

Personal identity and the police occupation in South Africa

Andrew Faull

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University of Oxford

Linacre College
Centre for Criminology
Faculty of Law

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Abstract

This thesis explores the question, ‘Who do South African police officers think they are and how does this shape police practice?’ Based on eight months of ethnographic fieldwork in Cape Town and the Eastern Cape province of South Africa in 2012/13, it is an exploration of the deep-seated perceptions, stories and imaginings that South African Police Service (SAPS) officers have of themselves, their occupation and their country, in the early twenty-first century. It unpacks how officers’ individual narratives shape, and are shaped by organisational narratives and forces, and how this interplay influences police practice in an unequal and violent young democracy.

The thesis suggests that a job in the SAPS is primarily just that, a job. It is a means to strive and survive in a country saturated in vulnerability and risk. Most officers join the organisation after other dreams have slipped out of reach. Once recruited they re-write their self-narratives to accommodate their new circumstances. Recruited from lineages long-oppressed, the meaning and income the job brings to their lives is usually more important to them than the work they carry out. As a result, they seek first to please their institutional overseers and ease the pressure of the job. This is achieved by enacting institutional performances that promote the idea that the SAPS is a rational, effective, evidence-based and rule-bound organisation made of up well trained officers performing common-sense crime prevention tasks, while hiding the darker side of police work. Using carefully choreographed performances, the SAPS and its officers present a strategically crafted façade behind which individual officers strive to secure their sense of self. When the façade is challenged, some resort to violence in an attempt to garner the respect they seek.

For the men and women of the South African Police Service and their children,

and for Kori, Lyra and Neave.

May your futures be golden.

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Chapter One: Policing in context

Democracy, life choices and hard work

Light pierced the clouds, turning freeway-black to grey. The yellow-painted line of the emergency lane flickered gold. Warrant Officer (WO) Skrikker was talking.

It was a late August day in Cape Town, almost two weeks into my fieldwork. Skrikker was a detective with the South African Police Service (SAPS) in Mthonjeni.¹ We were driving down the N2 freeway, returning to the station after running various errands, and were discussing some of Skrikker's favourite topics: work, justice, life choices and reward. 'It comes down to the decisions you make in life, Andrew,' he said, 'They are what determine your success.' He was a passionate, quick talking coloured² man in his mid-forties who had worked for the SAPS for twenty-five years. 'I get really angry when people who murder and rape stand up in court and say that they were raped as a child or that they live in a shack, and so ask the court to go easy on them.' I didn't agree, 'But in South Africa we are not all born with equal prospects,' I countered:

Born to white parents in a country that advanced the interests of white over black, I was delivered into a flow of privilege in which I could afford to make mistakes. Most

¹ Throughout this thesis I employ pseudonyms for the names of police stations and officers. This has been done to protect the identities of subjects, and avoid breaches of ethics.

² In this thesis 'race' is treated as a social construct. It is understood as having no biological basis. However, in South Africa, as elsewhere, the concept of 'race' and 'races' continue to have real effects on peoples' lives through the manner in which individuals and groups give meaning to, and mobilise around biological features. The labels 'African/black', 'white', 'coloured' and 'Indian' are still commonly used in South Africa and most South Africans identify with one of them. Affirmative action policies, including those of the SAPS, reproduce the labels as a means to aid redress. Despite their problematic nature, meaningful engagement with South African social issues requires reference to these categories. As such, I use them where relevant. For example, in Skrikker's case, the category 'coloured' hints at a particular socio-economic history. Because I don't use race descriptors for the majority of subjects in the main text, I have provided a summary of basic demographic data, together with the SAPS rank structure, at the end of the thesis under 'Summary of ranks, subject names and demographics'.

South Africans born at the time experienced the opposite. The system held them back and quickly punished any fault they made.

We had had this discussion before and would have it again in subsequent weeks.

‘Andrew,’ he went on, ‘I was raised by my mother and my grandfather’:

I love my mother more than my wife sometimes. She is amazing. She worked her whole life to give me food and clothes and to make sure I went to school. My father was always out *jolling* with other women. He had three other kids and they are all *skollies* now. My grandfather told me not to complain about the food I received but to be grateful that I was eating at all. He instilled discipline in me. He beat me with his belt. It’s how I beat my children. I’m angry that it’s not allowed in school anymore.

As he spoke we passed the turnoff that lead to the police station. ‘I want to stop by my house,’ he responded to my expression of confusion.

Skrikker had mentioned his house to me within our first two days together. It was another of his favoured topics. ‘I have a nice house in Blue Downs,’ he had told me, ‘It has a swimming pool and three bedrooms. My two older children have their own cars.’ He also loved discussing football. With a broad grin on his face and laughter in his chest, he would recount tales of watching his favourite team, Liverpool FC. In the past he had left home to watch the games, but since 2008 when he could first afford it, he had subscribed to South Africa’s most comprehensive and expensive satellite television bouquet, bringing the games directly into his bedroom. When I had told him the subscription was too expensive for me he had responded, ‘Don’t worry, you will have it one day.’ He saw me as hard working and believed my decisions and the market would reward me.

Skrikker was a proud man. He had worked his way into a secure post in the former South African Police *force* (SAP) during apartheid’s final years while many of his peers remained poor. After more than twenty-five years of service he was earning almost R20 000

(£1092)³ a month before tax, an income more than double the household average in the country.⁴ Like many police officers, he complained that he deserved to earn more: ‘Andrew, I do the work of an officer but I am paid the salary of a warrant officer,’ he would say, ‘I don’t deserve it.’ While wishing things were different, he was grateful for what he had, and pleased with his own financial maturity. He had put two children through school and had budgeted for the third, supporting them until they were financially independent. He was saving to support his youngest should she be accepted at university, and would put his next bonus aside as a wedding gift for his eldest. During one of our conversations he listed all the expenses he needed to cover in the final months of the year: a new toilet seat, curtains for a bedroom, clothes for himself and his daughter, ‘And then the money will be finished, Andrew.’

We had pulled off the freeway and were making our way into Blue Downs. He changed topic:

South Africa is a great country, Andrew. I love the South African sun and the smell of the African soil. Many white people say Africa is in their blood. All the races in the country need each other. We need the whites with their expertise. The guy living in Bishops Court⁵ deserves to be there because he is up at night attending meetings and working hard. We can’t be jealous of him.

I felt he was performing for me. Perhaps he wanted me to know that he didn’t resent white people. National discourse in South Africa, about South Africans, remains rich with notions of the racial other, and often includes fear or resentment. At the Mthonjeni detective branch where Skrikker worked there were only two white men, and one was the commander. Working in a policing area in which almost everyone was African, and living in

³ Based on a rate of £1 = R18.31 (16 December 2014)

⁴ The 2011 national census showed the average coloured male headed household earned R112 172 (£7249) per annum, slightly above the national average of R103 204 (Statistics South Africa, 2011:41).

⁵ One of the city’s most affluent neighbourhoods.

a predominantly coloured neighbourhood, Skrikker didn't regularly spend time with people who looked like me or who had had my opportunities. I represented a world he was not particularly familiar with. He went on:

I was watching the Olympics the other day. I watched Le Clos's⁶ father wiping tears from his eyes while holding the South African flag; it was great to see a white man so proud. And then to see a white and black man standing together on the podium after winning the running... This country is so beautiful. It has so much potential. These days any child can go to the poshest school. When tourists come here from overseas they can't believe how developed the country is. My daughter's fiancé wants them to emigrate to New Zealand or Canada after they are married. I won't stop them, people must make their own decisions in life, but I wish they would stay and build the country.

Again I countered Skrikker's view, which I found idealistic. There is little justice in the space between those who have and those who don't in South Africa, which is one of the most unequal countries in the world. But this conversation was on its head. It should have been Skrikker telling me that ours was not a meritocratic society, that this was a myth of the market. It was he and his parents who the former state had stifled so that I and mine could prosper. But he was invested in the narrative of capital and hard work promoted by the new state, and so we disagreed.

In the remainder of this chapter I interleave more of that August afternoon spent with Skrikker, and a description and discussion of my research question and methodology. In so doing I introduce the broad context in which the research took place, together with some of the central themes informing this work.

⁶ Chad Le Clos is a South African swimmer. He was one of South Africa's few athletes to win gold at the London Olympics in 2012 where he beat American favourite, Michael Phelps, in the 200 metre butterfly.

Thesis question and theoretical outline

Skrikker was a great teller of tales. I appreciated his talents, not only because they made for warm company, but also because it was the tales police tell, together with observations of their work, which I had set out to experience. I hoped that through them I would be able to answer the question central to this thesis: ‘Who do South African police officers think they are and how does this shape police practice?’⁷ To frame and answer this question I use a cluster of concepts, forming a conceptual framework. Sketched below, these are unpacked in more detail in Chapter Two:

- a) *personal identity* – understood most simply as the stories we tell ourselves about ourselves, which we believe to be true (eg. Geertz, 1975; Ochs & Capps, 1996; Simon, 1999; Krame & Wei, 1999; Jenkins, 2008);
- b) *ontological security* - a state in which an individual possesses the answers to ‘fundamental existential questions’ about their self and world (Giddens, 1991:47). It is a state in which the story one tells oneself about oneself (one’s personal identity) is positive and stable;
- c) *identity as social performance* - the notion that individuals and groups ‘perform’ differently in different contexts, and when engaging different actors, in order to achieve strategic goals. They strive to define what their audiences see in them and

⁷While I am aware that the words ‘police’ and ‘policing’ have a breadth of applications, unless otherwise specified, in this thesis ‘police’ and its derivatives imply state and municipal police. When referring to South Africa, they refer only to the national police agency, the South African Police Service (SAPS). In the South African Police Service ‘officer’ refers to the commissioned ranks of Captain and above. The correct terms for those below this rank are ‘official’ or ‘member’. However, the prevalence of American-centric media in South Africa means that many, including at times members of the SAPS, call police men and women ‘police officers’. For ease of reading I have used the term ‘officer’ in this thesis to refer to all police men and women, regardless of rank.

so what story (identity) is ascribed to them by those audiences, and by themselves (eg. Goffman, 1959; Manning, 1997);

- d) *precarity* - existence without predictability or security in a context of modernity, inequality and risk, the opposite of ontological security (eg. Young 1999, 2007; Giddens, 1991);
- e) *police organisational culture* - understood as a set of informal values, attitudes and practices commonly believed to exist across many, or most, police organisations, and thought to play a strong socialising role in the work of police officers (eg. Newburn & Neyroud, 2008; Reiner, 2010);
- f) *shaping and cultural work* – used to highlight the ways in which police work impacts the form, nature and practice of communities (eg. Loader & Mulcahy, 2009); and
- g) *entanglement* – used as to imply the underappreciated counter weight injected into police organisations through individual officers’ self-narratives. It draws attention to the fact that individual narratives inform organisational narratives, and vice versa, that officers’ lives are *entangled* in the structure and culture of national and local contexts, as well as of police organisational culture.

Taking these into account, the research question can be thought of as an exploration of who officers think they are (*personal identity*, or the stories they tell themselves about themselves) and how this relates to their quest for *ontological security* in a context of *precarity*. It explores the *social performances* officers enact (including police work), how these relate to, *shape*, and are *shaped by*, the SAPS’ organisational culture, and the local and national contexts in which officers are *entangled*. This entanglement can be imagined as the centre of the Venn diagram depicted in Figure 1:

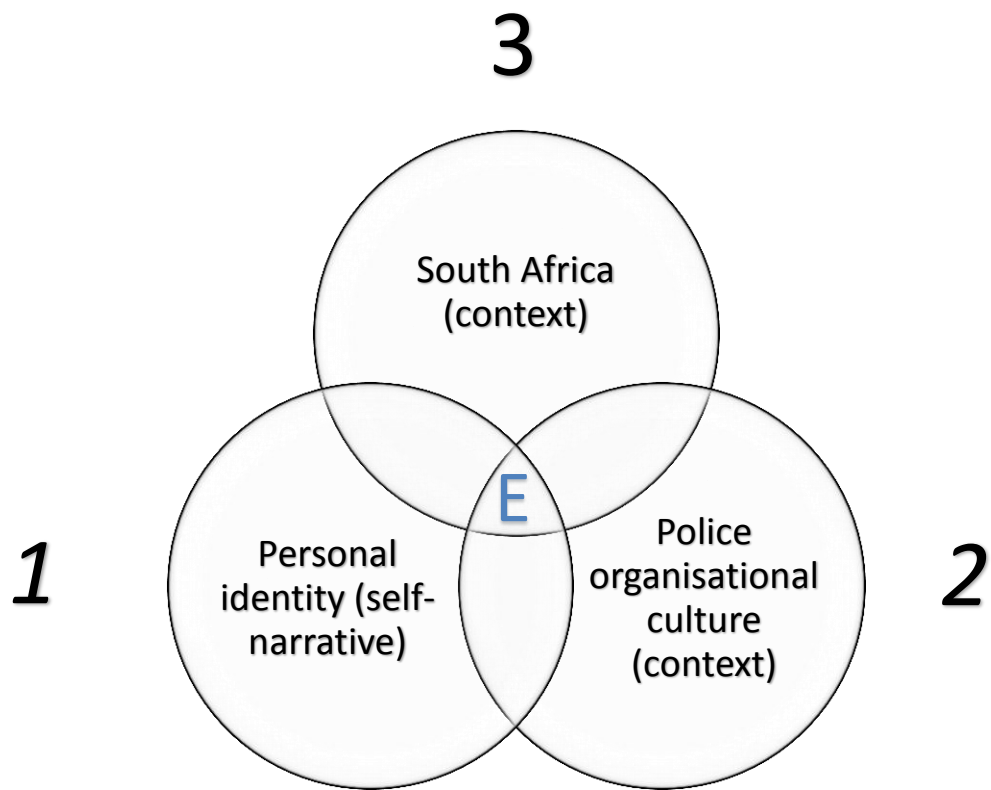


Figure 1: The conceptual framework

So described, the thesis explores the centre point of the figure, ‘E’, where the three spheres overlap: how personal identity intersects with, shapes, and is shaped by, the context in which SAPS officers live and work, and how these *entanglements* shape the work they do.

Space, place and race

Blue Downs, where Skrikker lived, is not a wealthy part of Cape Town, but nor is it poor.

Located at the city’s outer edge, we passed neighbourhoods of government’s free Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) houses and accompanying shacks before reaching it. The RDP houses were some of almost 24 000 built by the city since 2003 (City of Cape Town, 2014), while the shacks stood as reminders that these were not enough. But once past this relative poverty, Blue Downs’ tree-lined streets were bordered by sturdy, generously-sized homes.

In 2011, when the last national census was conducted, 77 per cent of Blue Downs’ population self-identified as ‘coloured’ and 21 per cent ‘Black African’. The remainder

identified as ‘Asian’, ‘white’ and ‘other’ (City of Cape Town, 2013:3). Skrikker was proud of his racial identity and of Afrikaans, his mother tongue. When I asked him what he knew of his ancestry he responded, ‘I think there is a white woman on my great grandmother’s side, and a Khoi person on my father’s side.’ The Khoi Khoen are Southern Africa’s oldest inhabitants, displaced through centuries of Bantu and European settlement. Coloured South Africans trace their identities to contacts between these migrant groups, and with the slaves brought to the region from Indonesia and Madagascar in the eighteenth century.

Previously defined under the Population Registration Act of 1950, the apartheid state used the four race categories to engineer a society where residence, migration, employment, education, health care and marriage were delineated according to race labels ascribed at birth. Resources and rights were distributed unevenly with the African majority most deprived, whites provided the most, and coloureds and Indians filling the space between. Colonial and apartheid governments barred most Africans from living in cities, relegating them to largely rural reserves and homelands from which most could leave only to provide cheap labour to white South Africa. Mthonjeni, the area in which Skrikker was employed, was first established as a dormitory town for such migrants in the middle of the last century. By 2012, twenty-six years after apartheid’s influx control apparatus was dismantled, Mthonjeni’s population was still almost entirely African. Apartheid’s spatial legacy is that South Africa’s cities remain broadly race and/or class-segregated.

