ABSTRACT

This paper looks at the relationships between Nigerian police officers and the Nigeria Police Force (NPF) in which they serve. Against simplistic portraits of police institutions as mechanistic agents of governmental power, the paper looks inside one such institution to examine how it exercises power over its own personnel, in a totalizing institutional project which combines duty and identity within a hierarchical and paramilitarized structure. Police officers are caught between their embodying of state authority and their lack of authority within their own institution. At the same time, it depicts individual officers' attempts to navigate this structure to their own advantage, creating a counter-current within the institutional world. Both ultimately affect the way in which the NPF exercises its powers within wider society. According to this perspective, the violence and corruption, negligence and evasion that often typify interactions with the police may be less signs of police officers' power than of their attempts to cope with the lack of it.

GOVERNMENT PROPERTIES: THE NIGERIA POLICE FORCE AS TOTAL INSTITUTION?

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INTRODUCTION

Studies of the African state, and of states in general, are often oddly silent on the people who populate the state and its institutions. This matters, because as Abrams (1988) asserts, states in their abstract form do not actually exist as a distinct entity. Mitchell (2002) examines the nature of states as social technologies; sets of institutions, assemblages of information, and practices of abstraction and representation. To this we must add that states and their institutions are also sets of persons, whose social personhood is formed, arranged and controlled in particular ways in order for state institutions to do their work. Therefore, the study of those people who live within the state and are formed by its practices should allow us to better understand the nature of states and their structuring effects on social life and public spheres.

This is not only because the way in which they are formed and controlled has effects on how they interact with the wider society external to the state's structures. Long ago, researchers such as Lipsky (1980) and Herzfeld (1993) recognized the typical patterns by which the semi-autonomous actions of low-level civil servants powerfully shape public cultures. Most recently, this argument has been retrieved by Bierschenk and Olivier de Sardan (2014), providing a corrective to new public management models that treat the people of the state as either a 'black box' (in which policy input equals outcomes output), or at best as responding

predictably and rationally to performance incentives.[1] But an even simpler and better reason to study the human beings who make up the state is that public sector staff, uniformed state servants and the like should be of intrinsic interest in themselves because they *comprise* large sectors of society, living more fully within the state's purview than those who are simply subject to its governmental authority.. The extent to which the public recognizes this different kind of citizenship is evident in the label describing uniformed state servants which forms the title of this piece; 'Government properties'.[2]

This is especially significant in countries, such as many in sub-Saharan Africa, where the state also represents the dominant share of the formal sector. For example, if we take a conservative number of four dependants for each of Nigeria's 377,000 police officers,[3] we can calculate that 1.88 million Nigerians are members of the wider police 'family' and thus derive both subsistence and meaning from their relationship with the institution.[4] This number is greater than the populations of some smaller Nigerian states, and yet the identity and professional groups who make up the human fabric of state institutions are almost invisible in the literature, especially when compared with the decades of studies on geographical or ethnolinguistic communities. It seems that the same membership in state structures of authority which makes these people so important to understand, at the same time makes them apparently invisible to scholars of society. In fact, these special types of people, and their special modes of living, deserve attention in and of themselves.

The study of African police forces reflects this omission. Most scholarship has looked at the ways in which publics interact (or do not interact) with the police (Hills 2000; Baker 2010). More recently, anthropologists and sociologists have also begun to examine the

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[1] This is most pertinent in the case of police forces as their coercive power over wider society seems both self-evident and to be shared by each officer.

[2] As for example by a trailer driver I spoke to in Abuja in November 2010, who told me: 'All of these gofamint properties – is it police, customs, immigration – can never disturb me …' The phrase neatly indexes the state's overt control of such officers' personhood.

[3] Estimate as at time of original submission in 2011; by 2015 the total frequently quoted was lower, around 307,000 active officers.

[4] Multiplying by a factor of five allows a spouse and three dependent children for each serving officer; in reality, while some officers, especially juniors, are unmarried, others may have much larger families, be polygamously married, and/or have dependants beyond immediate family residing with them or relying on their income.

organizational forms of police forces themselves, and the priorities and practices which are generated when police interact with publics (for example, Beek and Goepfert 2011; Di Nunzio 2014). But there is scant work on the nature of being a member of such a service, a person formed by their active participation in the state, its systems and identities. This paper therefore aims to contribute to filling that gap by examining the lifeworlds of officers in the Nigeria Police Force (NPF). Its central argument is that in order to better understand the role of police in society and public life in Nigeria, we must begin with the police institution's own internal nature – its structures, incentives, deterrents and preferences. In order to do so, we examine how personhood is shaped in training institutions, how careers are dictated, planned and navigated within the field of play delineated by the institution itself, and how the formal institution generates informal but well-established practices that accrete to it a whole additional 'shadow' institutionality.

This paper deals with the NPF as a 'total institution' engaged in a project of dominion over its own personnel. It examines the ways in which police training institutions unmake and remake personhood, turning 'civilians' into police officers, with the accompanying values, language, allegiances and bodily regimentation subject to a hierarchy reinforced by discipline and circumscribed by rules, constituting both markers of separation and boundaries to wider social intercourse. In the process of training, a cadet becomes an officer of the state, but one in a paradoxical position, and this merits some consideration.

Jauregui (2010: 13) characterizes police in Uttar Pradesh, India as 'an odd breed of subjects who are simultaneously authoritative but also very often impotent', globally seen as 'oppressors, not the oppressed; the violators of human rights, not the violated; the instruments of dominance and unchecked power that counter subaltern insurgencies, not the subjects who incite these insurgencies'. She observes that, 'by virtue of an official position which constitutes an "essential" difference from other members of society, subjects acting as representatives of "the state" are always already considered elites and never subalterns' (Jauregui 2010: 21). Yet, their position and placing in networks of power is observably ambiguous. To acknowledge these tensions, she introduces the term 'subalterns of the state' to capture the simultaneous facts of their authority and coercive power and their equally evident disempowerment and demoralization. This has implications for the way in which police subjects are created and controlled. Police 'as a special kind of labor force and as a special kind of social subject cannot be "oppressed" in the same ways as other subjects may

be. Instead they are managed, controlled, "disciplined"' (Jauregui 2010: 256). In response, we may add, their own means of deploying agency are typically neither confrontation with the higher powers which in turn control them, nor the unrestrained exercise of their power over the public, but instead a mix of evasion, dissembling and, most of all, strategic navigation of the opportunities available to them within their everyday constraints.

Jauregui's observations of postcolonial India apply well to postcolonial Nigeria. Indeed, this is a second meaning of this paper's title, in that we can thereby draw attention to one of the characteristic properties of government; the de-personalization of powers, and the abstraction of personhood, by which an officer of the law is simultaneously an embodiment of government's sovereignty *and* one of its most disempowered and constrained servants. The formation of this kind of disciplinary domain, and of empowered/disempowered personhood, can be seen at work in the process of creating police officers from civilian material. Significantly this process also produces persons who are more consciously national subject-citizens than those outside the reach of such thorough institutional character formation.

