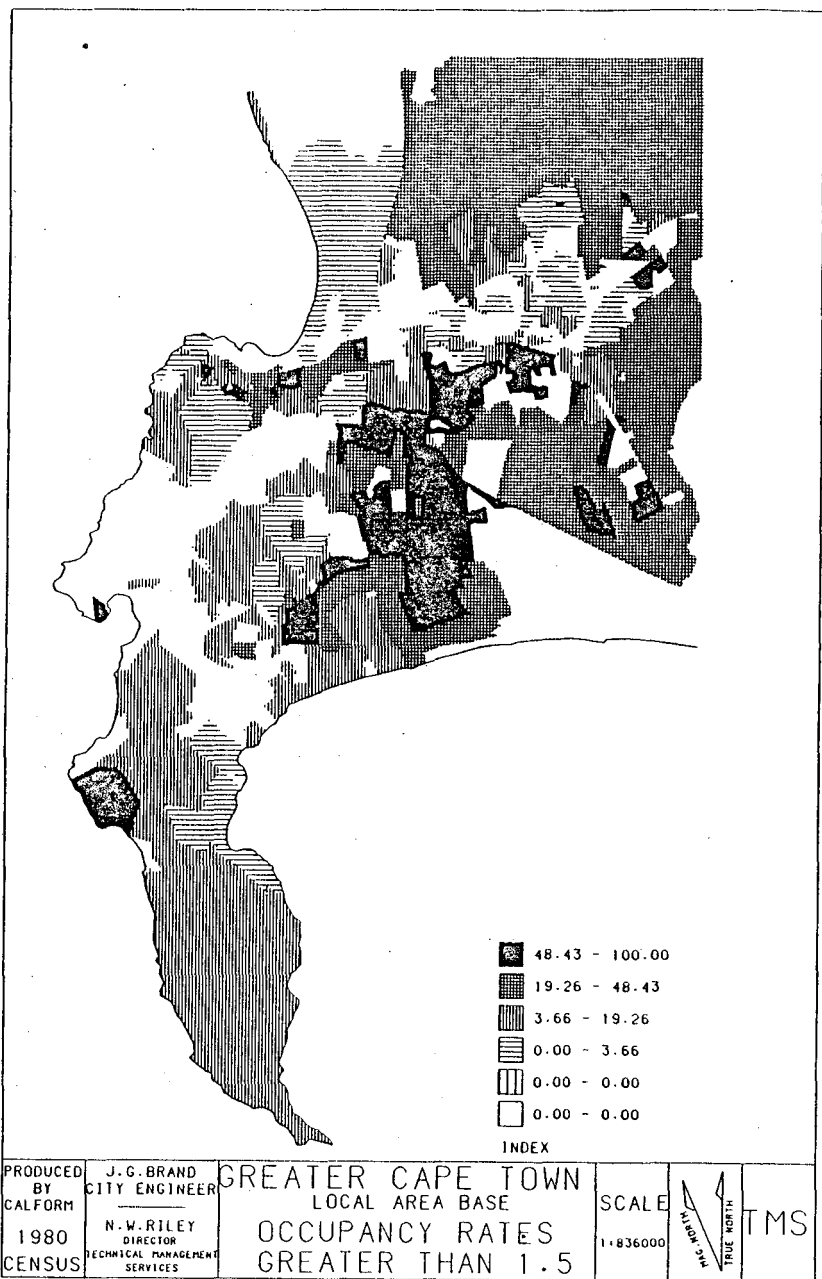


Figure 4

TABLE 4 : THE PREVALENCE OF TUBERCULOSIS

Clinic	1980	1981	1982	1983
Langa	100	110	152	117
Retreat	100	85	104	89
Guguletu	100	97	143	145
Lavender Hill	100	81	90	110
Parkwood	100	116	166	105
Silvertown	100	74	108	134
Heideveld	100	84	150	146
Hanover Park	100	90	157	162
Netreg	100	50	82	87
Bonteheuwel	100	82	170	150
Manenberg	100	106	138	147

Source : Medical Officer of Health, City of Cape Town

With the exception of the Retreat and Netreg clinics, although the indices fluctuate, all the clinics show an increase of 10% and more on the 1980 base indices. Since the populations of their feeder suburbs have remained relatively constant it is reasonable to assume that the prevalence of tuberculosis has increased in almost all of the areas.