That 21 per cent of Blue Downs’ population identifies as African hints at an emerging trend in upward mobility in South African society. Where Africans live or school in areas or institutions previously reserved for coloureds, Indians or whites, it is usually a sign of wealth accumulation and class migration. Because such areas and institutions previously received disproportionate state investment, they often remain well-located, maintained, sought after

and relatively expensive. The same is true of coloureds or Indians moving into areas or schools previously reserved for whites (Soudien, 2004). So, for example, when Skrikker's African partner, Sergeant Tambo, told me he lived in a 'coloured neighbourhood', I had thought he was signalling to me that he had been able to move out of the generally poorer and less developed 'black' neighbourhoods. But when I probed further the opposite was true: he told me he lived in a 'coloured' area because it was where the state had provided him a free home. In his case then, the neighbourhood and RDP house were markers of the precarity of his past.

Like many Africans living in Cape Town, Sergeant Tambo saw the Eastern Cape Province as home. Born in the former Transkei – a mostly total apartheid homeland reserved for Xhosa Africans – he felt attached to a part of the country almost a thousand kilometres from Cape Town. One of his two young children lived there with his parents to allow for him and his wife to work. But he also thought of Cape Town as home. He told me the Eastern Cape was where his father was the 'man of the house' while Cape Town was where he could claim that title.

Like Skrikker, and many other South Africans, Tambo is part of a generation and country in transition. The fieldwork on which this thesis is based allowed me insight into the lives of SAPS employees, and the transformation the work has brought them. I was given the privilege to reflect on how democracy has shaped their lives, and how they in turn shape South Africa through their work.

•

At one point in those first weeks of fieldwork Skrikker and I had a passionate debate about the death penalty. He believed in an 'eye for an eye. If you rape an old woman, if you rape a child, you should die.' He liked to watch the Crime Scene Investigation channel and

relished the way Texan detectives commanded respect by threatening their suspects with death. It seemed he wished the same power and respect could be conjured in his own work. When I pointed out that there was little evidence to suggest the death penalty reduced crime he retorted:

Andrew, you don't know anything because you grew up in the nice areas with the white people. You had role models all around you, Springboks walking past you in the street, Raymond Ackerman as your neighbour.⁸

In South Africa, Skrikker didn't need to know the details of my upbringing to make such a statement. My whiteness meant a more privileged life than his. As for his upbringing he continued:

We growing up on the Cape Flats, Gugulethu, Mitchel's Plain, we only had the gangsters. Our role models were the gangsters. You're never going to change it. It will be the same a hundred years from now, it will always be the same for blacks and colourds. It's a thug's life.

It was a rare instance of Skrikker expressing pessimism. The stories he usually told were of escaping the 'thug's life', getting out, getting into the police and building something better for himself and his family. His house in Blue Downs was a central symbol of that better life. But even Skrikker's optimism was rattled at times.

Methodology, description and reflection

This thesis is based on data gathered through eight months of ethnographic fieldwork. From August 2012 to April 2013, I spent over eight hundred hours shadowing and talking to police officers based at four SAPS stations, as they went about their work. The stations were chosen for reasons of practicality and diversity. Practically, they were located in areas which I could access within the constraints of my research funding. I had no funding for travel or

⁸ The 'Springboks' are South Africa's national rugby team. Raymond Ackerman is one of the wealthiest businessmen in the country.

fieldwork, so needed to choose stations that were accessible via moped from my home in Woodstock, Cape Town. Having worked as a police reservist⁹, and having conducted research in a number of suburban stations in Cape Town, Paarl, Pretoria and Johannesburg over the previous decade, I wanted this research to expose me to policing areas and work with which I was unfamiliar, while also representing a breadth of South African life. As such, I began by identifying two stations in Cape Town (Mthonjeni and Yorkton). Described in more detail in Chapter Three, Mthonjeni, where Skrikker worked, was chosen because it reported some of the highest rates of violent crime in the country. As such, I believed, it was the kind of station that fed South Africa's obsession with crime, an obsession which the SAPS places at the centre of its mandate. Yorkton on the other hand, is near the inner city and offered a diversity of space in one area, including offices, retail, residential spaces (predominantly rich but some poor), and a thriving nighttime and tourist economy. It is dominated by property crime, fraud and drug-related offences.

In addition to these two stations, which I felt offered a diversity of South African urban experience, I wanted some exposure to rural police work. The Western Cape province, in which Cape Town is located, is the only province in South Africa where Africans are a minority. Instead, people identifying as coloured make up almost half of the population, particularly the rural population, while just over a third identify as African. While I had a preference for conducting research in one of the former homelands reserved for Xhosa South Africans under apartheid, and from which the majority of Africans living in

⁹ Between 2004 and 2011 I conducted duties as a reservist with the SAPS on and off. SAPS reservists are technically required to volunteer a minimum of 16 hours a month. To the public they are indistinguishable from other SAPS officers. As a researcher working on policing in South Africa, my experience as a reservist has been invaluable in granting me insight into police practice in the country, the daily rituals of the SAPS, and the ways in which police and the public engage with one another (without a plain-clothes researcher hanging around). It has provided me with my own anecdotes about police work, which in sharing with officers in this study, helped build relationships in ways that might not otherwise have been possible.

Cape Town trace their heritage, I did not think, due to the practical limitations of funding, transport and accommodation, that it was possible for me to do so. However, three months into my Cape Town fieldwork I was invited to piggy back along with another research project being established in the Eastern Cape. Through that project I was able to access a rural village station (Gompo) and a rural town station (Patterson), so giving me exposure to the four most common forms of South African police space: urban township, urban city (including business and suburb), rural town and rural village.

To be clear, my intention was never for this to be a project of comparison, nor one of representivity. While I consciously sought to expose myself to as much diversity of type and place as possible, the work remained urban-focused, and focused on only four stations.

The Western Cape and former Xhosa homelands are connected through history, migration, identity, money and death. While I did not plan to write about these connections specifically, they emerged as central to the identities of the African officers I shadowed, and so have become core to this thesis. In this way, this thesis is far more about SAPS officers working across these two provinces, than it is a representation of the national organization. That said, comparable urban-rural links exist throughout South Africa, binding specific urban centres to specific countrysides.

My approach at each station was to accompany officers as they went about their daily routines. These included participating in morning parades, floating between offices, cells and community service centres (CSC) at stations, spending days and nights on the road with patrol officers and detectives, and talking to and observing officers as they went about their work. At each station I sought to split my time between the detective and patrol officers, ending a stint with one group before moving to the next. This was to give me a greater breadth of exposure across the SAPS. My access to officers was usually negotiated

first with their superiors, who would assign them to work with me for a number of days, or a week at a time. In this way I was somewhat limited in my selection of who I could shadow. However, where I felt my assigned subject population was unrepresentative of the demographics, functions or work of the station population, I would request a move to other shifts or individuals. In most instances these requests were granted. However, at Mthonjeni, I was unable to negotiate access to work in a patrol car with shift officers (described in Chapter Three) but did spend a considerable amount of time on patrol with Crime Prevention officers. Similarly, in Gompo, because very little patrol work took place, my exposure to patrol there was limited. For the most part, however, officers were very accommodating of me.

As I shadowed officers, I asked questions about the policing area, the work, the causes of crime, and of home, how the officers had ended up in the SAPS and what their plans were for the future. In short, I tried to access the story they told themselves about themselves, their personal identity, and then considered this in relation to how they went about their work. I had key themes in mind when I started, but allowed my questioning and focus to shift as the fieldwork unfolded, following the data rather than forcing it to fit a predefined tool.

My general routine was to merge into the flow of a shift or squad, beginning my days as part of their morning briefings. At times I stayed until their shifts ended, but sometimes I left early. Often, the most fruitful days were those spent with an individual or pair of officers. Whether sitting with them in their offices, attending crime scenes or patrolling the streets, they were often the days on which the most honest conversations took place.

Across the four field sites I engaged with almost three hundred different police employees. I know this because I have 298 distinct ‘individuals’ codes in my field diary,

which I analysed using the software package Nvivo 9.1. Of course the majority of these encounters were brief, even if they were repeated many times. Nevertheless, wherever possible, I made a record of them. While field notes are inevitably selective (they are based on my subjective decision about what was record-worthy), my goal was to record as much detail as possible at all times, fixing moments in time for analysis and interpretation later (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 2001). Aided by a smart phone and tablet, I was able to sketch detailed, time specific notes throughout the day or night, as well as snap photographs and geo-tag locations to record my flow through time and space. Note taking was easiest when at the station, or riding in the back of a detective car. It was more difficult in a patrol van with only one other officer in the car, sitting directly next to me, and very difficult when inside private homes or walking on the street. Where I quote police or myself in this thesis, the quotes represent the words typed into my phone either as we spoke (I could type without looking at my phone) or, usually, within minutes of the conversation. While I have tried to keep these quotes accurate they should not be considered verbatim.

But sketches made on my phone and tablet do not constitute my diary. At the end of each shift I spent two to four hours re-working my notes into a single narrative. I used the sketches as prompts, and dictated the narrative using the software package, Dragon Naturally Speaking. It is this diary, constituting over 700 000 words, which I coded over a five month period on my return to Oxford in May 2013. While this leaves me with a feast of data for future work, it is not an approach I would recommend or repeat. Not only was it exhausting and time consuming, but it took far longer than necessary for me to extract the data most relevant to this thesis.

I spent six months between two stations in Cape Town in the Western Cape Province. The other stations were in a rural region of the Eastern Cape Province, where I

spent just seven weeks. I divided my time between sites in this way because the rural stations were significantly smaller, less populous and less busy than those in the city. This meant it was easier for me to spend long hours with individuals in the rural stations, than in the city stations (except when I was posted on patrol or assignment with city detectives). I describe the field sites in detail in Chapter Three.

Aspiration and acquisition in contemporary South Africa

As he turned off the car outside his house I told Skrikker I would wait for him there. He immediately objected: ‘No, come inside, I want to show you around.’

The first thing I noticed as we entered the house was a 42-inch flat screen television. It was surrounded by a plush leather lounge suite on a polished tiled floor. Everything was impeccably neat.

Two women emerged from the nearby kitchen. Skrikker introduced them as his wife and mother, and me as ‘Andrew from England, but he grew up in Cape Town.’ The reference to a distant country in which I had only lived for ten months seemed to impress the women. I was on display.

Skrikker led me through the house. Each of the three bedrooms had its own television. The TV in Skrikker’s bedroom was even bigger than in the lounge. He pointed to pictures of his children, told me how proud he was of his daughter who had finished high school the year before. He said his youngest was the most intelligent of them all, that she knew everything about computers and cell phones, and that she wanted to visit Spain one day. He took me to the back of the house to show me the swimming pool and *braai* area. There was a glow in his face as he led me through his home, as though it were a monument to his achievements.

After about ten minutes we headed back to the car. Apart from a five rand coin retrieved from a bowl, which he said he would use to buy cigarettes, it wasn't clear that there had been any reason to visit the house. I could only conclude that he had wanted to show me what he had made of his life. It was a gesture I would come to view with increasing significance in the months that followed.

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Despite it being a middle-income suburb, at last count 24 per cent of working-aged residents in Skrikker's neighbourhood were unemployed and 48 per cent of households earned less than R3200 (£175) a month. Only 36 per cent of those older than 20 had completed high school (City of Cape Town, 2013:2). Compared to many of his neighbours, Skrikker was doing well for himself. He was living a life millions of South Africans had hoped would be granted them with the dismantling of apartheid.

The decade following the 1990 release of Nelson Mandela was one of great expectations for South Africans. Against a long history of competing people and powers South Africa at last belonged 'to all who live in it, united in our diversity' (Constitution of South Africa, 1996:2). Compared to the rest of the continent South Africa was wealthy. Its per capita gross domestic product (GDP) in 1994 accounted for half the GDP of sub-Saharan Africa (Nattrass & Seekings, 2011:518) but it was not a wealth equitably spread. In the early nineties, South Africa was one of the most unequal societies in the world. White residents on average earned ten times their African counterparts (Hirsch, 2005:2), 52.7 per cent of whom lived in poverty in 1989 (Fallon & Perreira da Silva 1994:39-42), and the majority of whom resided in the poorly serviced countryside (Simkins, 2011:510).

Two decades after the African National Congress (ANC) won the country's first democratic election in 1994, both the absolute number of those employed and the

percentage of those unemployed, had increased as new jobs were outstripped by population growth. In 2014, 25.5 per cent of South African residents were unemployed. This jumps to 27.5 per cent among women, and 36.1 per cent among men and women aged 15 to 34 (Statistics South Africa, 2014a:vi). If one includes those eligible for work who have stopped looking, unemployment stood at 35.6 per cent in June 2014 (Statistics South Africa, 2014a:xvi). Since 1994 unemployment has consistently been the issue which South Africans think government should most urgently address. Forty-five per cent of South Africans felt this way in 2011 followed by ‘housing’ and ‘crime and security’ at only eight per cent each (Afrobarometer, 2013a:53). The three issues – unemployment, insufficient housing, and crime – are often seen as the trident threatening to skewer the country’s potential. While the market has been unable to absorb the millions of poorly skilled, it has simultaneously struggled to fill thousands of skilled vacancies due to an absence of qualified professionals.

Despite the 1998 introduction of affirmative action legislation intended to provide preferential job access to women, people with disabilities, and anyone previously classified African, coloured or Indian, white South Africans remain disproportionately employed and better remunerated. In 2011 the average national household income was R103 204 (£5636) per annum, less than half of Skrikker’s annual income. But this average is misleading. Female-headed households earned significantly less (R67 330/£3677) than male-headed households (R128 329/£7009). Similarly, white-headed households on average earned six times as much (R365 134/£19 942) as black African-headed households (R60 613/£3 310) (Statistics South Africa, 2012:42). With nearly 80 per cent of the country identifying as ‘Black African’, Skrikker earned nearly four times more than the vast majority of citizens.

In 2014, 45.5 per cent of South Africans were classified ‘poor’, defined as lacking the R620 (£34) a month required for adequate nutrition (Statistics South Africa, 2014b:7). While

severe, this marks an improvement from 57.2 per cent in 2006. With a post-training salary of approximately R10 000 (£562) a month (pre-tax) in 2012, a job in the South African Police Service (SAPS) is very attractive.

Poverty, inequality, protest and crime

Mthonjeni, where Skrikker worked, is home to many of South Africa's challenges, including poverty, pervasive violent crime, and unemployment. When I asked Skrikker what came to mind when he thought of the area he responded:

The first things that come to mind are the high levels of serious crime, and the poverty. There are so many informal settlements, the hardship the people live in. Most people in Mthonjeni are good, god-fearing, hardworking people. I think of the suffering and expectations of the people, what they want from government, to take them out of this poverty. There are thousands of people who don't have houses. There's no service delivery. They stay in horrible circumstances, especially in the informal settlements in winter. The unemployment is a problem, HIV is a problem, and the high levels of crime. Generally it is the circumstances that people live in that is bothering me. I think the government must come to the party and live the lives of the people.

The expectation that Skrikker referred to is key to understanding contemporary South Africa. The hope that characterised the 1990s was expectation-driven. South Africans wanted jobs, houses, basic services and to feel safe and secure, and they looked to their new leaders to provide these. Apartheid had been both racist and anti-poor. It had purposefully limited the potential of the black majority. But many of the policies adopted by the ANC when it came to power were a continuation of apartheid's neo-liberalism (Bond, 2004:46). The result, it has been suggested, has been a continuation of the distributional regime of the apartheid state (Seekings & Nattrass, 2005:376; Nattrass & Seekings, 2011:519). As such, South African society remains divided into two class groups: the wealthy 'middle class' professionals and the working class and unemployed poor. A difference

between contemporary and apartheid South Africa is that class is no longer as starkly correlated with race. The post-1994 government has aspired to establish both an effective bureaucracy and rapidly build a black middle-class that subverts white economic dominance (von Holt, 2010). But the two goals obstruct one another. Rapid class formation requires ambivalence to experience, skill and authority, while the importance of saving face (*appearing* able to manage and govern effectively) promotes bureaucratic rituals linked to administrative target chasing, rather than service delivery (von Holt, 2010).

While a black elite has emerged, it has been accompanied by increased inequality:

[T]he post-apartheid distributional regime failed to provide income security for the overwhelming majority of the unemployed, who continued to fall through a large hole in the social safety net. At the same time, economic policies (including labour-market and industrial policies) did not succeed in creating the jobs to absorb new entrants into the labour market. In failing to address unemployment, the distributional regime was necessarily anti-poor, and it failed to reduce either poverty or inequality (Seekings & Natrass, 2005:378).