Membership of a police force cannot fully be captured by the concept of an occupation or profession.[8] The encompassing nature of the police institution requires us to look for other formulations; the most applicable I have found is to reclaim the concept of 'total institution' from Goffman (1961). It requires some modification, as it was developed in reference to a particular type of physical institution, bounded by walls, separated into empowered custodians and disempowered wards, and combining work, sleep and play into a single rational plan. Goffman's model of totalitarian institutions and their enveloping disempowerment was designed to explain extreme manifestations, primarily mental health institutions, but does not explicitly address institutions whose totalities are expressed in other ways but perhaps are equally pervasive. However, uniformed services exhibit many similar characteristics. In fact, their training institutions – closed residential worlds in which character is deliberately unmade and remade in the mould desired by the institution's

[8] Extending its hold far beyond the workplace, it is more a holistic social status than 'just a job'. This is not to deny that police officers are professionals; indeed, in this paper I specifically equate them to other state professionals such as doctors. Nor is it intended to be a comment on the currently influential trend in police reform globally known as 'professional policing', as that refers not to treating police officers as professionals in the ordinary sense in which I use the term, but to a specific model of policing that relies on particular types of data and evidence to guide policing policy.

functional aims – *do* fit Goffman's definition well. Police colleges and training schools collectively regiment, initiate and transform their subjects, and in the process such institutions necessarily supplant or complement other actual or potential claims on identity. As we shall see, their creation of officers as institutional subjects whose agency is circumscribed by hierarchy and discipline is key. Yet, ultimately, police and other uniformed services are created to interact with the public, not remain secluded from them. So, the totalizing work of the institution must also instil values and dispositions that are intended to be useful for that purpose.[9]

Outside the training institution, however, Goffman's concept requires further modification to address the kind of totality exercised by the police over its officers. We can argue that police officers are as much professionals as institutional subjects; certainly, their recognized role in society, specialized skills, and status based on privileged knowledge makes them akin to doctors, lawyers, teachers and similar technical specialists. Yet Sinclair, writing on the formation of medical students and the wider medical profession, notes the superficial similarity between the student of a profession and the inmate of the institution, and argues that training institutions are even 'broader and more conceptual than those Goffman originally described' (Sinclair 1997: 15). The temporary period in the bounded training institution, he says, 'will ultimately result in professional cognitive membership of the institution of which they are an inmate ... that may exclude the lay world just as surely as asylum walls'. Sinclair's observation is even more persuasive in the case of uniformed state services, because the institutions within which they work and live are more holistic.

In Goffman's total institution, walls cut inmates off from wider society. In professional institutions, we must also consider symbolic rules and fences that demarcate those institutions and circumscribe them with a 'dotted line' within which they pursue logics, morals, ethics, purposes and plans distinct from wider society, and whose members in many senses are not free to do otherwise. Totality in both total and professional institutions is 'symbolised by

[9] This can be said, of course, of all police officers and other 'street-level bureaucrats' the world over, although the circumstances in which Nigerian police officers encounter the public are very different not only to those which obtain in the West but also to those idealized relationships taught in the classroom. To note only the most salient feature, they are often imbued from the start with the public's deep distrust of the whole realm of state criminal justice (Smith 2007: 171). I discuss these interactions, and the risk to both parties embedded in them, elsewhere (Owen 2013).

barriers to social intercourse with the outside and to departure' (Goffman 1961: 4).In fact, totalizing claims are important identifying characteristics of such institutions. Claims on members' conduct outside work, allegiance, political organization and behaviour, identity, body, dress, sexuality, morality, place of residence, use of time, capital formation and more are typical of uniformed services and are over and above those that exist in any ordinary profession or workplace.[10] In the process, such institutions necessarily supplant other actual or potential claims on identity; and this has particular implications in Nigeria, as we will see below.

The total institution also extends its reach over time, moulding personal choices and opportunities through institutional careers, in which the hierarchy of ranks provides a structuring map of relative empowerment and disempowerment and interacts differentially with other social categories – notably, gender – to produce different possibilities for different persons. As rank is navigated via formal promotional procedures, it limits options for advancement to a pace set by the institution.

Yet there exists a second repertoire within which the agency of the subaltern can find an outlet more easily – postings to specific units, duties and roles. These comprise another register in which success can be attained, and which interlocutes with formal rank in varying permutations. Official principles and structures also spawn informal permutations that derive from them – the cadres of course-mates, for example – through which the wider world of police as career, as family and as opportunity can be navigated. The constraints of subalternity, and the options available to employ individual agency to surpass it, form an important part of the internal currents that invigorate the police institution, as an assemblage and as a constantly shifting network of constructed and contested careers.

This paper begins by outlining personhood and character formation as recreated by the police institution and its training disciplines. It then examines seniority as ideology and a structuring principle. Thereafter, it looks at the interaction of these constraints, and the ways in which they are inculcated by discipline, and with the social category of gender, to produce combined forms of institutional-social subalternity, even as the police employment of women

[10] In the Nigerian police, for example, there are prohibitions on debt and on taking traditional titles without express permission – both of which establish problematic loyalties outside the police, whether economic or socio-cultural.

as wage earners is itself a vector of empowerment. We then examine how posting is used by subordinates to inject agency back into the system, and look at some of the options that are available to navigate institutional careers, as well as the ways in which such mobility can problematize the rational plan and declared aims of the institution, making it perhaps more of a totalizing project than a successfully completed work. Finally, we consider the ways in which the police institution casts a further 'shadow' of institutionality onto non-formal spheres that derive from the NPF's formal role.

The paper draws on two years of interviews and fieldwork in police formations in Nigeria. The research included both north and south, rural areas and major cities, operational units and administrative departments, but the greater part was conducted in one location: 'B' Division in the (pseudonymous) town of Dutsin Bature, in Nigeria's north-central or 'Middle Belt' region. As I did not have the privilege of spending a prolonged period in a training institution, in what follows I also draw on the experiences related by respondents, many of whom had passed through the senior cadre recruitment process as graduate-entry Assistant Superintendent (ASP) cadets; comments relate to that particular cadre, except where stated otherwise.[11]

<A>RE-FORMATION

Alongside its formal rationale, police training has a strong set of often-unstated aims. We should remember that training is not just a matter of imparting skills. Total institutions also aim at something wider; the deconstruction and reformation of social beings according to the overall objectives of the institution. In fact, we may even consider this character formation, rather than practical training in professional task-based skills, as the primary purpose of training[12] Bierschenk (2009: 10) notes of the training of public servants in West Africa more generally that:

> <EXT>Officials in the countries we studied are given little preparation … in their training which provides them (see for example teachers and police officers) with an

[11] Nigerian police officers are recruited in three cadres; constable cadets, who need secondary school education; inspector cadets, who require proof of further education; and ASP cadets, who must be graduates.