4.1 A number of studies have indicated that high density living, generally associated with poor areas, is associated with many deprivations and stresses, and that both infectious and non-infectious diseases tend to cluster together under such conditions. In a study done in Baltimore, America, among high density housing areas with high occupancy rates, it was stated that "various diseases and maladies, including psychoneurosis was found"<sup>14</sup>. In a similar study done in Hong Kong it was found that "air-borne infection and especially tuberculosis increased with crowding, that is with room densities"<sup>15</sup>. These findings are corroborated by the Medical Officer of Health for Cape Town who maintains "Tuberculosis remains the greatest single communicable disease problem in Cape Town; it affects mainly the underprivileged and, despite major efforts at control, will remain a problem so long

as sections of the Cape Town population remain exposed to infection and to the effects of malnutrition, overcrowding, etc."<sup>16</sup>

4.2 A further indication of deprivation, insofar as health is concerned, is the treatment of malnutrition at clinics. The presence of this indicator is one of the strongest statements about poverty. The following table shows the cases treated for malnutrition at the same 11 clinics listed in Table 4. Once again, 1980 has been used as the base year.

TABLE 5 : CASES TREATED FOR NUTRITION

Clinic	1980	1981	1982	1983
Langa	100	370	115	80
Retreat	100	208	182	516
Cuguletu	100	203	177	337
Lavender Hill	100	1149	660	536
Parkwood	100	290	64	369
Silvertown	100	458	488	611
Heideveld	100	284	208	182
Hanover Park	100	454	460	303
Netreg	100	319	388	438
Bonteheuwel	100	384	302	268
Manenberg	100	585	463	369

Source : Medical Officer of Health, City of Cape Town

This table places the increase of deprivation in sharp relief. Langa is the only exception. Over all there have been marked increases in the treatment of malnutrition with Retreat and Silvertown having increases of 416% and 511% respectively.

#### THE VIOLENCE OF POVERTY

5. The areas which were identified as being deprived by the composite indicator and the index of income inequality exhibited marked similarities on characteristics like overcrowding, high unemployment



rates,\* poor health conditions, low educational levels\* and types of occupations etc. These areas generally fall in the category of public rented accommodation, that is, they largely coincide with the housing estates owned and administered by local authorities. These areas are lacking in infrastructure and recreational facilities, usually have high housing densities and have a drab, monotonous design. Not only are the designs monotonous, [but] they also have inadequate lighting and public open space which is not utilized or maintained to desirable standards. These factors coalesce to produce fertile grounds for anti-social behaviour. A comparison of violent crime figures for the police districts in poor areas with police districts serving the more affluent areas therefore has proved instructive. The following Table <sup>17</sup> shows the statistics for violent crime in 1982 for some poor and affluent areas.

TABLE 6 : VIOLENT CRIME RATES FOR DEPRIVED AND AFFLUENT AREAS - 1983

Deprived Areas (crimes per 100 000)				
Police District	Murder	Rape	Robbery	Assault
Bishop Lavis	41,43	118,97	539,6	709,54
Guguletu	149,54	178,84	489,52	1573,17
Langa	138,04	105,03	288,10	1296,40
Elsies River	48,44	71,21	359,42	382,67
Manenberg	62,96	60,10	1071,80	495,13
Grassy Park	35,14	79,10	237,22	465,65
Athlone	26,01	76,41	438,31	299,13
Affluent Areas (crimes per 100 000)				
Pinelands	4,06	0,00	85,20	60,86
Camps Bay	14,31	23,85	28,62	57,23
Wynberg	11,59	27,81	132,10	139,05
Claremont	9,30	31,01	130,25	176,77
Muizenberg	9,42	31,39	75,33	128,69
Rondebosch	4,87	34,12	82,86	107,23
Milnernton	20,82	37,47	133,22	316,40