By 2008, inequality was higher than during apartheid, and had become particularly pronounced *within* ‘race’ groups (Leibbrandt, Finn & Woolard, 2012:33). As such, post-apartheid South Africa has emerged as a country of two avenues, the public and private. Those who can afford to pay for what should be public goods often turn to private providers of, for example, education, security and health services. The provision of basic services and opportunities to the country’s poor majority has increased substantially since 1990, but remains far below the quality offered by the private sphere. It is in this context that a job in the SAPS has become a rare avenue from relative poverty into the emergent middle-class. But once inside the SAPS, many officers find their salaries don’t stretch far enough to fulfil their needs. As a result, many, including Skrikker and his partner, Tambo, were actively on the alert for opportunities for promotion or better remuneration within the SAPS and elsewhere.

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When Skrikker said the people of Mthonjeni needed ‘service delivery’ he conjured a phrase rich with symbolic meaning in South Africa. Often denied access to piped water, electricity and shelter pre-1994, the notion of ‘freedom’ in South Africa has been underscored with the expectation that access to these and other services will be provided by the state. Despite the poverty in which many South Africans still live, the ANC government has made impressive strides in providing both services and financial welfare since 1994. It has doubled expenditure on health, built 1.5 million free (RDP) houses, and provided free primary and secondary schooling to the poorest 60 per cent of learners. This has been made possible through effective tax collection, so allowing for some wealth distribution. However, the country’s tax base is very small, with 5 per cent of citizens paying more than 50 per cent of all income tax. As importantly, by 2013 45.5 per cent of households received at least one social grant from the state, benefitting 30.2 per cent of the population (Statistics South Africa, 2014c:12). In 2013 grants were the second most common form of household income, with only 64.7 per cent of households relying primarily on salaries (Statistics South Africa, 2014c:14). That same year, 70.7 per cent of grants were for ‘child support’, 17.9 per cent for ‘old age’ and 7.3 per cent for ‘disability’ (Goldman Sachs, 2013:25). Absent from this welfare system is cash support for the unemployed. But while unemployed citizens do not receive grants directly, they often live in households with one or more grant recipient, so still benefit from the welfare net. Although beneficial to the unemployed this can drag households into poverty (Klasen & Woolard, 2009:39). Where unemployed family members move from cities to rural villages to be with a grant recipient, they risk isolating themselves from job markets.

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Skrikker referred to his youngest daughter as ‘the apple of my eye’. He spoke as if he would do anything for her, including whatever he could to ensure she received a university education. Until 1990, schooling in South Africa was race-segregated. School served as a sorting mechanism that delineated life trajectories, in most instances providing limited education and post-school prospects to learners. Schooling in democratic South Africa has yet to recover from the damage wrought by this system. Despite education making up the largest chunk of the post-1994 budget (eg. 19.7 per cent in 2014), half of those who start school fail to finish. Of the 50 per cent who reach grade 12, 40 per cent pass and 12 per cent qualify for university (Spaull, 2013:3). Those who manage to finish often find themselves with few opportunities for further education or employment, exacerbating the country’s inequality (Simkins, 2011:515). Nevertheless, significant gains have been achieved. In 1996 7.1 per cent of South Africans had a tertiary diploma compared to 11.8 per cent in 2011. More impressive is the increase in school leavers. In 1996, 16.3 per cent of South Africans had a matric certificate compared to 28.9 per cent in 2011 (Statistics SA, 2012c:1).¹⁰ A matric certificate, together with a driver’s license, qualifies one for a job in the SAPS.

In 2013, 92.9 per cent of South Africans could read and write, while 73.5 per cent of those aged 5 to 24 were enrolled at an educational institution. Ninety-four per cent of school learners were attending public schools, 74.5 per cent of whom accessed a feeding scheme at school. Of those who left school early, 25.3 per cent said that it was due to ‘a lack of money’ (Statistics South Africa, 2014c:11), despite 62.4 per cent of learners being exempt from paying school fees by 2013. Of those attending tertiary institutions, 66.4 per cent were African, but represented only 3.2 per cent of Africans aged 18 to 29 in the country. This

¹⁰ ‘Matric’ is the final year of high school. A ‘matric certificate’ indicates that one has finished high school.

contrasts with white enrolment, which represents 18.7 per cent of the white population in this age group (Statistics South Africa, 2014b:11).

With education failing them and few jobs available, the poor majority in South Africa are starved of opportunities through which to improve their standing. It is in this context that government jobs, including those in the often derided police service, have become highly sought after.

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Despite impressive welfare interventions, a great many South Africans continue to live in poverty. Migrants moving from the rural countryside to cities in search of work often settle in un-serviced informal settlements or backyard shacks. Relatedly, what are called ‘service delivery protests’, as well as wage-related and other protest action has become a daily feature of South African life. But public protest is not new, indeed it was central to ending apartheid. In 1976 Soweto children revolted against the introduction of Afrikaans as the language of instruction at school, resulting in police killing an estimated 176. This marked a turning point, after which international and domestic pressure against apartheid rapidly gained momentum. In response, government suppression of anti-apartheid activities became increasingly violent and its police militarised.

Building on this momentum, the United Democratic Front (UDF) and ANC called on South Africans in the 1980s to make the country’s townships ungovernable through civil disobedience (of race-specific laws). Some have suggested it is this ‘disobedience’ which, combined with unemployment, has fuelled post-1994 criminality and the country’s ‘protest culture’ (eg. Super, 2013).

The very first day of my fieldwork involved protest. Riding to the Mthonjeni police station on my moped, I was stopped at a police roadblock one kilometre out. Behind the

police, residents sang in the street, partially obscured by the black smoke of tyres they had set alight. Re-directed via an alternate route I arrived at the police station to find it surrounded by armour-clad officers loading rubber bullets into shotguns, poised to protect it. Protest, anger and expectation continue to animate public life in South Africa.

In the two auditing years across which my fieldwork spanned, 2011/12 and 2012/13, the SAPS reported attending 11 938 and 12 399 ‘crowd-related incidents’ respectively, an average of 33 a day. Of these, 1194 and 1882 were classified ‘unrest-related’ (SAPS, 2014:101). But while the Mthonjeni station was not damaged in the protest action of my first day, WO Skrikker didn’t escape unharmed. When I first met him a few days after the protest one of his fingers was bandaged. Driving into the station with Tambo, he told me, protestors had thrown a brick through their car window, hitting his hand. When he recounted the event to me during those first days, his empathy for the protestors was absent. He said he had had his firearm between his legs and wanted to shoot at the brick throwers but knew the media would have made a ‘big thing’ about it. He said he wouldn’t drive into Mthonjeni at night until the protests had ended, that his life was worth more than the job. To this Tambo had joked, ‘They should call the police from the mines to get those people who throw bricks.’ Skrikker had chuckled and responded, ‘What can you expect, if you shoot at the police from behind a crowd of people then you must expect the police will shoot back.’

The detectives were referring to an event that took place in my first week in the field. On 16 August 2012 police shot and killed 34 striking mine workers, and injured 78 others, at Marikana, 140km outside Johannesburg. It was the worst such incident since the 1976 shooting of school children, prompting many to compare the SAPS with the SAP of old. In addition to the Marikana tragedy, 43 people were killed by police during protests from

2004 and 2014 (Grant, 2013). So despite the majority of public protest being peaceful, too many still end in death. South Africa is a country where people continue to die while expressing their longing for a better life. The irony is that the police who kill them do so in part to retain their jobs and secure their own light-filled futures.

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Skrikker and Tambo didn't seriously condone the use of live ammunition against brick-throwing protestors.¹¹ Rather, their comments are a sign of the cynicism and dark humour that are common to police organisational environments where officers feel isolated from broader society (Reiner, 2010). That said, violence is endemic in South Africa. It is often used to solve disputes and teach lessons, both by police and civilians in daily life (CSVR, 2010; Collins, 2013). I have already mentioned Skrikker's support of beatings as a form of disciplining children. On another occasion he told me about when his daughter had been robbed of her cell phone. In response he had driven around for an hour in search of the attacker. He told me he 'really would have hurt him' if he had found him. He thought retributive violence natural and fair.

Despite its reputation as crime-ridden, South Africa's overall victimisation rate is comparable with those of the developed world (Stone, 2005:4). But the violent nature of South Africa's crime sets it apart. In 2013/14 the country's murder rate was 32.2 per 100,000, four and a half times the global average. Other disproportionately frequent violent crime in 2013/14 included assault with intent to do gross bodily harm (GBH) (345.7 per 100 000); common assault (330.8 per 100 000); common robbery (101.7 per 100 000); robbery with aggravating circumstances (225.3 per 100 000); and sexual offences (118.2 per 100

¹¹ During a later discussion with Skrikker I would tell him of evidence which suggested some miners were executed by police. In response he had said, 'That's bad, that's murder,' lit a cigarette and left the room as if ashamed.

000) (ISS, 2014). While middle class citizens complain of hijackings and house robberies, it is the poor majority who are robbed, attacked, raped or killed most frequently.

Between events like Marikana, and the average of 47 murders a day in 2013/14, South Africa is a land of people who regularly turn to violence to shape their lives, while desperately avoiding victimisation at the hands of others. It is in this context that citizens look to the SAPS for protection from the violence of others, but also - as one of the country's biggest employers – for protection from the poverty and the precarity of life.

Police practice informed by life

While driving back down the N2 from Skrikker's house towards Mthonjeni, he shared another story:

Some years back I had a case where a father and son had returned from work to find a man breaking into their house. A scuffle had ensued and they beat him to death. They were also injured by him. That man and his wife worked hard for that house and the things in it. They worked hard to send their children to school. The wife was a domestic worker.¹² She told me she would attack me if I arrested her husband and son. Those people made sacrifices to give their children things, and then these guys who sit in the sun all day in the shacks across the road come and take them. So we didn't charge the men with murder, we made it an inquest.

It was a story about other people, but it was also a story about himself. It was a story in which the subtext was barely hidden. It said: *'This is how I see the world, and this is how it shapes my work.'* It was moments like this that most informed my research. I was there to explore who South African police officers thought they were and how it shaped their practice.

¹² Domestic work is common in South Africa. Law requires that a domestic worker employed 45 hours a week should be paid a minimum of R1 877.70 (GBP103) per month. Many, however, are employed part-time and/or are paid significantly less than this amount (Ally, 2009).

A few weeks later I had an opportunity to witness Skrikker's efforts to shape the world through his work. Though I was no longer shadowing him, he asked me to accompany him to the station's cells where he would charge a young man on behalf of a colleague. The man had been arrested for intimidation.

The young suspect was a coloured man in his early twenties. With a friendly smile on his face Skrikker led him from the holding cell to a table where his fingerprints would be taken. He spoke to the man in English, even though both spoke Afrikaans as a mother tongue. It soon became apparent why Skrikker had invited me along, and why he continued to speak English: he was putting on a performance to show me the good he believed he did through his work. All that Skrikker had been asked to do was take the man's fingerprints, inform him of his rights, and complete some paperwork. But for Skrikker that was secondary. It was the opportunity to engage the young man (in front of me) that was most important for him.

He began with, 'Andrew, I like to motivate people,' then turned to the young man. In gentle tones he shared his unsolicited advice with him, 'Why are you throwing your life away with this stuff?' he asked:

You don't want to go to prison. Prison is full of gangsters. Men are raped in prison. I had a relative who went to prison, he told me that even big men cry there. Life is not about tattoos and high living. I can see you are young, that this is your first time in jail. This place is like a magnet, it keeps bringing people back. That holding cell you were in is nothing. You don't want to know what prison is like. I can speak Afrikaans better than you, I can speak that gang language better than you, but that guy in prison is not your brother, you don't share a mother.

I also grew up on the Cape Flats, I know what it's like for coloured and African people in this country. It's hard. I was born into that. But one thing I always knew was that it was not going to be like that for the rest of my life. In my family I support my children. My stepson has never been in trouble. He has just started his own business. We support each other. Maybe you don't have that support but God gave you that voice in your head that says when something is good or bad. You must go to

church, you must find God, you must not drink excessively, you must stay away from drugs.

The young man stared at the ground, sniffing and shivering, occasionally nodding, while Skrikker talked and took his fingerprints. Skrikker didn't give him a chance to say much, though he did tell us he earned R500 (£27) a week and had a child. 'One day you will thank me for what I have told you today,' said Skrikker, handing him forms to sign. Skrikker didn't tell him what he was signing but then SAPS officers seldom do. As the man washed the ink from his hands Skrikker turned to me: 'Andrew, they should make a television programme where they show the reality of life in prison. They must scare the youngsters out of crime.' It was a thought he had shared with me before, based on a view shared by many South Africans: that coercion brings change; that threats, force and punishment prevent crime.

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The weight of Skrikker's contribution lies in this chapter. Not only did he and Sergeant Tambo warmly welcome me into the SAPS in the first weeks of my research, but they offered me a new lens through which to understand the lives of police officers in South Africa. Joining the SAPS, they showed me, meant a chance to change one's prospects in ways seldom allowed one's forebears. It allowed a parent to deliver a future of comfort and hope to their children in ways not possible in their own youth. Skrikker showed me that the SAPS is an organisation bursting with purpose and possibility. It is a vehicle through which employees can aspire to reach heights of material comfort and professional status denied those who came before them. At the same time it is an organisation to which millions look, including those who are part of it, to ease the violent crime that saturates their lives. Skrikker hoped to climb a little higher in the SAPS before retirement, but was at peace with the idea that this might not occur. He was glad of what he had achieved.

The value of ethnography

Most simply, ethnography involves participating in people's lives for an extended period of time to inform a research question (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995). In 2011 Shearing and Marks called on criminologists to re-embrace ethnography as a means to understand the social world (Shearing & Marks, 2011). They suggested that knowing how police understand their working reality is particularly crucial in transitioning states like South Africa. In such jurisdictions, they note, police are expected to alter their behavior and thinking based on changes in law and policy that they have little hand in creating. It has been convincingly argued that it is in the interpretation of policy by front-line government workers like police officers, that policy takes real-world shape (Lipsky, 2010; Maynard-Moody & Musheno, 2003). The idea that 'South Africa has the most progressive constitution in the world' has been key to the post-1994 nation building project. But while many have embraced this notion, social attitude surveys and popular discourse routinely expose the incongruity between the constitution's progressiveness and the views held by South Africans. SAPS officers are South Africans. The lenses through which they as individuals and as a group see the country and their job, shift the way the ideals of the constitution shape the lives of citizens. The example of the murder shared by Skrikker, illustrates this. He empathized with a family and possibly spared its men a life in prison. Ethnography allowed me the privilege to glimpse such events in practice and to explore them in conversation with officers.

The SAPS is a national police service. Initial permission to conduct this work took over a year to negotiate with its Head Office, and required re-negotiation at each station and with each unit. It is not easy to insert oneself unobtrusively into the working lives of

busy public officials. Having conducted comparable research in the SAPS in the past, I knew that I should budget a generous amount of time for ‘hanging out’, waiting for opportunities to engage (Marks, 2004). Although I posted one page summaries of the project objective and method on bulletin boards and distributed them to management and staff throughout the stations, or introduced myself and my work at briefings, most waited until they could engage me alone to explore my intent. Understandably, some were suspicious of my presence, but there were just as many who welcomed me into their routines.

Shearing and Marks emphasize that criminological ethnography should result in suggestions for actionable change. Their perspective echoes Smith’s (2005), that ethnography in institutions should bring understanding to, and make visible the way knowledge is produced and lives are organized by institutions. By illuminating such processes, research provides a basis from which institutional actors can challenge institutional power. While my research did not specifically aim to empower the lower strata of the SAPS, it has sought to understand how officers’ life histories, trajectories and worldviews feed into and off of organisational discourse and practice. As such, I hope that it will add to the space opened by Steinberg (2008) and built on by Hornberger (2011) in which the intersection between the personal and professional worlds of SAPS officers is explored. This is particularly important as criminology and police studies become preoccupied with ‘what works in policing’ (eg. Bayley, 1998; Sherman, 2013). While this is a very important and necessary line of inquiry, it threatens to reduce policing to a hard science, rather than one with an infinite gradient of contextual and human variables. These variables include the police officers themselves, shaped by the worlds from which they have been drawn, and asked to shape that to which they are assigned through work. It moves the conversation away from ‘the evidence’, back to the fundamental experience of *being* in the

world, particularly when the *being* is intimately tied to the shaping (Loader, 1997). Such inquiry is particularly relevant in the context of transitional societies, like South Africa.