[12] Similarly Sinclair (1997) characterises the formation of attitudes rather than the accumulation of knowledge as the defining aspect of medical studentships.

> ideal image of their future profession. They only learn to deal with reality in a phase of informal professional socialisation which they undergo in the early years of their career.

And indeed, the actual job-oriented training seems notable for its shortcomings. It takes place amid conditions that are not conducive to learning; training institutions are run-down, mostly lacking in investment, and not built for the numbers of officers who have passed through them in the last decade's efforts to expand the police.[13] They are not often considered prestigious by those who lead them, nor are they apparently a priority in the force's everyday concerns.[14] Thus I saw a promotion class of hundreds of inspectors crammed into a lecture hall while dozens more sat on plastic chairs crowded around the entrances in the hope of being in earshot. For those lucky enough to be inside the room, the education concentrates heavily on rote learning. This is not entirely unproductive – a capacity to be able to recall criminal charges and disciplinary provisions is, after all, of use to an operational police manager. But the kind of situational classes in crime-scene analysis or scenario planning, which might connect directly to workplace expectations, are notable by their absence.

Instead, police training is about turning civilians into officers in a holistic, internalized and embodied way. And doing this, in order to produce an institutionally shaped, functionally useful subject who is integrated into a hierarchical order, requires not just inculcating what 'police' is but breaking down what it is not. This implies the rupturing of pre-existing socialities. Graduates, as a category, are far from a blank slate. Having passed through a strike-plagued, resource-poor, patronage-inflected Nigerian higher education system abundant in lecherous lecturers and obstructive administrators, they will already be well versed in the arts of resistance, mobilization and collective action. Graduate recruits are therefore latent with potential problems for the police training process. Therefore police college has the task of deconstructing this. As ASP Patricia Jibrin related: 'The first thing they tell you at police college is "you graduates, leave all that 'we' at the gate, there is no 'we' here, just *I*."'[15] Subsequently, the cadets' instinct to organise will be replaced with new

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[13] When television documentary cameras exposed the dilapidated state of the Police College, Ikeja, a national scandal ensued. The documentary can be seen at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xKkywuKKBc4>, accessed 18 August 2014.

[14] For many senior officers, a posting away from front-line policing to a training school role is seen as the equivalent to demotion.

[15] Field notes, 8 June 2010. All names in this paper are also pseudonymized.

forms of solidarity and identity, cast within a hierarchical mould and oriented towards the ideal of the *esprit de corps* of a uniformed service.

Cadets must be turned from individuals-in-association, free and self-organizing, to a different kind of individual and atomized subject of disciplinary power, within a ranked associative structure planned by the institution as a grid of power relations. Neither is that process always unresisted. Foucault (1977) identifies the significance of bodily discipline and drill for creating uniformity of purpose, identity and subjection to command power. Drill exercises produce embodied regimentation and obedience, and, ultimately, corporate subjectivity, so it should not surprise us that this is a core part of training recruits. Another modality is subjection to the rules of discipline – it is axiomatic that 'the police is a discipline organization' and disciplined conduct is also expected to be reflected in physical appearance. Especially for an older generation of officers, appearance is synonymous with performance and rectitude. The AC Operations[16] in Dutsin Bature answered my query as to how one can tell a good police officer entirely in these terms: 'They have certain qualities, they are disciplined, you can see from their appearance, uniform is complete, they look like a policeman.'[17]

Corporate identity is also imposed by restructuring – cadets are divided into squads (of around seventy-five cadets) and into halls. This is not a completely dictatorial system – ideally, squad leaders are elected and there is a system of cadet representatives, structured hierarchically (General No. 1, General No. 2, Women Leader, 2 i/c[18] Women Leader, as well as hall leaders' committees and their chairs). In this way, a space is created whereby grievance can be expressed within the bounds of the discipline organization and without threatening its overall stability. Yet dissent dies hard: privation, crumbling infrastructure, large class sizes, shortages of resources and materials, and staff members who take advantage

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[16] Police language heavily employs official acronyms that refer to rank, post, or both. Here, ASP is Assistant Superintendent; AC Operations is the Assistant Commissioner in charge of Operations, DC Course is a Deputy Commissioner in charge of a course, CP is Commissioner of Police, usually in charge of a whole state, DPO is the Divisional Police Officer, (the manager of a police division), and DCO is Divisional Crime Officer (the senior officer in charge of criminal investigation in a police division). MOPOL refers to the paramilitary Police Mobile Force.

[17] Interview, 10 June 2010. This senior officer, known to be an old-fashioned and hard-line policeman, was once referred to in my presence as 'that thug' by one of his juniors.

[18] Second in command.

of cadets all generate grievance. Jauregui (2010: 261) pertinently notes that police officers' 'potential for organizing and mobilizing to improve their condition … represents an exceptional kind of threat to both official and unofficial patterns of order' for which discipline is the solution. So, where resistance is encountered, it is suppressed, sometimes by making creative use of those who have already served and have more fully incorporated police values. An officer tells of their own cadet course:

> <EXT>In the case of Squad 8, 'Igwe' was imposed by the DC course, because they were stubborn, so this guy – a serving member [i.e. an officer who was already serving in the police and was being promoted to ASP] – was imposed upon them. 'Everything about him was thick – his head, his arms, even his fingers, his attitude was … we tried making a coup against him, it failed, we tried getting rid of him, it failed, he stuck with us to the end.'[19]

Active parts of the curriculum aimed at personal character formation seem to be better liked. All ASP cadets undergo off-campus exercises designed to build personal confidence and command ability, which merit their own passing-out badges. These exercises include an outdoors leadership challenge course and the testing commando-style short course run at the Police Mobile Force Training School in Gwoza. In fact, police training overall is explicitly directed towards producing certain personal qualities, embodied practices and capacities, at once functional and markers of professional personhood – such as 'command presence' in the US (Barker 1999) or the 'fuck-off position' in communist East Germany (Glaeser 2000). Training in Nigeria also encompasses tacit learning of the following elements: to 'talk like a police officer' (loudly, clearly, and in a commanding manner); to eat fast, in deliberately brief lunch breaks; and, above all, to endure, to develop the bodily discipline and hardness needed to function well in adverse and uncomfortable conditions, which is perhaps the distinguishing mark of the police officer's pride. On 1 February 2011, for example, my field notes record:

> <EXT>Twice in the last two days – from BB and from mobile corporal who is CP's orderly – I have been told 'You sit down, you're a civilian. I'm a police, I can stand like this for three hours.'

[19] Field notes, 23 November 2010. 'Igwe' is an honorific title for a king or chief in eastern Nigeria.