\*See Figures 5 and 6

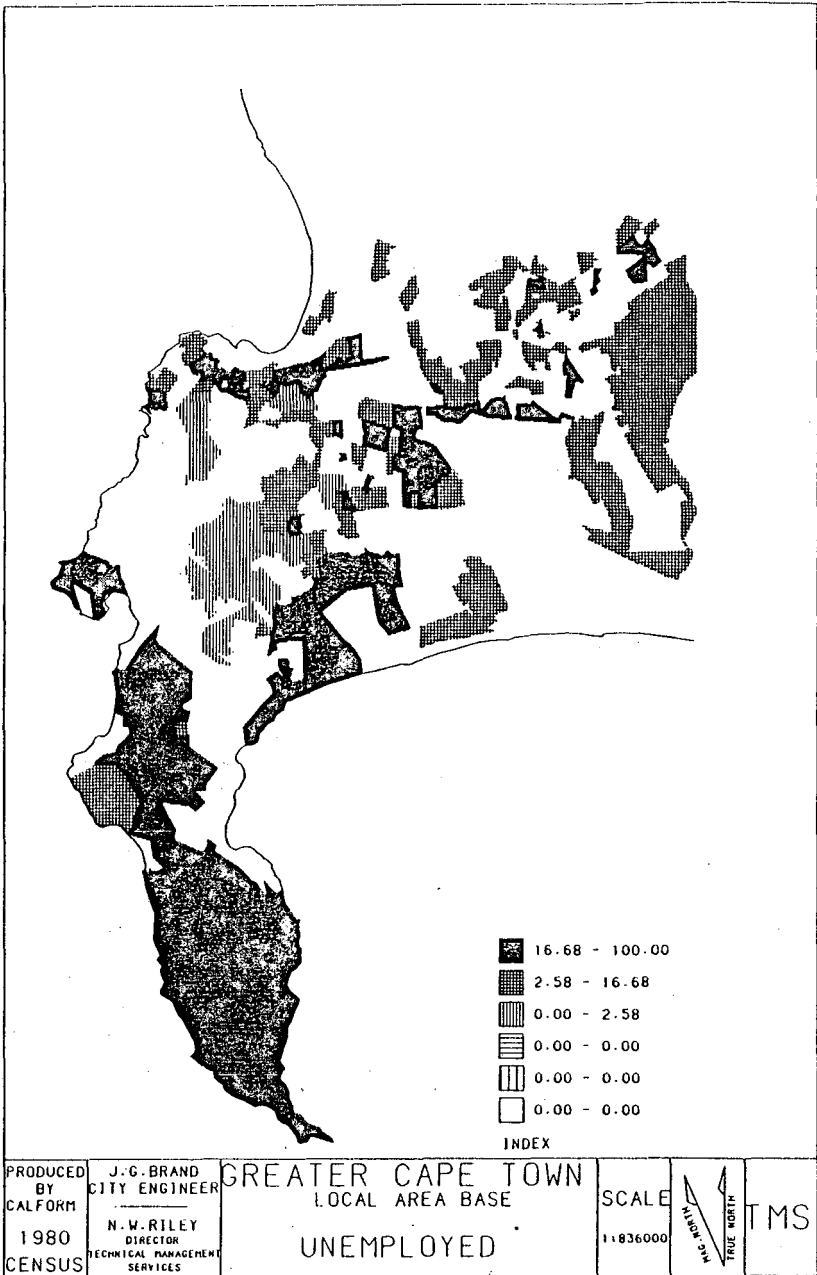
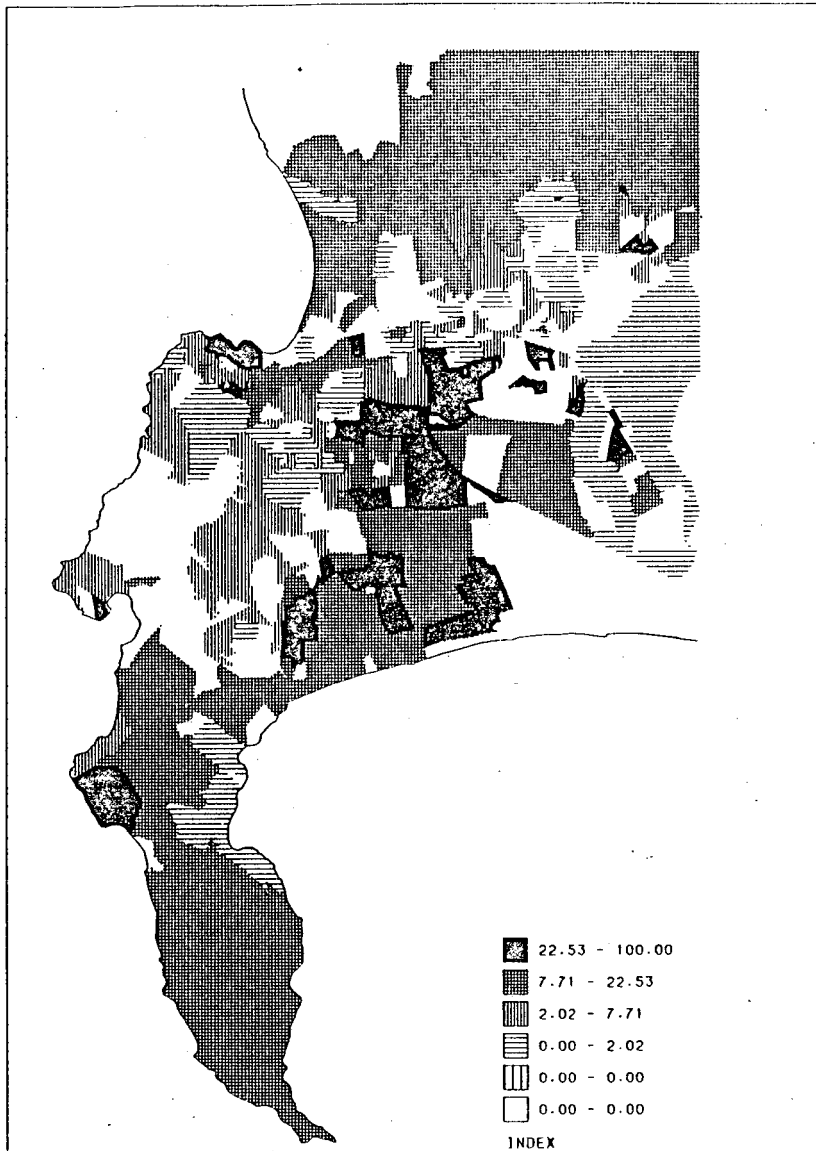