Another advantage of ethnography was that it allowed me to explore the manner in which particular conceptions of South Africa's social and criminal justice worlds are constructed and given legitimacy in police discourse (Fairclough, Mulderrig and Wodak, 2011). As such I treated the state and SAPS as category makers with the power to classify and stratify, to separate the dirty from the clean, to shape the nation. They did this in South Africa's past and they do so now, but in different ways. I paid attention to police discourse and accompanying performances (Goffman, 1959) to probe the ways they shape the South African brand and community (Loader, 2006; Steinberg, 2011a) through occupational classification (van Maanen, 2005). I considered this in relation to officers' understandings of themselves as people and as police officers. By being exposed to the stories police told about themselves and the world, by observing them doing police work, and by asking them about how their stories [personal identity] related to their decisions on the job, I was able to use ethnography to answer my research question.

As I have noted in earlier work (Faull, 2008), the accuracy of ethnographic research is easily questioned. Subjects might intentionally mislead researchers (van Maanen, 1979:6). But as Goffman (1959) suggests, all interactions are selective and so misleading. Indeed, where the ethnographer detects their subjects' attempts to deceive him or her, they find important data. There were many occasions where I challenged those I shadowed regarding their claims about their work and world. I didn't believe everything they told me, nor interpreted their actions the ways they might have hoped. Indeed, it is important for me to foreground in this thesis that its findings are *my* interpretation of the individuals I shadowed, of the stories they told, and of the work they performed in my presence. As police ethnographer, van Maanen, notes of the method's challenges, '[f]aced with routine uncertainty and doubt [as ethnographers], the most we can do with or without

the scientific method is to wait for time and fuller knowledge to explode whatever theoretical constructions we have built.’ (van Maanen, 1979:1). Ethnography is interpretive work. I have chosen what constitutes representation, and so it is *my* message, *my* view of who police officers think they are, which is given life in these pages. While I have tried to treat my subjects with honesty and compassion, I would never claim the work to be anything more than my take on eight hundred hours of police work involving three hundred SAPS employees – a small fraction of the SAPS’ world. In these pages I offer this view to a broader readership, and hope that time and critical thought will be the arbiter of its value. My subjectivity particularly important when one reflects on my position as a researcher in the broader South African context. On the one hand I shared a national and organisational identity with those I shadowed – I was a native of their group (a South African and SAPS reservist), with some shared knowledge of history and social ordering in the country. But in almost every other way I was a stranger, belonging to an elite whose experience of the country and world was far removed from that of most police officers. I spoke a different home language (English) to most officers, had grown up in different parts of the city or country to most, and had lived a very different life to most. Unlike most officers I was not married, had no children, and was part of the minority middle-class elite rather than the majority poor and vulnerable. As a white Afrikaans woman once referred to me at a SAPS diversity training workshop, I was ‘high English’, I stood out (Faull, 2008:23).

The fact that I was English-speaking, with limited proficiency in Afrikaans, and even less in isiXhosa¹³, not only marked me as different from most officers, but was also my greatest limit. While SAPS officers are required to be proficient in English, and while English is the official language of communication in the organisation, officers often communicate with each other, and with members of the public, in one of the country’s other ten official languages. Fortunately, I was generally able to follow interactions in Afrikaans, and to note

¹³ I have twelve years of schooling in Afrikaans as a second language, and two years of school, and six months of university instruction in isiXhosa as a second language.

key words that helped me infer meaning where communication was in Xhosa. Where I did not understand a conversation I would often ask officers to summarise it for me afterwards. This was helpful, both in understanding what would otherwise have been difficult, and in gleaning added insight into the stories officers told themselves (and me) about their work. Importantly, this benefit did not apply with the public. I had few opportunities to speak to members of the public following their interactions with police.¹⁴ As such, it is important to note that all my subjects were police officers or civilian employees of the SAPS. This limits the empirical claims the thesis can make. Indeed, as I have suggested, this thesis is really about eight hundred hours divided between three hundred individuals, the majority in the Western Cape, a province quite different from much of the country. More so, it is about my interpretation of their words and actions. At points in the thesis I use italicised text to summarise my interpretation of particular moments, or collections of events. To be clear, these are *my words*, not those of the officers I shadowed. They are my attempts to condense into a couple of sentences, key interpretations about officers' identities and how they shape their work.

Chapter overview

In this final section I provide a summary of each chapter, and give an overview of how the thesis proceeds. It is important to note that while there is some hierarchy in its form, my goal in this thesis has been to produce a circular narrative. By this I mean that key themes are repeated in most chapters, but considered in each from a different viewpoint and with

¹⁴ Where I was able to speak in private with members of the public, for instance when left alone with a complainant or arrestee, I often felt a need to emphasise that I was not a police officer, and so had limited impact over whatever it was that had brought them into contact with police.

different emphasis. In this way each chapter highlights different aspects of the central thesis. I have chosen this approach in order consider personal identity and police work in the SAPS, from a number of different vantage points. Through this approach I hope to offer readers the means to better understand the central point in Figure 1 above, that officers' lives are entangled in history, context and organisational culture, and that it is through this confluence that the research question is answered.

In Chapter One I have used Skrikker's narrative to introduce the context in which the thesis is located, its central question, and to describe the methodology used, including its limitations. The described context is of South Africa as a young, high-crime, post-apartheid democracy employing neo-liberal policies that promote inequality and the growth of a 'black middle class'. It is a country of great expectations where life is precarious for most. In this context the SAPS as an organisation bloated with meaning; it is an employer and protector, a container filled with hope for a better future.

Chapter Two reviews the literature on policing in South Africa, on police organisational culture, on police as shapers of communities, and on social performance and ontological security. It is here that the thesis question outlined in Chapter One is more fully developed.

Chapter Three uses thick description to introduce readers to the four policing areas in which the research was conducted. It describes the types of order police at the four stations hoped to bring about through their work, or what constituted a good shift for them. This focuses on the desire to empty township streets of people, while observing or engaging more respectfully with the middle-class on busy downtown streets. The chapter's focus is an exploration of coercion and the control of (poor and black) bodies in public space. It locates

these practices in historical and contemporary discourse on rural-urban migration and its relationship with personal values and crime. In so doing, it illustrates the visions of order which officers in the four areas bring to their work, contributing to the second part of the research question, 'and how does it shape their work'.

Chapter Four illustrates the manner in which police officers seek to maintain strategic symbolic fronts to ease organisational performance pressure and satiate public scrutiny. Because 'the perfect shift', explored in Chapter Three, seldom manifests, officers present façades of accomplishment to ward off organisational and public scrutiny. Because officers constantly deceive, I suggest that their performances contribute to their own suspicion and mistrust of the public and of each other, so shaping both their *personal identity* (the story they tell themselves about themselves) and the way they do their work. Four trends in organisational deception are discussed. I suggest that deceptive performances spill over into private lives as officers buy cars and houses, producing images of themselves as members of an emerging middle class, while often struggling financially, once again bringing in the theme of *precarity*.

Chapter Five locates the police occupation within broader life trajectories and narratives. It describes the SAPS as a vehicle through which poor South Africans are able to transform their personal trajectories and those of their families. It explores the instrumentality of a job in the SAPS for those in its employ, and touches on the conflict of personal aspiration in a public service. It links visions of upward mobility to the themes of violence, shame and respect that are introduced more subtly in earlier chapters. Important to this chapter is the manner in which officers conceptually order the world. Within this I elaborate on the themes of rural-urban migration, the view of the rural/urban 'other',

notions of 'home', personal identity in relation to space, place, and family, which are all introduced in earlier chapters. Through this discussion I foreground the precarious histories many officers bring with them to the SAPS, and how those self-narratives are rewritten to fit their new sense of self.

In Chapter Six I focus on the theme of police work and societal violence introduced in earlier chapters. I propose that feelings of inadequacy and shame are experienced by many officers as they struggle to build their lives on the precarious terrain of an unequal society in transition, where police are forced to do unpleasant enforcement work, often against the communities from which they are drawn, and often at their behest. Here I propose that this directly relates to South African masculinities, a public thirst for coercive policing, and police abuse of force. In so doing I draw a link to self-image and police work, how officers' inadequacies in themselves may inform their violence.

Chapter Seven focuses on coercion in South African society. By this point in the thesis I have described police as upwardly mobile citizens drawn from poor, violent and precarious communities, often committing minor infractions (littering, drunk driving, smoking indoors) at work. I now suggest they take the liberties they do because there is little to coerce them not to; and because lack of organisational accountability means the SAPS provides an environment in which minor transgressions can be enacted in a safe space. These are based on the premise that police officers feel that if there is no penalty for an action they should be allowed to carry it out, which in turn feeds the ways in which they approach their work. In describing these practices I suggest that in many ways the stories police tell themselves about themselves (their *personal identity*) include their being aspirant, deserving South Africans who should have the same privileges as others (including

those illegal). In this way I show how personal identity shapes behaviour while on duty, but often unrelated to police work. While the infringements described are minor, they shape the spaces and communities in which police work, both symbolically and literally. As the most visible representatives of the state on the streets, SAPS officials' actions shape the nation.

But 'carrots' as well as 'sticks' can be used to coerce change. As such I touch on the positive incentives some police introduce into their personal lives to shape the lives of their children and communities.

In Chapter Eight, I use a narrative foundation to review and summarise the argument presented in the thesis. I show that I have answered the question, '*Who do South African police officials think they are and how does this shape police practice?*' by presenting an exploration of the lives of individuals, primarily men, lifted from precarious life trajectories and placed in the relatively secure occupational world of the South African Police Service. I show that I have approached the question by framing officers' lives in terms of sense of self, self-worth and the search for ontological security in a risk-saturated environment, two decades after South Africa's first 'multi-racial' democratic election. I reiterate that it has explored the deep-seated perceptions, stories and imaginings that officers have of themselves, their occupation and the people who make up their occupational worlds, describing officers' conceptions of their professional identities and duties – often as forceful coercers of the poor and followers of the better off - located within individual life trajectories entangled in police organisational culture and the South African context. These trajectories, which become entangled in the messiness of policing contemporary South Africa, often include emerging from hardship in poor rural villages or urban townships, and aspiring to shape a more secure country for themselves and their children.

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Skrikker believed he had succeeded in shaping a more hopeful future for his family but many of his colleagues continued to struggle financially. Regardless of how much they had show that I have approached the question by frarikker is just one of the almost two hundred thousand who make up the ranks of the SA. Through this thesis, I offer a piece of their story, and my understanding of how it shapes their work.

Chapter Two: Identity and Police work - unpacking the conceptual framework

In this chapter I introduce the literature in and against which the conceptual framework outlined in Chapter One is set, and so present the framework in more detail. I begin by using vignettes from my fieldwork to illustrate the concepts of ontological security, precarity, social performances and entanglement. I link these with basic concepts of personal identity, occupational culture and workplace socialisation, to show how individual trajectories become entangled in occupational culture and broader contextual social forces, and so impact police practice. I then sketch the history and mandate of South Africa's police, contrasted with what is known about police practice in the country and elsewhere, to flesh out the context in which officers work. In this way I unpack the Venn diagram introduced in Chapter One, beginning with the 'Personal Identity' sphere, then moving on to the 'Police Organisational Culture' sphere, and then adding to the 'South Africa' sphere introduced in Chapter One. With this literature so described, I suggest that all the common traits of police organisational culture identified in the policing literature can be identified in the SAPS. I suggest that the SAPS is a crime-focused, target chasing organisation invested in strategic performances that propagate select ideas about police officers and police work, and that by exploring personal narratives within this context, we can glean how personal identity shapes the work SAPS officers do, as explored in the remainder of the thesis. In so doing, this chapter shows that my conceptual framework is a valid tool for answering the research question.

Overarching concepts of the conceptual framework - 1: ontological security, precarity, social performance and entanglement

A job in the South African Police Service (SAPS) shapes the lives and personal identities of its officers and detectives. It provides routine, income, status and mobility wrapped up in a very public, archetypal occupational identity. Similarly, the work officers do in the name and iconography of the SAPS shapes the contours of South African society. Police represent the state ‘made flesh’ on the street and in private homes (Loader & Mulcahy, 2003:58). At first glance their work appears only practical, but it is also deeply symbolic. It is central to state projects of naming, sorting, ordering and shaping communities and nation. Every encounter between a police officer and civilian is one in which the state communicates with citizens (Tyler, 2011). So when one asks ‘Who do South African police officers think they are and how does this shape police practice?’, one is asking how the stories officers tell themselves about themselves, their job and their country, impacts the order they aim to shape through their work. Key to the manner in which I interpret and answer this question, are the concepts of ontological security, precarity, social performance and entanglement, which I describe through the following vignettes:

Consider once more Warrant Officer Skrikker. Central to his personal identity (the story he told himself about himself) was the idea that he had been raised in an environment of relative hardship in which many young men were drawn to crime. It was through good parenting and personal decisions, he believed, that he had evaded a life of crime and made a success of himself. When he took me to his home, Skrikker wanted me to witness what Giddens calls the material manifestation of self-narrative (Giddens, 1991:80), to see how his decisions and hard work had shaped his material life. Through them he was able to provide

for himself and his family, an idea central to popular notions of masculine success in South Africa (Richter & Morrell, 2006).

Similarly, when Skrikker called me to the holding cells to watch him process the young man charged with intimidation, he wanted me to witness his compassion. He wanted me to acknowledge his effort to identify with the arrestee as a coloured man living with precarity.

Goffman's (1959) work on the presentation of self in everyday life is valuable here. It is his work, together with Manning's (1997) that I draw on to understand identity as social performance, introduced in Chapter One. Goffman tells us that people manage the appearance they present to others in order to achieve strategic goals. They seek to define what the audience *ought* to see in them (1959:24). They provide limited information and give the impression that what they offer is who they are. In this sense, Skrikker foregrounded particular aspects of himself in the police cells. His actions and words were intended to shape my and the arrested man's view of him, and so to reinforce his own belief in the narrative he told himself about himself. Such performances act as what Giddens calls 'ontological reference points' (Giddens, 1991:48), in this case contributing to Skrikker's sense of self and ontological security. In this thesis I use Giddens' (1991) description of 'ontological security' as a state that manifests when an individual possesses the answers to 'fundamental existential questions' about the self and world (1991:47), sustained through the formation of a protective cocoon forged through routine (1991:167-69) social performance. To be ontologically secure is to have a positive view of oneself in an age when personal identity is fragile. Trust and belief (truth) were easy to secure in the small-group societies of humanity's past, but modernity shattered this, replacing it with an infinite range of possibilities, beliefs and risks. As a result, life in the early twenty-first

century involves the constant questioning, doubting, and reflexive re-writing of personal narratives and future biographies as people encounter new information, and are jostled by markets and employers. This happens to SAPS officers when they join the organisation, and as they settle into routines centred on the job. Through their entanglement in police organisational culture and local contexts, those entering the SAPS often re-write the narratives they tell themselves about themselves, and so re-write their personal identity.

In this thesis I contrast ontological security with ‘precarity’, by which I mean existence without predictability or security. While South Africa is not a late-modern society in the developmental sense, much of Young’s (1999, 2007) characterisation of such societies as saturated in risk and uncertainty, individual choice and pluralism, and profound economic and ontological precarity, is relevant to South Africa. With its gross wealth and poverty, and its high rates of violent crime, HIV and Tuberculosis infections, South Africans experience the challenges of late-modernity with the added risks and fragility of a state in transition. It is this contextual force of precarity and risk, together with the SAPS organisational culture (discussed later in this chapter), in which officers’ lives are entangled, shaping their social performances and police practice as they strive towards a state of ontological security.

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Contrast Skrikker’s cell-interaction with another that occurred in the Mthonjeni holding cells some weeks later. On this, the only other occasion I was called to the cells by an Mthonjeni detective, it was Constable Mxenge who called me over. He had just detained eight teenaged boys, members of an informal neighbourhood ‘gang’, on suspicion of killing two others.

Inside the holding cell Mxenge barked instructions at the teens. When one of them spoke back to him he slapped the boy twice across the face. He instructed the cell sergeant to hand over the boys' confiscated possessions. From among them Mxenge claimed their cigarettes, lighting one up in the cell. Assault, theft, and smoking: 'These,' Mxenge's actions said to the boys, 'are my privileges. This is my space, police space.'