As can be seen above, the shared endurance and participation in training do indeed produce an *esprit de corps*, but one which encompasses the solidarity of attempted resistance to the shared experience of subalternity, as well as the intended sense of pride in corporate and individual police-*ness*. This is further underpinned by eighteen months of shared co-residence (which cross-cuts the squad organization as halls are mixed-squad and single-sex), and produces plentiful new relationships. As one respondent recalled, 'Men can't go to the women's hall, but women can go to the men's hall and some stayed there for full eighteen months virtually.'[20]

The creation of police corporate personhood – and the deliberate inculcation of nationalist loyalty in such a diverse nation – also means that the training institution needs to be a place where other corporate identities are broken down, or at least intertwined with new sources of identity and meaning. This is not to say that concepts such as home-town or ethno-linguistic community become irrelevant. But they are supplemented and cross-cut by the new structuring solidarity of course-mates. It might be an overstatement to say that the police succeeds in producing detribalized subjects, but it clearly is an *agent of* detribalization, or at least acts as a zone of cosmopolitanism which makes free association across identity boundaries more possible, in the context of creating a future national leadership cadre that will serve in a career with a *national* scope. Since police frequently marry police, and in many cases have offspring who go on to serve, this can be self-reinforcing. The situation is summed up neatly by a female ASP:

> <EXT>Being in the police you get used to a lot of different places, and the funny thing is it detribalizes you. This one is Igbo, this one is Yoruba, you just get used to it … any child that is raised in the barracks will speak at least one or two languages in addition to his mother tongue. And intertribal marriage is common. Very common. Look at my parents.[21]

Upon graduating, the cadet experience is permanently enshrined, both in that it is commemorated in the passing-out ceremony, and in a more enduring manner, as a six-digit force number with which every officer is numbered according to their year of commission,

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[20] Field notes, 23 November 2010.
[21] The informant's own parents were from two different ethnic and regional backgrounds and had met in the course of their careers as police officers. Field notes, 8 July 2010.

making this information immediately visible and indexable to those who are able to read it (who are, of course, only other NPF officers). This is significant because not only rank but also seniority is a structuring principle – two officers of equal rank will distinguish the primacy of one of them on the basis of the date of their passing out.

The solidarity between course-mates underlines that the NPF is an *intimate* institution, within which, despite its size and national spread, officers will encounter and re-encounter each other, and former colleagues and commanding officers, throughout their institutional career. It is a resource of support to officers otherwise atomized in the hierarchical grid. Not only are course-mates and classmates a reserve of assistance in times of need, but they also produce a powerful structure with which to navigate the police institution, as we will see below.

<A>RANK, SENIORITY AND SUBALTERNITY

By now it will have become apparent that the police institution creates a kind of personhood indivisibly intertwined with *rank.* Rank orders persons and defines their relative agency in the overall system, their access to opportunities and, notably, their entitlements both as understood by themselves and as defined by others.[22] Rank imbues official procedures, personal interactions, and even the material, infrastructural and spatial dimensions of the organization. In Force Headquarters, for instance, there are separate elevators for the three cadres. The fine gradations of rank are even used to allocate furniture. In fact, for some officers, entitlement seems to be the prime function of rank. In one interview, I asked a DPO if there was anything more he needed (i.e. to perform his job effectively). He replied: 'I'm

[22] Rank can be seen as a composite product, of both institutional practices and wider social ideologies. In Nigeria generally, there is a strong ideology of hierarchical ordering and entitlement. Entitlement claims and ideologies inflect relations in workplaces, communities and families, and implicate not just generational or birth-order relationships between seniors and juniors (we should note the frequent use of the language of relative age to express concepts of relative ranking) but also gender relations. Nor should we see entitlement as applying solely to goods, material resources or opportunities. Ideologies of entitlement also influence sexual and reproductive relations and rights, and equally questions of the relative formal agency, freedom and social, cultural and juridical personhood of individuals vis-à-vis their placing in hierarchies of rights and entitlement. At the crossroads of longstanding cultural traditions of gerontocracy and colonially reinforced ideas of institutional and class (and race) distinction and privilege, questions of hierarchy and entitlement are strongly evident in histories of influential state institutions in Nigeria, not least the military, and, unsurprisingly, are also strongly present in the world of policing.

grade 10, so I'm supposed to have a fridge and an A/C.' The DCO then nudged him, to indicate that I was asking about *policing* needs, at which he quickly changed direction.[23]

Rank inflects all social interactions within the police, and transgression is keenly felt – perhaps the more so because, as with all ideologies, it covers up instances where the system is manifestly contradicted by other realities, as we will explore in the section on posting. Therefore, any failure to observe the formalities of rank is a salient point of tension that itself demands to be policed:

> <EXT>The inspector was irate at the way that constable just behaved – that 'Did you see he just came up and shook me?' [I ask what is wrong with that, and he replies:] 'He should have come up and respect me [he mimes the stiff-armed, straight-backed 'attention' salute pose] and then if I want to shake we can, or highest I receive the salute [i.e. he also salutes] that is equally respecting him … I will show him, in the usual way. Not now, but when we are in front of people.'[24]

Note that the decision on whether to be casual or not is to be taken by the senior party – 'if *I* want to shake we can'. Even non-formal interactions become imbued with rank, down to a mundane activity such as sharing out biscuits:

> <EXT>Coincidentally, the red-eyed Charge-Room Officer [an Inspector] is first, then a MOPOL Corporal … then the W/PC on counter duty, on which the MOPOL shouts 'Seniority order!' and they [other more senior officers who are yet to get their biscuits] say it's OK, but when it gets to Corporal Rebecca Pam she says, 'I will take two because of my two stripes.'[25]

Importantly, rank structures personhood over *time*. Officers can have certain predictable expectations of how they will move up the ranks. In order to do so, one must wait 'on queue' for the signal from headquarters ordering the promotion exercise, when the officer will 'go on a course' and in time 'hang the new rank'. However, promotion courses themselves are not plain sailing. Police college instructor appointments are poorly rewarded and not much sought after, and the training institutions themselves are not well maintained, with budgets

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[23] Field notes, January 2010. A/C refers to an air-conditioning unit.
[24] Field notes, 16 June 2011.
[25] Field notes, 3 March 2011.

that do not often reach their intended destinations intact. So it is routine for instructors to create extra income opportunities by selling course materials which are supposed to be provided for free, and for course participants to have to provide their own essentials such as food, which are supposed to be supplied.

> <EXT>Emmanuel Egwu spent 100,000 Naira [26][] on [the] corporal promotion course (because 'I must flex every night') in camp. Blessing spent 40,000 and Onoja Davies spent only 20,000 – took his own rice and beans and stove – but cost on course includes to buy manual (4,000-ish) and to write exam (4,500), which Onoja helpfully tells me to multiply by 678 (new corporals) making 3,050,000 Naira or so income accruing to instructors, and you're meant to get allowance, which of course you never see.[27]

At the same time, the ideal of a rational, seniority-based progress through the ranks can be debased and upset at the very highest levels by political preferences which can select certain favoured officers and advance them past their seniors. As seniority is such a structuring principle of the uniformed services, it is problematic to expect senior officers to serve under their own erstwhile juniors, and so the usual practice has been to forcibly retire those who have been jumped over. This has two deleterious consequences; one being the damage to *esprit de corps* and professionalism caused by incentivizing the courting of political favour; and the other being the damage to police human capital caused by these periodic 'decapitations' of whole crops of DIGs and AIGs.[28] Clearly, we understand that the rational order of a bureaucracy is sometimes an ideology rather than an iron principle outside which it is impossible to think. Yet it is instructive that the principle has enough 'hold' to make even

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[26] Approximately US$600 at 2012 prices.