Figure 5



-  22.53 - 100.00
-  7.71 - 22.53
-  2.02 - 7.71
-  0.00 - 2.02
-  0.00 - 0.00
-  0.00 - 0.00

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Figure 6

With the exception of the assault category in Milnerton police district, the poor or deprived areas all registered substantially higher crime rates for all categories of violent crime than the more affluent areas. Milnerton's murder rate, for instance, which is the highest of the more affluent police districts is 20% less than the lowest murder rate in the deprived areas, namely, Athlone police district. Guguletu's assault rate, on the other hand, is 397,2% more than the worst rate in the more affluent areas.

- 5.1 It should be borne in mind that the person who commits a crime is not restricted by his place of residence. This means that anyone is potentially a victim of violence. One researcher has phrased it rather succinctly when he says "Poverty then consists of social problems correlated with low income" and that "Externality is concerned with social consequences of poverty for the rest of society rather than in terms of the needs of the poor. The poverty line should serve 'as an index of disutility to the community of the persistence of poverty'"<sup>18</sup>. At the same time, the broader society loses man hours and therefore productivity through victims requiring hospitalisation. Attached to this, of course, are the concomitant costs in money terms.

#### CONCLUSION

6. Large areas in Greater Cape Town experience extreme conditions of deprivation economically, socially and politically. The sharp pointers to this stage of deprivation are: 49,23% of all income earners earn less than R3 000,00 per annum, 58,9% of the households of the largest population (coloured) are overcrowded, tuberculosis and malnutrition are on the increase while Cape Town's crime rates remain amongst the highest in the world.

6.1 The effects of violent crime result in fear ridden suburbs and neighbourhoods which are subject to a reign of terror from gang and individual violence. These condition further exacerbate the uncertainty of the environment. This in turn leads to a breakdown in community life. Children grow up without the opportunities to release their energies creatively and productively. Susceptibility to deviant behaviour is the likely response to conditions of overcrowding, lack of opportunity and low levels of living. In such a harsh environment, the basic principles of fair play, honesty and respect are lost in a world where the individual gains nothing for possessing them.

## APPENDIX

## Areas surveyed

Cuguletu

Retreat

Bonteheuwel

Manenberg

Grassy Park

Bishop Lavis

Langa

Athlone

Hanover Park

Nyanga

Other suburbs

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