Minutes later Warrant Officer Paul, another murder detective, entered the cells. Although the case was not his to investigate, Paul also had a message he wanted to deliver to the murder-accused teens. Entering the cell he paced slowly between them, glaring. Occasionally he delivered an open handed blow to a teen body. At one point he stopped to wrap his big hands around a boy's neck, wordlessly threatening to strangle him. He hissed at the boys, boasted that he could walk anywhere he liked in the policing area¹⁵ while they would be killed if they crossed into another gang's territory. It seemed he wanted them to see that his life was better than theirs, that they should be envious of, and fear him, and that he hoped fear would coerce change in them. Before leaving the cells he glared at them once more, 'If I ever see you here again you will cry, you will shit your pants, I promise you that.' Passing Mxenge on his way out he said, 'You must *moer* them,' to which Mxenge replied, 'Yes, I'm going to *moer* them later.'¹⁶

In the preceding months, Paul had struck me as one of the gentler detectives at the station. He had presented himself to me as believing he was more ethical and professional than his colleagues. His aggression surprised me. As I followed him out of the cells he volunteered, 'Andrew, you know I told you there is an area here where the women don't want to give birth to baby boys because they die young?' He had shared this with me some

¹⁵ This was not strictly true. I was not aware of detectives walking anywhere on foot in the precinct. On the contrary, a number of detectives told me they feared walking in the area.

¹⁶ 'Moer' is Afrikaans slang meaning to hit or beat aggressively.

weeks earlier as a way to explain the extremities of violence in parts of the policing area. ‘Well that’s the area where those boys come from,’ he said. The reference brought context to the interaction. Had I pushed him further, I could imagine him saying: *‘These boys have been born into the most murderous neighbourhood in the most dangerous policing area in the country. The likelihood that they will kill or be killed is very high. This knowledge weighs on my mind and throws me off balance. If only they would change their ways. All I can offer them is the threat of force and a reminder that life can be different.’* With boys like the teens on the streets, Paul’s world remained unpredictable and precarious. They symbolised the young, black, criminal ‘other’ towards which South Africa’s criminal justice infrastructure has long been turned (Super, 2013).

Later in the day Mxenge proudly told me he had linked the boys to two additional murders. When I asked how he had done so he smiled, ‘My friend, I have been doing this job for three or four years. I know what I am doing.’ Legal or not, he was confident in his occupational competence, including his modes of informal punishment and interrogation. It was likely that he believed his cell-assault and theft were justified, after all, he had purposefully invited me, a researcher, to witness them. If this was part of the narrative he told himself about himself and his occupation, its message seemed to be that he was invested in his work, and that this involved fighting crime by punishing unmoored youth.

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In both these examples Skrikker and Mxenge engaged the young men in instrumental ways. They were attempting to shape their future actions and so shape the community and country. Skrikker did so by empathising and providing guidance. His message was that one could not always help where one came from, but that one could

make decisions that led to better outcomes. Skrikker wanted the young man to see that he was proof of this, presenting his life as if a juicy metaphorical carrot.

On the other hand Mxenge and Paul wielded the metaphorical stick. They employed force and theft, and the idea that a violent life could be avoided, to try and coerce change in the teens. Their message was that violence had brought the teens there, and the violence of the state would keep them there, to punish and correct them. I explore this intersection between violence and order-making in more detail in Chapter Six. For now it is enough to note that the three detectives' actions were shaped by the lenses through which they viewed themselves (their personal identities), the teens and community (national and local contexts), and their job (including organisational culture), and how these entanglements shaped them, their work, and the country through their work for the state.

None of the detectives followed official protocol in these interactions. Skrikker foregrounded his own coloured identity, rather than his occupational identity, in dealing with the arrestee. He did not provide the man with any information regarding what to expect from the justice system, nor did he read him his rights or tell him what he was signing. Although a lack of communication is common in such circumstances, it ignored official policy. As such, Skrikker's sense of self shaped his sense of occupational responsibility and occupational action.

Mxenge's behaviour went beyond a simple contradiction of policy, to assault and theft. By enacting these offences in front of fellow officers and me, he showed that they were tolerated at the station, that they were part of its organisational culture. So while police work is shaped by individuals, it also shapes individuals by defining the boundaries of acceptable behaviour, shaping both organisational (SAPS) and broader (local and national) cultures.

In the next section I explore select literature on identity and organisational culture related to the shaping work police do, so filling out the conceptual framework.

Personal identity and organisational culture, and their entanglement

Two of the three spheres making up the Venn diagram which illustrates the conceptual framework on page 7, are labelled 'personal identity' and 'police organisational culture'.

An important element of this framework is the idea that personal identity is shaped by, and entangled in, the broader contexts of police organisational culture and the daily experience of life in contemporary South Africa, the latter making up the third circle in the diagram. But how is personal identity formed? Like culture (Geertz, 1975), in this thesis I treat personal identity as formed of the stories we tell ourselves about ourselves, which we believe to be true. To possess a secure sense of self is to keep a particular self-narrative alive, while continually integrating events and interactions with others into a narrative of the self, and colonising the future with the resultant self-image (Giddens, 1991: 54, 133). Identities, the stories we tell ourselves, form through social interaction (Jenkins, 2008), and are closely related to culture (Glaeser, 2000:342). The notion of the self gives coherence and meaning to individual lives, locating them in the physical and social world (Simon, 1999:49). We selectively create and re-create narratives about ourselves, which in turn influences the way we think about and engage others. Sense of self is relational. Through social interaction (or entanglement in context and culture) we expose ourselves to existential risk. Sharing our understanding of ourselves with others opens a space in which it can be reinforced but also challenged (Kramer & Wei, 1999:146). As the contexts in which we present versions of ourselves change, as the audience for whom we perform our roles shift, we re-negotiate our

sense of self and the narrative we use to communicate it (Borland, 1991:63). The police cell interactions between Skrikker and the young man, and Mxenge, Paul and the teen boys, were self-shaping moments. The detectives drew on very different aspects of their sense of self in relation to the arrestees, and engaged with them based on their understanding of who the arrestees were in relation to them as detectives and individuals, entangled in the SAPS, local and national cultures.

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Acknowledging the importance of institutions and occupations in modern life, a body of sociology has emerged to explore the effects of different occupations on the outlooks of their employees. Some of this research has been directed at state and municipal police. Early research in the United States and United Kingdom in the 1960s and seventies produced a rich literature describing perceived cultural traits of the occupation. Data was often gathered ethnographically and showed that the way police present themselves in public is not an accurate reflection of who they are (Loftus, 2009:4). It described the 'social organisation of policing' (Manning 1997: 182), the 'working personality' of police officers (Skolnick 2005) and a 'sub-culture' (Waddington 1999: 288) of apparently shared traits within police organisations. These include a sense of mission, cynicism, pessimism; conservative outlook, machismo, racism, pragmatism, suspicion, isolation and solidarity (Reiner, 2010:122-31). It was, and still is believed these arise as a response to the role police play in liberal democracies, working to maintain order within a legally constrained framework (Reiner, 2010). It has been suggested that the interaction between police culture and the police mandate shapes the way police work is practiced (Manning, 1997; Reiner, 2010).

However, Chan (1996) expressed concern that generalising the idea of a 'cop culture' risks ignoring the context in which police operate. In some respects it is arrogant to assume a universalism of traits based on research historically restricted to four or five developed Western states. However, where research has been conducted in developing democracies like South Africa, it suggests that many consistencies in police culture exist across time and space. In 2004 when I first began working as a police reservist and reading the police culture literature, I found it easy to identify many of the concepts described in British and American literature among the South African police I met. If one hopes to understand who police officers think they are, it is helpful to have some understanding of the ideologies, mythologies and contexts that inform their work. Here, the literature on organisational culture is helpful, even if it remains somewhat narrow. In the following two sections I use this literature to fill out the 'police organisational culture' sphere of the Venn diagram.

Culture refers to patterns of behaviour shared by a group. When an individual is born into or joins a group, these patterns are learned and the culture appropriated or resisted (O'Hara-Devereaux & Johansen, 1994: 38). Organisational environments foster culture. Where individuals spend a significant time in an organisational context, organisational cultures may shape their sense of self and sense of others. That Mxenge and Paul both believed the teens should be '*moered*', suggests they shared an understanding of the context and the appropriate (cultural) response to it. Such group logic has been called 'secondary' (Berger and Luckmann, 1966) or 'institutional' socialisation (Harro, 1996). It is a powerful force in the industrial world where the flourishing of institutions and centrality of employment has produced a new era of social ordering (Giddens, 1991). In this context, norms encouraged in the work environment wrestle with those introduced through earlier (primary/childhood) socialisation, at times challenging prior narratives of the self and world. Although Paul had presented himself to me as someone who disagreed with police violence, in the cells, with a different primary audience, he embraced it. It is partly for this reason that some

have called the corporation (or employer) the dominant force in the modern world (Deetz, 1992; Kersten, 2000); occupations have become the core through which people integrate in industrial society (Manning, 2007:43). Experiences at work become part of one's sense of self and self-trajectory (Glaeser, 2007: 186). This is what I refer to as entanglement in police organisational culture.

But officers' lives are not only entangled in organisational contexts. They are entangled in broader contexts, including future contexts. Together with the centrality of work, modernity has introduced pervasive *future risk* into individual life. Our ability to glimpse local and global developments in real time, and to feel the ripples of shifts in the global economy, politics and power, make the future uncertain and uncontrollable. Lives become characterised by calculations of risk. In South Africa, a constant barrage of media referencing violent crime, unemployment and political corruption animate the imaginations of police officers. For officers it tells them they are fortunate to be employed, that their work is important, and that their political leaders cannot be trusted. The decision to join the SAPS rather than pursue other goals is a choice in embracing one cluster of risks (eg. stigma, occupational violence, submission to authority, association with the state) to avoid others (unemployment, unpredictability, precarity, personal violence). In this environment personal identity becomes a reflexively organised project in which individuals work to maintain a coherent, and yet continuously revised biographical narrative (Giddens, 1991:5). As I describe below, Constable Mxenge remembered himself as someone better suited to a career outside the SAPS. But in telling me that he had linked the teens to additional murders he presented a self-narrative in which he was confident in his interrogation/interview ability.

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When I asked Skrikker why he had joined what was at the time apartheid's South African Police *force* (SAP), he told me he had wanted to fight crime and make the country better. Mxenge's reasons for joining the SAPS were less idealistic. Despite his apparent confidence in his ability to apprehend murder-accused teens, he had not been a life intended for policing. After finishing high school he had studied human resource (HR) management because he wanted to work with people. He had imagined himself in the HR department of a company, managing staff recruitment and wellbeing. But when it came to applying for jobs, the SAPS was the only organisation that made him an offer. He had accepted, telling himself he would work his way into its HR department, but as he had become entangled in the organisation's mandate and culture, it had shaped his life differently. It had made him a murder detective and dispatched him to one of South Africa's most violent policing areas where he slapped and stole from teen boys. His was a life shaped by the SAPS, and through the SAPS he shaped the country's young men.

It was the same for Skrikker's partner, Sergeant Tambo. He had joined the SAPS because he was 'just looking for any job'. He would have preferred to be a teacher, he told me. Instead he spent his days trying to stitch together narratives that explained unnatural deaths. On one of our last days together he, Skrikker and I attended a scene where a man had been struck and torn up by a train. After a few minutes examining the fragments of flesh scattered across the tracks Skrikker sighed, 'This is a bad, bad thing.' Walking back to the car I asked the detectives what they felt at such scenes. Skrikker responded first, 'What are you supposed to feel? The person has died. It is terrible. Someone is dead and you must try to identify them so that they are not an unknown on your name.' An 'unknown' would be an unsolved case, a missed performance target. Tambo added, 'You just have to take it and forget about it very quickly. You can't take it personally, it will drive you crazy.' Both

statements spoke of protecting the self, holding onto something stable. Between them I imagined other words whispered: *'In this job I must be seen to be competent, but sometimes I see terrible things. They are things that threaten my sense of self and my ability to be in this world. I will do what I must do to evade organisational sanction, but I will protect myself in the process. This scene must not shape or become part of me.'*

As we climbed into the car Skrikker added, 'That's the worst train accident I've seen in a long time, there's nothing to look at.' Like it or not, it was character-shaping work, work their younger selves may never have imagined they would do when they first entered the job market.

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SAPS-joining narratives like Mxenge and Tambo's were more common than Skrikker's. Considering the romanticism of mission and vocation built into popular representations of police work, this surprised me. I wasn't surprised that a majority of SAPS officers had applied to the job out of necessity rather than vocation, but I was surprised how many admitted to it up front. It was as if they feared I would judge them as lacking ambition if they told me they had always wanted to be police officers – an answer one might think more fitting of the police archetype. Rather, it seemed they wanted me to know that they were what one might think of as 'accidental police officers'. They had not planned to do the work, and relatively often they did not want to be defined by it.

Whether people join police agencies in pursuit of the archetypal police identity (for example, Manning's [1997] suggestion that police project an absolutist morality linked to the state), or because it is the only employment they can find, they become police officers to be part of police agencies, not to change them. As a result police organisations have far more power to influence employees, than employees have to change organisational culture

(Brodeur, 2010:149). As such, SAPS organisational culture shapes the lives of officers entangled in its forces, and through them, the nature of society more broadly.

Key tenets of police organisational culture

Six decades of research on policing has predominantly focused on what (patrol) police do and ‘what works’ in policing (Brodeur, 2010:150). The term ‘police culture’ has come to be seen as a means to explain police behaviour, and so an avenue through which to change it. In this section I review the key tenets of police organisational culture, in order to better understand this element of the Venn diagram.

Writing about English police in the 1980’s, Holdaway suggested that occupational culture ‘remain[ed] the final testing ground of sociological analysis and policy intervention’ (Holdaway, 1983:175). But not everyone agrees, citing concern that the concept does not account for changes in policing (eg. O’Neill, Marks & Singh, 2007). Sklansky calls reversion to the police cultural lens as a means to understand contemporary police, ‘cognitive burn-in’ (Sklansky, 2007), a kind of wilful blindness. Nevertheless, like Loftus who recently identified ‘the persistence of a substantially similar set of cultural traits to those identified almost half a century ago by earlier police research’ (2009:189, 2010) in contemporary English police, Sklansky and others concede that there remain strong common threads linking police cultures through time and space. And yet while police officers are often subject to the same social and economic forces that create the insecurity they are asked to manage, research has tended to shy away from exploring their lives outside of the police institution, or how their personal and occupational narratives influence one another, through what I have

called entanglement. This is where this thesis hopes to make a contribution. But first, a summary of the police cultural literature is helpful.

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Early researchers interested in police culture drew on symbolic interactionism, including Goffman's (1959) concept of the 'frontstage' and 'backstage' of social interaction to understand the ways in which police manage their image. In my conceptual framework I have called this a 'social performance'. Goffman calls an individual's common pattern of social performance – how they are most often observed - their 'front' (1959:32), performed in the 'front region' (1959:109) or frontstage. In institutional settings these fronts can become part of what is expected of employees. In such contexts, including police agencies, the front becomes a 'collective representation' (1959:37). When an individual joins such an institution, they find their role, their expected performance, pre-defined. It has been scripted for them. As such, they come to see themselves as part of a 'team' (1959:85) for which they must contribute to the maintenance of the collective front. Individuals employ 'signs' (1959:40) or symbols, including symbolic action, to strengthen their front. Police officers leverage their cars, lights, uniforms, equipment and weaponry to imbue their work with symbolic meaning. By so doing they unite their peers within the social performance of the police 'team' and communicate a carefully crafted image to those with whom they interact. These performances, which take up many hours of an officer's day, then shape their personal identity through entanglement.

The more power granted a particular institution or occupation, the more able it is to gain and maintain control over the symbolic meanings with which it is associated in the public mind (Manning, 1978:191). Police agencies as bureaucratic entities, and police officers as symbols of those agencies and the state, manage appearances accordingly. Ritual performances are endlessly repeated to suppress doubt over the legitimacy of police.. Emphasis on crime statistics ensures the idea of crime remains married to notions of the

police (Young 1991:256). Young and Holdaway, both British police officers turned undercover ethnographers support the view that police performances serve ideological functions. For Young, a:

[S]pecifically created police culture of the dramatic...incorporates illusion and imagery as part of a well-directed social production...[rejoicing in] mythological archetypes of good and evil which are made manifest and exaggerated [through] games of cops and robbers' (Young, 1991:4)

Like others he suggests that 'metaphors of chaos and inhumanity' form part of an ideology-supporting police agenda to ensure their institutional longevity (Young, 1991:23). These police-constructed stories or myths are intended to sustain ideas about police practice (Holdaway, 1983:48) and so are generators of social meaning (Loader, 2006). They are likely to impact both organisational culture and individual officers' world views as they are internalised and carried into officers' private lives through their entanglement in organisational and broader cultures. As I show in this thesis, SAPS officers are intimately committed to the notion that 'crime' is their domain of expertise, and yet many revert to the use of violence when off duty, or become victims of crime in ways that complicate the police mythology promoted by their work. In this way their personal identities and the way they practice their craft, are in part products of their entanglement in the occupational and national culture.