[27] Field notes, 24 February 2011. To 'flex' is to go out and enjoy oneself, indicating that a certain amount of the spending is a question of lifestyle preference. However, no participant is likely to escape minimum costs completely, such as for food, or the unofficial exam fee, which generates a tidy US$19,000 (at the March 2012 exchange rate) in total for the course examiners. Total income from manual sales and fees amount to 5,763,000 Naira or US$36,400.

[28] The increasing political significance of the police as it returns to centre stage in the civilian security–political nexus is indicated by the fact that the NPF has had seven Inspectors-General in the twelve years since the return to elected rule in 1999, compared with three in the previous twelve years. A DIG is Deputy Inspector-General, the second tier of command below the Inspector-General, and Assistant Inspector-General (AIG) is the third tier.

those wishing to break the rules try to find ways to stay formally within them, for instance by issuing directives to top-level officers passed over for promotion to IG by someone who was previously their junior to 'voluntarily' retire, so as not to disrupt the notional idea of a stable seniority system at the top.[29]

It can be seen that this system of rank-ordered seniority casts the police officer as a kind of inherent subaltern: most completely at the outset, but relationally and even when in command of others, always as a subaltern to someone more senior. Yet in Nigeria, unlike in Jauregui's Indian example in which most non-gazetted officers and men will never surpass the rank of Head Constable, all serving officers have a reasonable expectation of progress. Promotion exercises are regular and general, and the only reasons why someone will not be promoted is if they fail the course or are demoted[30] for a disciplinary offence. So, unless the officer is unfortunate in either of these two registers, they may fairly be described as subaltern, but not irretrievably so.

Police seniority is therefore self-resolving; you are subaltern but will not always be at the bottom of the pyramid, and officers understand the system as such, which cannot but provide a philosophical outlet for the resolution of everyday frustrations. I encountered Constable Friday Kassam (a perennial player of the system who moved between three different 'comfortable' postings in the command during my fieldwork period) washing his commanding officer's car; he said he was happy to do it because 'he is my boss, I will wash his car, and so someday someone will wash my own'.[31] That this inbuilt promise of eventual resolution is noted does not mean that varying rates of progression for various categories never introduce divisive structural tensions. A comparatively recently graduated ASP recalled that:

[29] By the time of publications, modifications to this practice were beginning to see such decimatory forced retirements at the top level phased out.

[30] Demotion is a relatively uncommon occurrence; in 2008, only 232 officers were punished with reduction in rank, out of 3,226 disciplinary cases (Nigeria Police 2008).
[31] Fieldnotes, 7 March 2011.

> <EXT>Some of those senior officers who have come up from the ranks after thirty years have that attitude towards the cadet ASPs, that 'we have worked for this, but you…' [they have] that anger and hostility. It's not *all* of them, but some few.[32]

Nor is this limited to rivalries between different elite cadres; it is also keenly felt in the fine gradations at the bottom of the pyramid. On the same day, I recorded Constable Onoja's quiet complaint to me against life's unfairness: Constable Egwu, six months his junior, had been sent on a course for promotion to corporal, because he came earlier in the alphabetical list.

Likewise, the only very recently discontinued practice of positive discrimination to ensure balance at strategic senior levels of command produced situations in which candidates from regions under-represented at the higher echelons were promoted over the heads of those from areas that already had numerous officers in the senior ranks. The effects of this on the morale of those bypassed, and upon elite motivation and cohesion within the organization, were sometimes alluded to by those who felt that they had progressed more slowly due to their unlucky placing in the ethnic algebra, which can hardly have reinforced the purposeful inculcation of a de-ethnicizing *esprit de corps*.

Promotion is an uneven process, that much is clear. But importantly, it is eventually and ultimately a predictable process, which dictates certain things about officers' agency and about their expectations within a constant, stable and regularly progressing formal register of personhood that qualifies subalternity as a relational and (eventually and partially) surpassable condition.

<A>SUBALTERNITY AND GENDER

Within the police, nothing illustrates the multifaceted nature of subalternity so well as the situation of female officers. Women officers of the NPF are usually limited to administrative and station-based tasks, or 'soft' duties such as working in the police clinic or the Juvenile Welfare centre (JWC). They are not usually allowed to carry weapons (with the exception of a single all-female Mobile squadron), and are subject to official constraints on their personal liberty, sexuality and reproductive rights. in addition to being the subject of 'locker-room'

[32] Field notes, 1 March 2011.

workplace stereotyping, stigmatization and harassment, which are familiar from police institutions the world over. Asplund (2010a: 2) finds that:

> <EXT>Wherever we went, the male high rank officers we got to speak with told us that: 'In the security sector, we are all gentlemen' … the phrase expresses that there exists an ideal of neutrality when it comes to gender policies within the security sector, and that the general perception is that the ideal is lived up to. However, the quote also seems to indicate that the meaning of that neutrality is biased towards a masculine and male ideal, taking the male employee as the point of departure. It furthermore mirrors a view where the security sector is seen as set aside from the rest of society, accountable only to its own circumstances and standards.

This finding requires some small modification: The subordination of women is not limited to the security sector, but is also extended to constitutional law; for instance, until very recently in the stipulation that female Nigerian citizenship was not transferable by marriage, whereas male citizenship was.[33] Within the NPF, the Police Act states that female recruits (but not male) must be unmarried at the time of joining; that female officers (but not male) must apply to marry, and that the prospective spouse must be approved by the police (usually by interview with a commanding officer); and that female officers (but not male) must be married or of long service to become a parent, and are liable to disciplinary procedures if found to be in breach.[34] The array of such rules is intended to protect female officers – and thus the police force – from being morally compromised. In fact, the whole complex of regulations pertaining to such issues assumes an ideology of greater male moral and economic agency, in which women are subordinate and in which their position and likely behaviour are assumed to derive from the males with whom they associate.

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[33] This was the law that obtained during my fieldwork, although a change was instituted after a court challenge in 2012.

[34] Police Act 1999 [1967], Sections 118(a), 118(g), 123, 124 (in Asplund 2010a). In addition, other constraints can be imposed due to the ad-hoc exercise of hierarchical authority. During the period of my fieldwork, a national media and political row took place over a (now-retired) Inspector-General's directive that female officers married to civilians should not be given places in police barracks. The rationale was not clearly communicated; it may have been understood as an issue of 'security risk' but seems more likely to have been an attempt to create much-demanded capacity in barracks accommodation, predicated on the presumption of a male breadwinner who took responsibility for family accommodation. During the drafting of this paper the rule was changed; however, there was little publicity and many officers did not know about the change.

The rules of the police and other law enforcement agencies on approved marriage and on single parentage mean that these organizations also take on a role of policing the sexual morality of their own members. This is built on a British colonial history in which police forces were tasked with ensuring the moral continence and social probity of their members *as an intrinsic part* of upholding the law (Emsley 2009). The moral policing of the police ranged beyond solely sexual morality. Other regulations – contained in NPF force orders but functionally unenforceable – require that police recruits be free of debt, which would create obligations and incentives to behave in an immoral manner. The varied official rationales of discipline, risk of criminal association and the risk of any close social association with other constituencies and loyalties outside the force are apparent.

In actuality – at least supposedly – such regulations give the police institution the right and role to police bodies, status (because marriage in Nigeria is normatively an index of full adulthood), principles, choices of association and reproductive rights. Since a man can become an unauthorized single parent *invisibly*, whereas a woman cannot do so other than extremely visibly, the burden falls much more heavily on women than on men; effectively, unauthorized *female* single parentage is penalized whereas such behaviour in males is not. Personal conduct is a professional matter for all police, but the result of rules and practices such as those noted above is that it becomes much more so for female officers, who are thus more fully possessed by the institution as they are more fully subject to its disciplinary mechanisms.[35]

To concentrate solely, however, on the structural and cultural impediments to women in the NPF is to miss an important paradox – the obvious fact of their presence. The police, as one of the earliest mass formal employers of female labour, has long been a vector of women's labour-market and social mobility in Nigeria; 20 per cent of current establishment strength (approximately 80,000 officers) are women, embodying state authority (Asplund 2010b), albeit within a patriarchal system that stereotypes and attempts to set limits to their roles.[36]

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[35] However, especially with regard to marriage, it is worth noting that police managers use their discretion on whether to follow these regulations. A female officer told me in February 2010 that, in order to marry: 'You're meant to get DPO's approval; many don't, and many DPOs and senior officers turn a blind eye a bit.'

[36] Asplund uses the figure of over 80 per cent male employees (Asplund 2010b), while referencing both Alemika and Agugua's 1993 figure of 4.77 per cent and self-aggregated contemporary data on senior ranks (Asplund 2010a). Archive film of Nigeria's first women

Against this context, a few women can and do achieve positions of power and influence in the male-dominated domains of operational policing. I met female DCOs and DPOs in high-profile metropolitan stations, and Dutsin Bature's Officer Commanding traffic division was a veteran female officer who was also the proprietor of a large supermarket.

<A>PUTTING AGENCY BACK IN

If the principle of seniority and the structures of promotion formally define what the police officer can be, the realm of posting is the counterpart in which the individual officer can attempt to reassert control over their life and career, and an opportunity for the ambitious to transcend subalternity. After all, for many, recruitment into the police itself is an avenue to socio-economic mobility, both by status and wage labour and by the entrepreneurial embracing of additional chances to accrue income and 'relevance'.[37] To understand the possibilities, it is worth underlining the huge size and internal variety of the police institution. For a police officer at the start of their career, the options are many and can be followed up according to aptitudes, ambition, capacity, ability to play the system, and, above all, opportunity. Some are obvious, such as becoming a detective Investigative Police Officer (IPO); joining Anti-Bomb units, lately expanded to meet new terrorism threats; aiming for elite investigative State and Force Criminal Investigation Departments;[38] 'mobilizing' – that is, joining the Police Mobile Force (known as PMF or MOPOL), which is only possible after a period of ordinary service; a career in administration; or joining the traffic warden service. Other specialized functions recruit separately –forensics experts, IT and computing, police doctors or pilots.[39] And because the NPF, like other state bodies in Nigeria, is a maximal

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police passing out in Ikeja on 26 April 1956, accompanied by an informative written commentary, can be seen at <http://www.colonialfilm.org.uk/node/1961>, accessed 20 March 2012.

[37] 'Relevance' is the term used in Nigerian colloquial English to evoke a sense of being in a position to influence events and relationships for others, and thus enhancing one's own status and social capital. Steinberg (2008) also underlines the importance of class mobility and extramural capital accumulation to contemporary South African recruits to the police rank and file.

[38] The Force Criminal Investigation Department is a centralized national investigation bureau for exceptional cases

[39] All of these specialist departments have undergone severe structural difficulties that have seen their functions impaired; police forensics, for example, which lacks laboratory facilities and the training to use them, has been partially co-opted to another specialist function, as

institution that has not passed through the outsourcing revolution, it also incorporates many other functions. As well as joining a police band, or taking advantage of the special entry and posting schemes for exceptional sportspeople, it is also possible to be posted as a serving officer to a police clinic, the police co-operative society, a police secondary school, a state command's Works department, or the police motorcycle display team.

Not all police services command equal respect; some see themselves as internal elites. This is particularly true of specialized detective units such as the Special Anti-Robbery Squads (SARS), and the fifty-seven Squadrons of the Police Mobile Force (PMF). Significantly, one feature shared by these, and Anti-Bomb units, is their dual chain of command (to a supervising CP or DIG in Abuja, as well as to the CP of the state),[40] which gives them a certain degree of autonomy from the State Commands to which they are attached. Thus, their importance is indexed by their relative freedom of agency, and does not go un-noticed by those serving in them. The attitude of MOPOL towards ordinary police officers is evident in their pejorative nickname for them – '*atura*', derived from the Hausa verb *tura*, to push; *atura shi* means 'send him'. *Atura* as a pejorative term for non-MOPOL officers therefore approximates to 'push-arounds' or 'messenger boys'.

Despite the internal variegation, there is a common discourse on what constitutes a good or bad posting. This is crudely misunderstood as being solely about economic considerations. The possibility of making extra income and capital formation are undoubtedly prime considerations, but they are not exclusive. Comfort, safety, and the possibility of reproducing future prospects are also all salient reasons for evaluating postings as good or bad. Postings vary according to the twin vectors of role and geography; being an ordinary 'general duties' officer in Dutsin Bature was not at the top of the pile, as Inspector Aliyu noted:

> <EXT>Any commercial centre is good, as they will appreciate you, and any border town, as there are importers and exporters, there is no way but they must thank you. Then, within state, CID – but not here … No one likes to be posted here.[41]

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specialists with legal experience have been recruited to present police cases in court in order to minimize the number of prosecution cases which collapse on technical grounds.

[40] DIG is Deputy Inspector-General, the second-highest rank in the NPF.

[41] Fieldnotes, 9 June 2010. 'Appreciate' and 'thank' must be understood here in the material sense.