Skolnick's 1966 sketch of the 'working personality' of the police officer was one of the first to explore the impact of police culture on police officers. He believed that police develop a particular cognitive lens through which they view work, and that this lens and its

effects on personality are formed at the lowest ranks (Skolnick, 1994:264). Influenced by a sense of danger, authority and a need to perform, he suggested police find their social identity within the occupational milieu because they feel dehumanised in the eyes of the public (Skolnick, 1994:270). Ericson agreed that patrol officers draw their motivation for action from the broader culture of the police agency, but believed they acted according to their understanding of the community, the organisation and criminal justice system as a whole (1982:223-225). Because of their strong group bond, and their suspiciousness of the public, Skolnick foregrounded isolation, solidarity, conservatism and an affinity to stereotype as traits central to the police officer's personality.

Muir (1977) also identified isolation and solidarity as occupational traits in his early ethnographic work. He emphasised that police work was a job for life with benefits and a pension.¹⁷ Job security could be threatened by civilian complaints. Police resorted to collusion to protect one another, including turning a blind eye to abuse of force and corruption (Muir, 1977:185). But for Bittner the social isolation police experience is born of a stigma earned as a result of the dirty work society requires them to do: 'those who fight the dreadful end up being dreaded themselves' (Bittner, 1970:45). There is certainly truth in all of these views.

Along with their social performances, police talk informs police organisational culture. Stories are an important part of police life. Police use storytelling and mythmaking to lay a foundation of strategies and knowledge through which action is guided (Shearing & Ericson, 1991). Occupational tropes encourage subjectivity without constraining officers'

¹⁷ This is particularly important in the modern context. While in the 1970s the idea of a single career or employer for life was not uncommon, it has become the exception rather than the rule. As I explore in Chapter Five, many of the police I shadowed said they might leave the SAPS if they secured comparable pay and benefits elsewhere.

individual initiative (Shearing & Ericson, 1991:318). Stories provide a frame of reference through which officers can interpret one another's actions. In some sense the primary audience to whom police performance is directed is their fellow officers who interpret and judge one another based on shared understandings (Glaeser, 2000:206). Because storytelling is culturally defined, attention to narrative provides insight into culture for those who are not part of it (Presser, 2009: 178), such as ethnographers.

Memories, shared through storytelling are particularly important in building collective identity among police. Experiences of the work are shared through informal stories and official record keeping (Glaeser 2000:206-7). They become elements in a strategy of legitimation as some memories are favoured over others (Marks, 2005:172). They emphasise certain points and silence others. The emphasis on themes relating to car chases and crook-catching reinforces traditional ideas about police work, releases tension and resolves occupational contradictions (Holdaway, 1983:62). Stories preserve cultural traditions so that the way things are done is viewed as common sense. Young suggests that it is in the semantics of police talk that metaphoric layers can be peeled away to reveal what it really means to be a police officer (Young, 1991:108). Police stories often follow clear thematic structures; a crisis is defined, police action follows and results are achieved (Glaeser, 2000:207). Valued stories present police deploying skill to overcome challenges. For Loader police 'talk' can be viewed 'as action' (Loader, 2006). This is because police rhetoric gives life to the occupational culture, bringing meaning to the police experience, sustaining occupational self-esteem (Waddington, 1999:372), and informing action. It is for this reason that it has been said that for police culture to change, the stories police tell each other must change (Marks, 2005:23). But the stories that shape police culture need not originate in the police organisation alone. Rather, they seep in through shifts in broader

community and national narratives, shifting the way police understand themselves and the way they view their work, through their entanglement in organisational and broader cultural contexts. This is the national and local contextual element of my conceptual framework. It was aptly captured by a SAPS officer I interviewed in 2005 when I asked her whether the diversity sensitivity training at her station was having any impact. ‘People are changing ‘cause they feel they have to change,’ she said, ‘because the country says they have to change’ (Faull, 2008:3). It wasn’t just about the organisation, it was about the bigger picture, about the country. Still, one must be wary of police talk alone, for focus on expressed ideology in isolation of other factors threatens over-simplification (Manning, 2007:50). This is why ethnography is such a useful method for the study of police.

Occupational culture informed by mandate

Police organisational culture emerges from the role police play in modern democracies. In this sub-section I review the police mandate in relation to culture, to further develop the ‘police organisational culture’ sphere of the Venn diagram.

States ascribe the right to force to specific institutions or individuals. The most obvious of these have been the police and military but increasingly include private security. They are empowered to provide security but in so doing may become a threat to security. This is the foundational paradox of state police (Bittner 1970; Walker 2000 in Walker & Loader, 2007; Young 1991). The use of force is a contradiction of liberal values (Waddington, 1999:376), it ‘goes against the ethos of the polity that authorises it’ (Bittner, 1970:47). It is also naive to suppose that force is only used by designated officials to achieve an

instrumentalist purpose for the state (Holdaway, 1983:132), as should be clear throughout this thesis.

In light of these contradictions, Bittner (1990) and others (eg: Manning, 1978, 1997; Holdaway 1983; Bayley, 1994; Marks, Shearing & Wood 2009) have suggested that police have failed to formulate a clear justification for their presence in democratic societies. This is because while mythologies propagated by police and their political overseers suggest their purpose is to prevent crime and maintain order, evidence suggests very little police time is spent performing crime-related tasks or invoking the criminal law (Cain, 1973; Westley, 1970; Young, 1991; Bayley, 1994; Manning, 1997; Brodeur, 2010). Against this ambiguity, Bittner identifies the defining characteristic of police to be their ability to use legally sanctioned coercion (force) to pacify situations that might result in crime. Brodeur shifts this to the ability to use 'diverse means' prohibited to others, to uphold a particular social order (Brodeur, 2010). In this view, police work is rule-breaking in defence of rules.

While the sanctioned use of force is still considered by many to be the defining feature of an otherwise all-encompassing occupation, police work is obviously influenced by a legislated mandate. South Africa's constitution defines the role of the police as being 'to prevent, combat and investigate crime, to maintain public order, to protect and secure the inhabitants of the Republic and their property, and to uphold and enforce the law' (Constitution of South Africa, 1996). Police and politicians have been accused of misinterpreting this mandate, promoting the expectation that police will 'prevent' crime (Burger, 2006), something over which they have limited influence. Nevertheless, police and political leaders in South Africa continue to promote the idea that police will do just this.

Manning summed up this challenge for police when he called theirs the 'impossible mandate' (Manning, 1978). In accepting a 'police prevent crime' paradigm, he suggests that

police set themselves impossible goals. To avoid losing political, societal and budgetary support, they resort to a manipulation of appearances, constructing a mythology that sustains them (Manning, 1997). The cyclic conundrum is that because police propose an image of themselves as ‘crime fighters’, the public expects them to perform like ‘crime fighters’, and they in turn feel a need to fulfil this expectation. In high-crime societies like South Africa such performances encourage cycles of increased visible security and related budgets. But streets saturated by armed (wo)men simultaneously serve as a reminder of insecurity (Loader, 2006), while the narratives of crime and violence that SAPS officers tell themselves about the country, breed insecurity in their own lives. The focus on, and foregrounding of recorded crime in official documents like the SAPS Annual Report, serves as a bureaucratic signal to both officers and public that crime and its prevalence is the central defining feature of police work. The burden of efficiency leads police to substitute goals for ritual behaviour (Manning, 1978:202).

Manning (1997) describes the social performances of police officers as ‘ritualization and symbolization’, and as ‘a masterful costume drama, a presentation of ordering and mannered civility that [is] also dirty work’ (Manning, 1997:4-5). In such a drama, he points out, police work together to ensure their performances convince audiences of their veracity. The management of frontstage performances requires selective communication, secrets and lies (which I discuss in Chapter Four), in order to project an appearance of police legitimacy, competence and public order, even where there is little (Manning, 1997:35). In this way police present symbolic fronts, employing routine behaviour and communication in ways that rationalise their activity. They position themselves as crime fighters but spend more time maintaining a façade that suggests control, rather than expressing control (Manning, 1997:188). In reality, police have limited impact on crime (Manning, 1997: 246-

249), but a shared crime-oriented sense of mission among police officers unites them. Society in turn asks that police ‘perform sacred duties’ (Manning, 1997:10), which become central to both officers’ and citizens’ sense of ontological security. Police provide a symbolic conception of what order should look like (Manning, 1997:28) by harnessing and selectively articulating the interpretation of select symbols (Manning, 1997:41). The presentation of police work on the public stage is an exercise in selectivity. They focus on the law, crime, and activities that identify them with secular, rational state power (Manning, 1997:95). This selectivity hides the range of often mundane tasks in which police regularly engage (Manning, 1997:130), as well as the darker side of policing such as the violence in the backstage of the Mthonjeni cells. It obscures the fact that much of the police’s crime-oriented posturing, performance and rhetoric, has little impact on crime (Manning, 1997:182).

Because of their privileged place in society, police can control key information with which citizens make sense of their social world, particularly that relating to crime (Manning, 1997:25). Their position is rationalised by the ‘police myth’ (Manning, 1997:45), through which police organisations encourage the public to take them and their statements about the world for granted. This allows police to make pronouncements on what is right and wrong, true and untrue, and to name and order bodies within the polity. ‘Suspect’, ‘wanted’, ‘accused’, ‘prisoner’, ‘convict’, and ‘criminal’ are just some of the labels police deploy in ways that literally change lives and order. They are not labels applied scientifically or rationally. While they are linked to law, they are not guided by law alone, but by how police officers interpret the law and labels within their conception of their mandate and role (Manning, 1997:93-4). As such, it is important to know who police officers think they are and how this shapes their practice.

While many police agencies, including the SAPS, would claim their police act against all offenses, this is a practical impossibility (Newburn & Reiner, 2007). The patrol officer's challenge is one of practical decision-making, defining an action as legal or not, and responding with an appropriate action (Manning, 1978:198). The result is an inevitable inconsistency in practice. A key irony of policing is that the most junior officers wield the greatest discretionary power. Decisions are in large part informed by an officers' understanding of job priorities in relation to the space and bodies with which they work. The appropriateness of police action is first decided on the interpretation of the case at hand, and only secondarily by general guidelines. As such, patrol officers are individual and discretionary practitioners of a craft (Bayley 1994, Bittner 1970:65), informed by how they view themselves, their work and their social world, views which are produced out of their entanglement across contexts.

In addition to enforcing the occupational culture's view of the law, police officers enforce their personal conception of order (Manning, 1978:199). Their personal views can be shaped both within and outside of the police organisation. In turn, the stories they tell themselves about themselves (their personal identity), their work and their social world, impact how they practice their craft. The fact that Paul chose to invoke a story about a particular neighbourhood after threatening the murder-accused teens, is illustrative of this. The story was intended to give his performance context and to justify his violence.

Because police officers understand their role as one of rapid response to crime, they foster states of mental alertness. Their view of society – even in jurisdictions far less crime-saturated than South Africa - is of a place of risk, characterised by suspicious and untrustworthy characters (Reiner 2010:122-125; van Maanen 1978). These characters pose a threat to both the social order police believe they must protect, and their own physical

integrity. Although most police seldom invoke the criminal law or employ force, police agencies are structured and resourced around these themes because they hold centre stage in the occupational imagination (Bayley, 1994:159). Police actions are also geared to fit this imagined order (Ericson, 1982:220) so that patrol officers are prepared to respond to an emergency call with haste, no matter what they may be doing at the time.¹⁸ Police respond in earnest knowing that little is likely to come of their response, regardless of how rapid it is. It is because citizens are aware of only a minor and dramatic slice of police work and so demand rapid response even when perpetrators have long fled, that they judge police on their response times (Manning, 1978:196). Police in turn play the part, measuring their own performance on the speed with which they respond to calls (Bayley, 1994:161). Similarly, the crime-centric framing of police work means importance is placed on arrests as a measure of performance. Reported crime becomes a gauge against which to judge police despite most causes of crime lying beyond police control (Ericson, 1982:221; Manning, 1997). This creates perverse incentives for police to discourage victims from reporting crime, and to manipulate data, as has occurred in the SAPS in recent years (Bruce, 2010; Faull, 2010a). As I show in Chapter Four, the emergence of a performance culture in the SAPS means that in addition to foregrounding the ‘police prevent crime’ mythology, many officers find their work guided by targets more than the constitutional mandate.

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In general, police are characterised by uniforms, rank hierarchies, legally sanctioned use of force and legitimate rule-breaking, discretionary authority, and 24-hour availability.

¹⁸ While this is common theme in Anglo-American literature, the work of Steinberg (2008) and Altbeker (2005) suggests there are common exceptions to this trend in South Africa. My own experience of police patrols in suburban Cape Town and Pretoria from 2004-2011 largely supports the Anglo-American interpretation, while my fieldwork in 2012/13 offered me tastes of the world Steinberg and Altbeker describe.

They are presented as crime-focused, yet they seldom invoke the criminal law in their work. Culture forms in this space, and as officers become entangled in it, it contributes to how they perceive themselves, their work, and those with whom they engage. Waddington calls the idea that police officers are crime fighters a ‘collective delusion’ (Waddington, 1999:377). For Bayley:

Believing that the real ground for his existence is the perennial pursuit of criminals, the policeman feels compelled to minimise the significance of those instances of his performance in which he seems to follow the steps of a nurse or social worker. He combines resentment against what he has to do with the necessity of doing it. In the course of it he misses his true vocation (Bayley, 1994:169).

Understanding how this missed vocation plays out in South Africa would provide a foundation from which we might re-imagine the country’s future police.

Overarching concepts in the conceptual framework - 2: entanglement, shaping and cultural work

In this section I return to the overarching concepts of entanglement, shaping and culture work, which I position across and in the midst of the Venn diagram. In so doing I explain how the entanglement of personal identities within police organisational and national cultures, shape the work officers do, and how this shapes South Africa.

Research on police work has highlighted the tendency of officers to categorise those with whom they regularly engage. Indeed, each of us is always observing, judging, categorising and ordering those around us. It is how we make sense of the social world (Jenkins, 2008:26). But institutions are powerful guides in this ordering process. Police, as representatives of the state, are particularly powerful in ascribing meaning to bodies, and so

shaping individuals, communities and nations. This is the ‘shaping’ *or* ‘cultural’ work I refer to in my conceptual framework. When individuals speak, write or act in the name and iconography of the state, such as Skrikker and Mxenge did in the police cells, they do so with an official authority. In such contexts their actions and words have a greater potential to shape, sort and order individual lives than those spoken by people without such authority. Loader puts this eloquently:

Every stop, every search, every arrest, every group of youths moved on, every abuse of due process, every failure to respond to call or complaint, every racist snub, every sexist remark, every homophobic joke, every diagnosis of the crime problem, every depiction of criminals—all these send small, routine, authoritative signals about society’s conflicts, cleavages, and hierarchies, about whose claims are considered legitimate within it, about whose status identity is to be affirmed or denied as part of it (cf. Sparks and Bottoms 1995, 60). The police, in short, are both minders and reminders of community (Walker 2002, 315)—a producer of significant messages about the kind of place that community is or aspires to be. (Loader, 1997:211)

In this vein, much has been made of the ‘symbolic assailant’ against whom the police officer is pitted (eg. Reiner, 2010). The manner in which police view themselves and their work is directly related to the manner in which they view their civilian landscape (van Maanen, 1978:280-282), constructing conceptual maps of the populations they work with (Holdaway, 1983:63). Once an officer has mentally classified the type of person he or she is engaging, they can draw on an organisationally generated store of ‘recipe rules’ to guide their responses (Ericson, 1982:235). These rules emphasise control (Holdaway, 1983:99). They

serve to help officers persuade themselves that when coercive force is used it is because the people against whom it is used fall outside of society's idea of the good citizen. This is how Mxenge and Paul justified their actions in the Mthonjeni police cells. They classified the young men as 'gangsters' and so treated them the way they believed 'gangsters' should be treated. Through such mental manoeuvring officers avoid moral dilemmas by framing their actions as contextually justifiable (Waddington, 1999:378, Young 1991:150). Such police sanction reinforces the status quo (or in the Mthonjeni example - police violence), for civilians and police alike, shaping and ordering individuals and communities in the process. The ways in which police produce particular visions of order, what I call their shaping work, can also be thought of as manufacturing and disseminating culture. This is a key theme in this thesis: the idea that police do symbolic and cultural work, shaping identities, communities and nations. An illustration of this is the manner in which South African police enforced pass legislation in the twentieth century. In so doing, they reminded Africans that the state did not consider them equal to other citizens.