Although newly graduated ASPs are posted all across the country, an internal sorting mechanism soon emerges. Many with provincial postings attempt to work their way back to Force Headquarters in Abuja, which offers both the attractions of living in a large city and the possibility that, 'if anything good comes, it will touch there first', as well as proximity to influential seniors. But for more experienced officers, an active role such as DPO offers the best chance both to 'acquire relevance' and to boost income. There is a relationship between rank and posting, as some posts are clearly reserved for certain ranks: the Commissioner of a State, for example, must be a Commissioner in rank. This is the case at the lower level too; the highest independent command an Inspector could hope for would be a sub-station under another division.

However, some posts are more fluid in their relationship to rank. The key managerial role of DPO is one example. Since southern parts of Nigeria are more economically dynamic, posts in those states are more sought-after, and officers I spoke to considered that it would be unlikely to see a one-star (i.e. junior) ASP heading a division in southern Nigeria – while they might do so in the less economically developed parts of northern states. For a great many officers, the country's commercial capital is the goal. DPOs in large Lagos divisions tend to be Superintendent or Chief Superintendents, and such is the demand for Lagos postings that tenure is unofficially limited to two years.[42] DPO postings are also commonly used as a pre-retirement reward for those ASPs promoted after spending the majority of their careers as Inspectors. This is sometimes combined with a more regularized expectation; a transfer to their own region of origin to allow these officers to get re-acquainted with the social context into which they will retire. There are also temporary postings available to senior officers that give them both advanced professional exposure and additional income – Nigeria's historical commitment to overseas peacekeeping means that there are often opportunities to join UN missions abroad, and the generous allowances provide a boost for those officers unwilling to engage in other means of supplementing their income.

For constables and others of low rank, the possibility of working in a good posting offers a way to transcend rank. A constable of ability has a very different set of prospects from a semi-literate time-server. Most constables who are not content to stay in-state have already

[42] The two cases known to me of officers who have been DPOs in central Lagos for longer than two years both concern officers of exceptional ability who also have good ties to decision makers within the policing world.

thought out strategies for their advancement. Some aim to 'mobilize': in 'B' Division the Station Officer's clerk Godwin had his sights set on becoming an armourer seconded to Kaduna Defence Industries, while sports specialist Emmanuel aimed to join the potentially lucrative Mechanized Salary Section (MSS).[43] Financial and administrative appointments at headquarters allow constables and corporals to wield influence vastly disproportionate to their formal rank, and a rank-and-file officer in the state headquarters may be more privileged than their formal superiors serving further from the centres of power and money. As Lipsky (1980: 24) observes, with control of information, lower-level staff can make their seniors dependent on them, and this can also be turned to lucrative advantage. The disparity is keenly felt by the excluded, especially those who are senior to them. IPO (Corporal) Mainassara pointed out the officer in charge of MSS in Dutsin Bature as being 'that constable that changes his car every month'. Even within a division, there are good and bad postings, permanent or temporary – a potentially lucrative special duty, for example. Yet, as stated above, opportunities for enrichment can take second place to other forms of well-being, as I realized while watching two officers checking the duty roster in May 2010:

> <EXT>IPO (in mufti) says, 'They have posted four of us to special duty.' 'Which?' 'State CID.' 'Ehn, that is good now.' 'I don't want it.' Uniformed corporal laughs – 'Why?' IPO: 'No, serious.' [Then to me] 'I need something I can get peace of mind.'[44]

Axiomatically, for a police officer 'a good beat is full of deadbeats' (Barker 1999). This is even truer in the Nigerian context – where high crime translates into capital accumulation possibilities for the police officer, as well as experience and reputation – than it is in the US LAPD context which Barker cites. Yet, as we see from the quotation above, there are significant numbers of police officers who have the *opposite* motivation. One constable I met in Dutsin Bature had recently been transferred from Aba (a busy, commercial and crime-

[43] Sports as a career path has advantages and disadvantages. In everyday terms, Emmanuel complained that there was 'no [way to make extra] money', but the duties are lighter and, if successful, a career in sports can trump everyday service.
[44] 'Peace of mind' is intended to mean a lack of stress. An IPO is a criminal case officer within a division.

ridden centre in the east) and claimed that he was happy with the posting because Aba was too violent; to be an officer there, he said, 'You have to be prepared to kill human being.'[45]

<A>TENURE AND TRANSFER

To navigate the postings web, NPF officers attempt to mobilize social resources created within, as well as outside, the police institutional context. During the course of my fieldwork, two phrases were commonly repeated, almost identically, by officers who wanted to emphasize their own 'progressive' disposition. One was: 'I have never lobbied for position.'[46] This phrase, designed to draw attention to the exceptional virtue of its speaker, does so by indexing the otherwise assumed mundane universality of the practice. Different repertoires are employed in lobbying, and the direct mobilization of money is a poor second to being able to employ social capital. One such tactic is sticking close to power and forming lasting vertical patronage relationships with high-flying senior officers, in order to benefit from the boss's favouritism, as practised by 'IG boys' and others. Another is appealing to shared identity; 'tribalism' and ethnic favouritism, although not universally mobilized, are often suspected and can set emotions running high.

> <EXT>Godwin – in uniform – is really upset when I come in – first arguing with some people in the corridor about posting and 'it is not a matter of tribalism' and then behind [the] counter in a red-eyed strop, standing behind the duty roster staring out the door, too angry to greet, looking/waiting for someone.[47]

Another key strategy is – paradoxically – to mobilize the horizontal peer relationships formed in the process of the police institution's creation of a hierarchy of ranks. These relationships can be used to navigate the system and attempt to transcend the constraints of rank by accessing favoured postings. As Inspector Paul tells me:

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[45] Some officers create inventive ways to combine a peaceful posting with a rewarding profile: for example, the dancing policeman at the junction of Aminu Kano Crescent in Abuja who became a city celebrity for moonwalking while performing traffic control duty.
[46] The other, often accompanying it, was: 'I have never asked anyone to collect money on my behalf.'
[47] Field notes, 14 February 2011.

> <EXT>Like peacekeeping, they do it by strict seniority … but *we*, we must lobby – some pay money, some it's their classmate (mimes picking up phone, saying 'Ol' boy, can you …?').[48]

Even when the system of class- and course-mates is not used to secure a posting, it is a prime resource in getting to hear about opportunities in the first place. The 'friend at headquarters' is an invaluable asset not just for personal advancement but in other contexts too, for risk mitigation.[49]

On the one hand, postings are officially made anonymously, bureaucratically and blindly, from 'on high'. Yet, on the other, they can be influenced by agency – lobbying, qualifications, and social capital. The result is that, even with lobbying, outcomes are rarely guaranteed. Seen from below, the caprices of postings are evidence of the popular epithet that 'man proposes and God disposes' rather than of any more legible rational schema. Nor does bureaucratic power often explain its workings to its own subalterns. As in Kafka's castle, 'official decisions are as shy as young girls' (Kafka 1926: 227) and while the skilful and lucky officer may work their transfer, the opposite possibility exists; one day a signal may arrive ordering an officer to a job they have not requested, at the other end of the country. Since vacancies need to exist for transfers to be possible, the demand created by officers lobbying for popular postings implies its corollary – the created supply of officers for *un*popular postings – and so the police career always encompasses the latent possibility of being plucked from a place of relative comfort and flung to the farthest reaches of the institutional empire. True, the situation is not as bad as in Uttar Pradesh, where a hyper-politicized system of influencing postings results in a 'transfer industry' that constitutes 'a kind of four dimensional chess match … which may never fully be understood' (Jauregui 2010: 103). However, it does introduce a degree of uncertainty into police careers, and thus the possibility that as well as having to lobby for postings, one may sometimes have to lobby to stay put. Nothing illustrates the potential for extreme disparities between the dual and sometimes contradictory registers of promotion and posting more than the case of an

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[48] Field notes, 9 June 2010.