In thinking about police cultural work I am guided by Loader (1997, 2006) with Mulcahy (2003). Like the English police about whom they write, the SAPS has increasingly found itself making authoritative pronouncements about the nature or 'condition' (Loader & Mulcahy, 2003: 32-36) of democratic South African society. They are an:

[E]specially rich site for the production and dissemination of meaning...[an institution] that offers an interpretive lens through which people make sense of, and give order to, their world, the source of a set of [stories about the world]' (Loader and Mulcahy, 2003:45).

Individuals, their sense of self and of the social world, are invested in ideas about, and attachment to, police and policing. Police become an 'interpretive lens'

through which ontological security is sustained (Loader, 1997:3). This investment in the idea of police bestows to them:

[T]he right of legitimate pronouncement: a power to diagnose, classify, authorize, and represent both individuals and the world, and to have this power of ‘legitimate naming’ not just taken seriously, but taken for granted...As a body possessing an aura of authority and knowledge-ability, the police are well placed to ‘name’ contemporary problems, diagnose their causes, and mobilize opinion behind certain preferred ‘solutions’ (Loader & Mulcahy, 2003:46-47).

In this way police agencies are Giddens’ (1991) modern institutions, shaping the narratives about the self and world, which we tell ourselves and believe to be true. It is worth quoting Loader and Mulcahy at length, for their synopsis of the symbolic, ordering power of the police is both astute and eloquent. Police, they note, are a:

[C]ultural institution and performance, producing and communicating meaning about the nature of order, authority, morality, normality, subjectivity, and the like. Policing, in other words, has to be understood as *a category of thought and affect*... that enables individuals and groups to make sense of their past, form judgements on the present, and project various imagined futures. As an institution intimately concerned with the viability of the state and the security of its citizens—one that is entangled with some profound hopes, fears, fantasies, and anxieties about matters such as protection/vulnerability, order/entropy, and life/death—policing remains closely tied to people's sense of ontological security and collective identity, and capable of generating high, emotionally-charged levels of identification among citizens. Through their presence, performance, and voice, police institutions are able to evoke, affirm, reinforce, or (even) undermine the social relations and belief systems of political communities, serving, in particular, as a vehicle through which ‘recognition’ within such communities is claimed, accorded, or denied. Policing is, in short, is

closely bound up with how political order and identity are represented and 'imagined'.

(Loader & Mulcahy, 2003: 39-40).

As a result, the two remind us, when people think about crime they instinctively think of police. This is done as if the pairing were natural while the reality is far less clear (Loader & Mulcahy, 2003:43). Policing communicates meaning and produces culture by marking what is and is not acceptable in a society (Loader and Mulcahy, 2003:51).

As in England, the SAPS is one of the central institutions through which South Africans tell stories about themselves and their new democracy. Still dressed in a police-blue strikingly reminiscent of the apartheid SAP's uniform, SAPS officers remain for many a reminder of an oppressive past. At the same time the SAPS is regularly conjured and appealed to as a reminder of government's inability to provide security. As a result, the SAPS has become a reminder of its antithesis - a crime-saturated society and government's inability to provide a 'better life for all'.

In writing this thesis I have found myself embracing the metaphors of 'dirt' and 'cleanliness', ideas about 'good' and 'evil', 'light' and 'dark', that closely link to Loader and Mulcahy's writing on the cultural work of police officers. The style is in part inspired by the title of Altbeker's (2006) book on the SAPS, 'The dirty work of democracy', in part by Steinberg's (2011b) comparison of SAPS work with the nineteenth century limitation of African movement under the guise of disease containment, and in part by the language of the officers I shadowed, some of whom literally talked of 'cleaning' the streets.

These metaphors merge well with Loader and Mulcahy's work, but also with the work of Mary Douglas (1996). Writing of 'purity and danger', 'pollution and taboo', Douglas explores how these concepts are deployed in societies in defence of particular notions of order. She's sees 'dirt' as 'disorder', a 'matter out of place' (1996:36), existing in the eye of the beholder, rather than objectively defined. In this sense, dirt offends order and must be eliminated. It is the by-product of systematic ordering and classification:

Ideas about separating, purifying, demarcating and punishing transgressions have as their main function to impose system on an inherently untidy experience. It is only by exaggerating the difference between within and without, above and below, male and female, with and against, that a semblance of order is created (Douglas, 1996:4)

In this sense, police officers work to ‘clean’ that which is perceived as ‘dirty’ in South African society. As I show throughout this thesis, such associations are generally made of young, poor, black men. That the lives of these ‘polluting’ men often mirror those of SAPS officers makes the reconciling of ‘dirt’, ‘purity’ and the self, difficult for officers, as I explore in Chapter Five.

Douglas’s work also relates to ontological security. The latter is achieved by attaining a mental state characterised by perceived stability and permanence. Without naming it as such, Douglas writes that we all strive for such stability, continually modifying our assumptions to accommodate new experience (1996:37). Dirt threatens such permanence. Societal rituals, including the police stops, searches, and pronouncements about which Loader and Mulcahy write, serve to shape the way things are perceived by labelling and categorising them. This is cultural work, but might also be thought of as cleaning work. Douglas notes that within societies, certain individuals are allowed to break rules in the context of ritual cleansing (1996:161). While she was not writing of police, her view links neatly with Brodeur’s (2010) conception of policing as rule-breaking in defence or a particular notion of order.

In contemporary South Africa, government sees security as a pre-requisite to development (Samara, 2011; Super, 2013). As such, cleanliness and order must be established before lives can be improved. But in such a context, security colonises public life in ways in which it has no place (Loader, 2006:207). Every action and utterance from police officers communicates meaning about what society should look like, who is clean and who dirty, who and what belongs and who and what does not. Recognising police officers’ symbolic and culture-making influence, officers must carry out their work in ways that ‘sustain the conditions of democratic common life in which the security of all

individuals and groups can best flourish' (Loader, 2006:213). If they don't, they risk marginalising vast swathes of society, marking both people and places as dirty and undeserving of belonging.

State policing in South Africa

In Chapter One I provided select data about the South African context with a focus on the precarity of life in the early twenty-first century. In so doing I provided information informing the third, 'South Africa' sphere of the Venn diagram. In this section I provide an overview of the overlap between spheres two and three to explore literature on policing in general and in South Africa, providing both historical insight into the development of modern South Africa, and the development of policing the country. In so doing, I further mould the conceptual framework into a form that helps answer the research question.

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When I asked SAPS officers to imagine the country without police they conjured one of bloodshed and anarchy. It can be difficult to imagine modern states without police, and yet their presence is a very recent one, both in South Africa and elsewhere. SAPS officers often complained that the public accused them of behaving like those who came before them, like 'apartheid police'. It was a belittling accusation that inferred disrespect. To understand why this offended them so, it is helpful to briefly review the evolution of South African policing.

Fifteen years before Sir Peel introduced his reforms in London in 1829, the English seized control of the Dutch Cape Colony in southern Africa. The early Cape was a space of contested power between indigenous, slave and settler groups. English law restricted the movement of the Boer and non-European populations, and bound the latter to exploitative

labour practices to the benefit of the settlers. The century that followed was the most formative in the shaping of identities still found in contemporary South Africa. It was the century in which most inhabitants were reduced to a semi-proletariat amidst rapid social expansion (both European and African) and the explosion of new economies (Landau, 2009:392).

The South African Police force (SAP) was established in 1913, three years after South Africa gained independence from Britain. At first the SAP primarily employed officers of English descent, serving as a class builder for those whose lineage was closest to that of the ruling elite. Towards mid-century political power shifted towards Afrikaners, and the SAP became a home for the Afrikaans poor. But in these periods the SAP was by no means constituted only of white men. There was no shortage of black applicants for whom a job in the police offered significant advantages to the farm or mine work through which white governors sought to wed Africans to a white-owned cash economy (Hornberger, 2011:32). African police were recruited from rural areas and armed with spears and *knobkieries*. They received comparatively poor pay and benefits and held no authority over white police or civilians. Yet according to Kynoch and Steinberg, they enjoyed popular support in urban townships until 1976 (Kynoch, 2003; Steinberg, 2008). Until the deadly police crackdown on student protests that year, the two suggest, township communities supported both black and white police in crime-related police work. They suggest African police were viewed as symbols of progress in their communities, members of a petit bourgeoisie (Kynoch, 2003:325; Steinberg, 2008:100). Still, both acknowledge that the SAP's main role in black areas was to enforce apartheid race laws, and so to shape a particular vision of the white state, rather than to prevent crime. This meant that most of the SAP's work took place in areas designated 'white', and that there was a relative lack of state interest in policing

‘black’ areas beyond enforcing race laws. The absence of police in black townships meant that other providers of security, order and violence emerged in the vacuum (Steinberg, 2008). In subsequent decades these would become the foundation of the crime challenge faced by South Africa at the end of the century.

Following the introduction of apartheid in 1948 an already significant focus of police work targeting the movement of the African population, was increased. Influx control, the restricting of black bodies to designated urban zones and rural ‘homelands’, ultimately proved an impossible task while the state and its police generated more category making data than it could handle (Posel, 2000). The system imploded in the mid-80s leading to a mass migration from the mostly rural homelands to the formerly white cities (Shaw, 2002:21). From the late 1960s to 1980s, in opposition to the ‘terrorist’ threats posed by resistance movements, SAP officers were trained in counter-insurgency warfare and deployed with the country’s army in South-West Africa (Namibia) and Angola to combat the ‘communist threat’ to the white state.

Under apartheid, state rhetoric presented the African man as the archetypal criminal threat to the archetypal victim - the elderly white woman (Super, 2011:166, 2013). But in reality the majority of crime occurred in black areas, where police were mostly absent, perpetrated by black men against black men. For instance, between 1976 and 1977, 220 murders occurred ‘across racial lines’, ‘7122 blacks were murdered by other blacks and 136 whites by whites’ (Super, 2011:167). While absolute levels of crime have risen in the democratic era, crime in South Africa is not new.

Throughout apartheid violence was strategically and gratuitously deployed by police in the delivery of their tasks. When the officers I shadowed complained of being called

‘apartheid police’ it was most often in relation to the use of force. Formal rules governing apartheid’s police were flexible and regularly bent (Brogden & Shearing, 1993:40).

In 1976 Afrikaans was declared the language of instruction in schools. Children in Soweto revolted, boycotting classes and marching in protest. On 16 June police opened fire on protesting children, killing an estimated 176. That year is considered a turning point for apartheid rule, after which both international and domestic pressure against the regime rapidly gained momentum. Police were chased from townships across the country, with African police at times forced to seek accommodation elsewhere, losing what respect they had previously possessed as members of the small African petite-bourgeoisie (Steinberg, 2008:82).

In the aftermath of the 1976 massacre, government suppression of anti-apartheid activities became increasingly violent and militarised. At the same time, the African National Congress (ANC) expanded its campaign of ‘armed propaganda’ in which it planted bombs in white urban space to garner popular support for its cause (Lodge, 2011:432). The 1980s brought calls to make the country’s townships ungovernable through civil disobedience while unions encouraged hundreds of thousands of workers to embark on ‘rolling mass action’ to cripple the economy. In 1984 a partial state of emergency was declared, and in 1988 a full state of emergency, as the government lost control of the country. A Mass Democratic Movement in 1989, led to the widespread flouting of race-specific laws, most of which police were responsible for enforcing. The SAP labelled the protests ‘criminal’ (Super, 2013:22), in so doing performing the cultural work of apartheid, stripping them of (official) political legitimacy.

As apartheid buckled in the late eighties and negotiations towards a democratic South Africa gained momentum in the early nineties, it became clear that a new vision of

policing was necessary. Policy experts from abroad lined up to make their contributions (Steinberg, 2011b). An ANC discussion document on policing published in 1993 accused the SAP and ten homeland police agencies of ‘being unable to deliver even a minimum level of public safety and security’ (Haysom, 1993:3). It called for a ‘break with the apartheid past [which was characterised by] exploitation of the police as a political instrument, [making it a] militaristic, secretive, unaccountable, racist, and violent institution.’ (Haysom, 1993:1). In its place it proposed a democratically-constituted police agency, accountable and visible to local communities, focused on quality rather than quantity, prevention-oriented, demographically representative, transparent, ‘problem’ rather than ‘action’ oriented, politically non-partisan, and focused on service (Haysom, 1993:9-11). Such a police service, the ANC believed, would be accepted as legitimate by the African majority. In turn the violent crime wracking the country’s townships would cease (Super, 2013:138; Steinberg, 2008:98).

Anticipating the transition to multi-racial democracy, in 1990 the previously segregated police training facilities were integrated, and recruitment shifted to bolster the number of women in the police force. In 1994 the ANC won a resounding victory in the country’s first democratic election and in 1995 the SAP and homeland police agencies merged to form the South African Police Service (SAPS). The rhetoric of force was replaced with one of service and human rights (Hornberger, 2011:43). Aggressive affirmative action policies saw black and women officers rising through the ranks at an accelerated pace. In 1996 the Independent Complaints Directorate (ICD) was established to investigate complaints against police, and Community Policing Forums (CPF) were introduced to police stations to promote transparency and accountability.

But the ANC's belief that a legitimate government and police service would bring an end to crime proved false. The public violence that marked the final decade of apartheid died down, but the interpersonal violence that had become a part of daily township life didn't. Instead it spread, while organised crime flourished (Shaw, 2002). That which was previously restricted to black ghettos spilled into middle-class (formally white) neighbourhoods and confidence in the state's ability to manage crime plummeted (Super, 2011:175; 2013:39-40). A newly liberated media and expanding police presence in formally black areas shone a spotlight on previously hidden but already endemic crime. Rapidly, feelings of insecurity became common to almost all South Africans, threatening to entrench the precarity of life which democracy sought to dismantle. In some sense, the major task of the post-apartheid SAPS has been to employ human rights and community-focused policing strategies to bring order to the disorder fostered and shaped under the watch of their violent predecessor, the SAP.

[Policing the democratic era](#)

Following the 1994 elections the ANC government developed a holistic, multi-departmental National Crime Prevention Strategy to promote security in the new democracy. But as public concern over crime quickly mounted, this was replaced in 1998 with a police-centric Crime Combatting Strategy. That same year the Minister of Safety and Security, Steve Tshwete, declared that government would 'deal with criminals in the same way a dog deals with a bone' (Shaw, 2002:86), pandering to what was a rapidly developing (or continuing) appetite for security and punishment (Loader, 2009; Steinberg, 2008). Following a late-

nineties moratorium on police recruitment, the SAPS received disproportionate boosts to budget and personnel for almost a decade. From 2001-2011 it grew from 120 000 to 195 000 members as police were re-centred at the forefront of crime-related policy (Altbeker, 2005:254). New recruits were meant to be professionals who chose the job as a vocation. But at the core of the ‘new’ South African ideal was the promise of a ‘better life for all’. With jobs and wealth failing to materialise for the majority poor, the authority of police officers was ‘soon eclipsed by their place in the evolving ecology of class formation in South Africa’s new democracy’ (Steinberg, 2011a:6).

In 2000, Jackie Selebi, an ANC loyalist with no prior police experience, was appointed to lead the SAPS. Selebi worked rapidly to increase police salaries and numbers, and to introduce a CompStat-style monitoring and accountability system, the Performance Chart. The resulting emphasis on reported crime led to a number of crime manipulation scandals (Bruce, 2010; Faull, 2010a) while in 2010 Selebi was himself convicted of corruption.

With its ability to control crime becoming a measure of government legitimacy, the SAPS was increasingly empowered to assert its own stance on crime and policing (Hornberger, 2011:80), bolstering its culture-making power. One of the more infamous indicators of government’s shift in rhetoric regarding crime and policing came in 2008 when Deputy-Minister of Safety and Security, Susan Shabangu told police to ‘kill the [criminal] bastards if they threaten you or the community.’ She said police were ‘[not to] worry about the regulations. That is my responsibility. Your responsibility is to serve and protect’ (Berger, 2008).

Selebi’s successor Bheki Cele, another ANC loyalist without police experience was, according to a source close to President Zuma, appointed to remind South Africans that the police ‘should be feared and respected’ (Tabane & Tolsi, 2011). Under Cele and Minister

Mthethwa, one of the great ironies of democratic South Africa occurred. In 2010 the Ministry of Safety and Security was renamed the Ministry of Police, civilian ranks were replaced with apartheid-era military titles, and politicians and police leaders began referring to the SAPS as a 'force' once more. In 2012 Cele was forced out of his post following a finding of maladministration against him, but the changes remained.