[49] Course-mates become a core means of resolving many of the practical problems encountered during a police career, and an insurance policy. Thus 'P' boasts: 'I have classmates in every single command in this country.' E: 'That's good if you get transferred, you have a friend.' 'Not only that, but if you're travelling through and you have any trouble …' Field notes, 9 June 2010.

administrative officer spoken about in Dutsin Bature as having *refused promotion* in order not to have to move from his extremely lucrative posting.

Playing the postings 'game', whether as an enthusiastic or an unwitting participant, also creates extreme contradictions with regard to the intended bureaucratic rationality of the police institution. This can be seen in the example of training courses for specialist roles (as distinct from promotion courses). Since officers commonly pursue multiple strategies for advancement concurrently, since a favourable opportunity may come by at any time, and since training facilities and opportunities are limited in capacity, it is common to find a situation whereby, *after* working as a detective IPO for three years, someone may be selected for training at the Police Detective College, Enugu, and, immediately on leaving, obtain a transfer to a privileged post such as chief security officer at a State House of Assembly. Such illogical situations are common, and constitute a repeated waste of human capital.

Of course, if self-propelled mobility were allowed to continue unchecked, every policeman and woman in Nigeria would be a detective in Lagos, and no one would be left to do unpopular jobs such as guarding TV transmitters in rural savannah areas. So, an 'arms race' between personal and institutional demands pervades the realm of posting. During my fieldwork, the Inspector-General issued a new (and, of course, unpopular) directive that, ordinarily, transfers should be allowed only within each of the three-state, geographically contiguous administrative zones into which the police are territorially organised. As I finished my fieldwork, much personal career planning was taking place around how to effect posting opportunities in contexts and formations deemed to be extraordinary under the new rules in order to get around this new constraint.

<A>POLICE FAMILIES AND THE POLICE FAMILY

The question of career mobility should redirect us to note a kind of 'shadow' institutionality that accompanies the formal world of policing, a reflection of formal roles extended into non-formal spheres that derive from institutional exigencies. Foremost among these is family. Given the unpredictability and geographical scope of a police career, officers do not always take their families with them when they relocate. Consequently, a large number of officers have families resident in a different place to where they are serving. Mobility is of course easier at a younger age, whereas children and schooling make it increasingly difficult. The problem becomes more complex in the case of 'police-marry-police', a category of persons

which is seen to be growing due to the improving economic conditions of police officers, as the inspector in charge of Dutsin Bature's SARS detachment asserted:

> <EXT>It's true. Since 2000, 2003, hardly you will see police marry; it's only *piuw-piuw* [makes bullet noise and moves fingers to indicate quickly ricocheting back and forth], 'hit and run'. That one we call 'hit and run'. Then to 2008 it's a bit more up, and now since 2009 that salary is a bit OK, you see 'application to follow husband', 'application to marry' … And most of the time it is police-marry-police, or police-marry-army, or police and any of those other paramilitaries. It's true! – if to say na the time wey police no get anything, you go gree that man to marry you? Let's tell the truth now![50]

As the officer's comments indicate, the police force provides an official mechanism for married couples to stay together. But not everyone is able to take advantage of it, nor does everyone wish to. Many mid-career officers opt to lodge their families in medium-sized, accessible towns where reasonable facilities are combined with a lower cost of living (and, sometimes, better security) than in their place of posting. Thus, an officer serving in Lagos may have a family living in Ibadan, or someone posted to Abuja may lodge their family in Kaduna. Throughout my stay in Dutsin Bature, I met officers who had previously served there and were back to see their families, whom they had left when moving to new postings. The mobility of both men and women puts an additional strain on family life, and when officers are posted away from home, and out of the reach of wider kin and community social networks, they sometimes those problems to 'elders' within the police workplace community for resolution. This may be more likely when police and spouses reside in barracks – the ideal for many, despite the dire shortage of spaces. In fact, this shadow extension of the institution extends its totality into spheres not imagined by any bureaucratically centred formulation. The station officer, for instance, may be called upon to act as mediator between an officer and their spouse in cases of domestic strife. The term 'police family' describes this additional dimension of structuring sociality, even while acknowledging that a familial ideology encompasses significant inequities, tensions and conflicts.

<A>CONCLUSION

[50] Fieldnotes, 11 March 2011. The penultimate sentence means 'If it were the time when police had nothing, would you agree to marry such a man?'

We can see then, that while the police force seems unquestionably powerful from its structural position, police officers find themselves not so much in a powerful position of dominion over wider society as caught between their authority in that respect and their disempowerment within their own institution. According to that perspective, violence and corruption, negligence and evasion are less signs of their power than of their attempts to cope with their lack of it.[51] Becoming a police officer involves internalizing both the official claims and repertoires of the system and the possibilities of creatively manipulating, subverting and bypassing them. The hierarchical institutional system, while no doubt onerous for its own internal subalterns, also allows within its formal strictures room for individual agency, even as its ideology claims otherwise. Equally, the official processes of police character formation (such as the network of course-mates) supply the very tools then used to redeploy agency subsequently in an officer's institutional career. The state and its institutions do not only attempt to exercise control over wider society, they are constitutive of large parts of it, and state institutions provide a fount of identity and an internal field of social action that is bigger and more encompassing than we might at first appreciate.

Within this, a rigid system of rank and discipline coexists with an innovative and entrepreneurial institutional counterculture; the total institution is totalizing in its claims but not totalitarian in its lived realities. Affinitive networks, including those intentionally produced by police training, interpenetrate the official procedures with plentiful informalities. So, to be possessed by the state as one of its paradoxically empowered-constrained subalterns does not exclude the possibility of the state's own servants dragging its institutions in directions their bureaucratic rationales do not envisage, making its totalizing project always an uncompleted work in progress. Similarly, we may expect to see this creative admixture of the bureaucratic and the particular, of prescriptive structure and innovative agency, in the way in which the police in Nigeria conduct their wider work.

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[51] I am grateful to the anonymous reviewer for pointing out this formulation.

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