Cele was replaced by another politically connected individual without police experience, Riah Phiyega. Following the deaths at Marikana, which occurred under her watch in 2012, she seems to have led a SAPS cover up of events, rather than encouraged transparency and justice. A Commission of Enquiry into a breakdown in relations between the community and police in Khayeltisha, Cape Town, ordered by the Province's Premier, Helen Zille, also took place during Phiyega's time in office. In an apparent effort to save face, Minister Mthethwa challenged the constitutionality of the Commission, but failed.

Perhaps unsurprisingly considering its schizophrenic leadership, credible complaints of torture by police continue to emerge (ICD, 2009:35; Amnesty International, 2011) while the SAPS rallies its members behind the slogans 'Pushing back the frontiers of evil' and 'Squeezing crime to zero' in a 'war on crime'.¹⁹ So while the 'police prevent crime' mythology continues to be bolstered, as Bittner reminds us 'the idea that [crime] can be vanquished through war is a trivial kind of utopian dreaming' (Bittner 1970:48).

Contemporary South Africa has been described as a 'struggling post-colony' mirroring global apartheid (Shearing & Marks, 2011:126). It is the quintessential divided society, fragmented along class, culture, ethnic, linguistic and geographic lines. It is a land increasingly characterised by streets filled by the poor and working fringe demanding housing, services, respect and dignity. In such a context, where social consensus on what is

¹⁹ These were particularly popular during the build up to, and hosting of the FIFA World Cup, which the country hosted in 2010.

proper becomes blurred, criminal law becomes the basis for social control (Manning 1978:197), the chisel with which society is shaped. In the midst of this the SAPS remains an institution of contested narratives with a leadership whose integrity is consistently in question.

The centrality of the SAPS to contemporary South African life impacts the lived experience and self-narratives of those who make up its ranks. The manner in which police understand themselves and their job impacts how they do their work. And yet the confluence of people, ideas and risks that exist both within the SAPS and throughout South African society, make the acquisition of ontological security and a positive sense of self, difficult. The police officers I shadowed detested being compared with apartheid's police (even those who had served in the SAP), but as the actions of Mxenge and Paul in the Mthonjeni cells show, in many ways SAPS officers *do* still carry out some of the acts that made the SAP so unpopular. As such, it is not surprising that the country in many ways mirrors global apartheid. It is how its neo-liberal economy and aspirational police shape the nation.

[Ethnographies of the recent past](#)

Writing in apartheid's final year, Brogden and Shearing suggested that South African police culture was characterised by the same elements identified among rank-and-file police in American and British jurisdictions but that its defining feature was brutality as a legitimiser of white hegemony (1993:42-3). They wrote that a specific Christian, political and scientific discourse of white rule was embedded in the police occupational culture of the SAP, and that although Afrikaners were no longer numerically dominant by the early nineties, the culture of the organisation remained one of Afrikanerdom (1993:57).

This is not surprising for the period. Police officers enforce the laws of the jurisdictions in which they work so that their work is in part shaped by what those laws ask of them (Manning, 1978:200). As such, police reproduce social order with the hope that civilians accept it as a rational, desirable status quo (Ericson, 1982:219). When the leaders

of new political orders introduce major change, institutions such as police agencies take time to adjust. Since the late nineties a number of researchers have conducted ethnographic work in the SAPS to better grasp the manner in which the SAPS has adapted to the post-1990 shifts in politics and power:

The first of these was carried out by Marks (2005) who conducted her fieldwork with public order police between 1996 and 2001. She suggested that police cultural knowledge is embedded in police practice, informing the rationale and understanding about what police do and how they view the public. In order to change police culture, she proposed changing the nature of police work, workplace relations, and the way police see their work. For Marks, culture initiates attitudes but does not force action (2005:19). She noted behaviour change amongst those she shadowed, but in the absence of value change (2005:178). In other words, attitudes expressed by police in private did not necessarily change the way they worked. Marks believed that for culture to change, the stories police tell each other must change. One way of doing this, she suggested, is by introducing new stories (2005:177). These should allow police to move away from a focus on force and instead reaffirm the broader value of their work, and of what works in policing. She stressed that the basic rationale for policing is the hardest but most crucial aspect to address in changing police culture.

Marks's observations are astute. However, while she promotes police changing the stories they tell each other about their work, I would add that this should include an acknowledgement of the stories police tell themselves about themselves; their narratives of self, and how these become entangled in, and so shape, their work and lives. For while the 'police prevent crime' mythology remains central to the SAPS, the idea that for many individuals it is 'just a job', rather than a vocation, disrupts the organisation's coherence.

Like Marks, Hornberger's (2011) ethnography explored the transition from apartheid to democratic policing. She focused on human rights training in the SAPS and its implications for patrol officers and detectives working in Johannesburg's inner city. In her view the 'frontstage' and 'backstage' are constituted by two different forms of authority. The first is characterised by legalistic practice, hiding violence. The second evokes fear and awe in the population, overriding the law and foregrounding violence (2011:100). She suggests the police she observed struggled to operate in the frontstage because they believed the methods of the violent backstage were a necessary tool of the trade. In Marks' terms, this was the story they told each other about their work. As a result police invested in the backstage where they received recognition from peers, while breaking the law. Mxenge and Paul's violence in the police cells was an example of a retreat to this backstage where violence and the threat thereof becomes a legitimate tool of police work, while the façade of human rights-based policing serves to shield the SAPS, rather than shape procedurally fair practices.

Altbeker (2006:133) and Marks (2005:172) also encountered police who rhetorically glorified violence and the use of force, expressing nostalgia for 'the old days' of the SAP when violence was institutionally more acceptable. But Marks observed restrained behaviour incongruent with expressed attitudes, while Altbeker (2006:57) met a detective unwilling to torture for the sake of case closure, and another whose bravado masked hints of trauma resulting from the violence he had meted out. In other words, these were police who spoke of the social world in ways that were incongruent with how they policed it. They were also police whose self-narratives contradicted organisational narratives.

Much of the Anglo-American literature suggests police culture glorifies action. My experience as a police volunteer largely supports this. But in South Africa, far more than in

most British, and many American agencies, police in certain jurisdictions have a good chance of experiencing violent conflict. Altbeker and Steinberg's accounts of police responses to threats suggests a practical diversion from danger. In Altbeker's example, the patrol officer he was with was called to the scene of a restaurant robbery in progress, just minutes away, reportedly involving fifteen heavily armed assailants (2006:45). But rather than Loftus' (2009) English officers or Fassin's (2013) French officers who responded with excitement and haste to reports of violence, Altbeker's officer held back, employing various delay tactics to ensure he did not arrive at the scene before others. While it may be logical to wait for backup before approaching such a situation, this officer didn't call for support. Rather, he purposefully delayed his response while limiting the damage to his reputation among his colleagues. Similarly, Steinberg (2008) recounts officers patrolling a township ignoring patrol plans and skirting its periphery until the early morning when they knew the streets would be empty. In his reading, it is only when roaming in large, concentrated packs that SAPS officers feel confident asserting their authority on crowded township streets. In other words, their ability to shape the night, and so the country, is limited by their lack of legitimacy in the eyes of the public, and where they may be unable to monopolise force.

Steinberg makes the important point that in South Africa the sense of mission identified among Anglo-American police may not exist. Rather, the SAPS represent a rare avenue through which the poor might enter the country's small middle class. For many, as I explore in this thesis, joining the police is a practical means to an end. As a young constable told me in 2009:

I stay in the police because the family has got to eat...Most of the people...if you ask them why they joined the police they will tell you it's so their family can survive, nothing more (Faull, 2010b:269).

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It is now generally accepted that cultural explorations of police work must emphasise contextual variables (Chan, 1996; Waddington, 1999; Marks, 2005; Reiner, 2010). Even if most modern democratic police organisations do share common origins, comparably structured, resourced and mandated police agencies function in a vast diversity of environments, resulting in an array of police experience and practice. In this chapter I have fleshed out the conceptual framework introduced in Chapter One, to illustrate how the concepts of personal identity, ontological security, identity as social performance, precarity police organisational culture, shaping and cultural work, and entanglement form a relevant framework for answering the research question.

Reiner concludes his overview of police culture by reaffirming the commonalities evident in a range of contextually different studies (2010:137). He believes these are due to the similarities faced by police working in neo-liberal environments characterised by inequality and social divisions. As such, he echoes others by suggesting that police culture cannot be changed by changing police. Rather, the police role must be rearticulated in conjunction with changes in power and inequality, politics and law.

What might this mean in South Africa where both police and society have altered dramatically in recent decades, where society remains divided, grossly unequal, and significantly insecure, and where policing remains heavily crime-centric? What would a

changed society mean for police as civilians whose interests are invested in both the stability of the police institution, and the nation more broadly? In what future do SAPS officers imagine themselves growing old? What do they hope and believe they will leave behind for coming generations? How do these imaginings influence their self-perception, the way they live their lives and do their work? These questions inform my overarching question regarding who South African police officers think they are and how this shapes police practice.

Unless otherwise indicated, I have observed every element of police organisational culture reviewed here. The SAPS is a monolithic institution promoting long-standing mythologies about who police officers are and what they should do. It is a crime-focused, target chasing organisation invested in strategic performances that propagate select ideas about police officers and police work. What SAPS officers are less conscious of, however, is how the work they do chips away at the structure and shape of South African society. Without turning our gaze towards the intersections between personal and organisational narratives, and how they shape the cultural work the SAPS does, we may one day find that South African society has changed fundamentally in ways not foreseen. By remaining attuned to the SAPS' culture and stories, and to the personal narratives that keep them alive, we increase the possibility of shaping the SAPS, and country, in ways that promote and sustain human flourishing. Towards this goal, I use the described conceptual framework and remainder of this thesis to explore the spaces in which personal identity, police organisational culture, and the South African social and cultural milieu, overlap and become entangled with one another. Within this entanglement, I emphasise and explore personal narratives and social performances as officers pursue ontological security in a precarious environment, and how these overlaps shape police practice. I begin in Chapter

Three where I probe the types of order police officers hoped to bring about through their work.

Chapter Three: Police practice and the perfect shift

Overview

Thus far I have emphasised the importance of considering both individual (personal identity) and contextual (organisational culture and South Africa) narratives and forces in understanding who SAPS officers think they are and how this shapes their practice. I have framed the research question as an exploration of personal identities (stories about the self) in a quest for ontological security in a precarious environment (contemporary South Africa), entangled in the South African Police Service (SAPS) and its organisational culture, and how these entanglements produce particular types of police work (shaping and cultural work).

In this chapter I use ‘thick description’ (Geertz: 1973) to introduce the four policing areas in which the research took place: urban township, urban affluent city, rural town and rural village. I suggest the four sites are connected and shaped by patterns in South African development and migration. I employ the idea of the ‘perfect shift’ to explore the types of order police hoped to bring about in each area. By so doing I describe the work officers do, laying a foundation from which subsequent chapters explore how this work is shaped by personal identity. I also use this chapter to begin to explore the meta-narratives officers use to understand the contexts in which they work. In other words, this chapter provides insight into the ‘how does it shape their work’ element of the research question, as well as providing insight into the big-picture ideas about South Africa through which officers understand themselves and their work (the contextual, shaping forces).

To summarise my argument: Most African officers (who make up the majority of the SAPS) considered the rural Eastern Cape ‘home’. They described it as a place of traditional authority, respect and order. It was where they and/or their ancestors had lived, almost

always in relative poverty, and where a portion of their monthly income was often invested. For police living in the city, they or their parents had moved there to pursue a better life; but city life was hard. Outside of select affluent bubbles, cities and towns were viewed as places of anomie and disrespect, where police were hunted and killed by young men who, born and raised on the urban fringe, lacked rural values. In the township and rural town these men - young, black and poor – were to be stopped, searched and questioned. At night they were to be chased off the streets. They were to be disciplined by police, taught to respect their parents, the law and life. A shift during which officers successfully controlled the township or rural town was a good shift. It gave police purpose.

For police working in the affluent city, their role was to protect its order and please its middle-class residents, whom they believed respected and appreciated them. In South Africa, affluent, formerly ‘white’ urban space is, like the village, remembered as part of a more crime-free past. During my time there city police saw their role being to survey interlopers from the Cape Flats - poor men from the same violent neighbourhoods to which many police returned at night – to ensure they did not sully the affluent city streets. When they did, it was the detectives who moved out of the city at night to hunt and apprehend them, meting out a coercive violence less common in the affluent city.

In the rural Eastern Cape, police sat uncomfortably between the two worlds: the peaceful countryside and the violent town and city. There, as in the city and town, they disciplined young men (and women) who strayed from their roles as respectful youth. For the most part, however, such transgressions were rare. Respected by village residents, rural police were able to mediate disputes between adults, and shame or beat conformity into the youth. To give meaning to often quiet days, they borrowed from urban discourses on

crime and risk, reminding themselves that they were part of something bigger than the village, something important.

I interpret these practices in the following way: The young men police targeted in their work were drawn from the same communities in which police were raised, and/or where many lived. Their alleged crimes fuelled violence and fear in their neighbourhoods, fed negative stereotypes about groups to which police belonged, and trampled on memories of more peaceful times past. They threatened an imagined future where life was materially easier and absent of (illegitimate) violence. Through their work, police sought to deflect these young men – who were too much like themselves for comfort - from potential paths of criminality, and to punish them – sometimes pre-emptively – for their indiscretions. In so doing they were both reproofing them for failing to thrive in South Africa's marketplace, and goading them to adapt, conform, and assume a 'legitimate' place in the social and economic hierarchy.

I don't believe police officers necessarily longed to live in the affluent city or its sterile suburbs. But I do think they wished their relative order, safety and affluence were present in the communities in which they lived. In this way, the affluent city echoed the remembered order of the rural village while offering the material comforts promised, but not fully delivered, by the post-1994 democratic order. It was this longing for meaning, order and material comfort in both their private and occupational lives (their search for ontological security in a context of precarity), and in their imagined futures, which underpinned how police interpreted and approached their work.

Police work as shift work: the idea of the perfect shift

In Chapter Two I suggested that public police struggle to justify their presence in democratic societies (Holdaway, 1983; Bayley, 1994; Marks, Shearing & Wood 2009). As such, the idea of ‘the perfect shift’ can be used to explore their attempts to do so. The ‘perfect shift’ is about a search for ontological security, of purpose at work and in the world. When a shift unravels and police lose control over their environment, it serves as a reminder that they are important, but also that their influence is limited. When a shift is good, it serves as evidence that police have shaped the night.

As already suggested, the managerial and bureaucratic nature of police work shapes police action and culture (Bittner 1970, Ericson 1982, Bayley 1994, Manning, 1978, Skolnick 1994), and the way SAPS officers think about a good shift. The crime-centric framing of police work locates arrests and reported crime as measures of performance (Ericson, 1982:221). This focus signals to both police and the public that crime is the defining feature of police work. Police engage in endless rituals that instil this logic, so influencing the ways officers think about a good shift.

But the perfect shift is not the same for everyone. In carrying out their tasks, officers draw on their personal conceptions of order (Manning, 1978:199). In a country as diverse, unequal, precarious and transitional as South Africa, personal notions of order (and a good shift) inevitably vary, in part due to the different ways in which officers personal identities are entangled in, and shaped by, broader contextual forces.

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Because the South African Police Service (SAPS) never closes for business, uniformed officers, detectives and some civilian clerks work shifts throughout the day and night. These

usually start at six or seven in the morning and end twelve hours later. Most shift-bound officers staff front desks in Community Service Centres (CSC), conduct patrols and respond to complaints or calls for assistance.

Some stations establish Crime Prevention Units (CPU). CPU shifts are timed to correspond with changing crime patterns. CPUs generally only patrol and respond to urgent calls for assistance.

Detectives work office hours, usually beginning their days at 7:30 and ending at 4pm. Every evening and weekend individual detectives are placed on standby to respond to crimes reported out of office hours.

With this basic work-flow in mind, I use the remainder of this chapter to describe the meaning that the hours at work brought to officers' lives, explore how they animated officers' visions of the country they wanted to live in, and so influenced how they carried out their work. I begin where I began my research, in Mthonjeni, Cape Town.

Mthonjeni (the township): meetings about murder

Murder in the Mthonjeni policing area is common. It hangs thick in the air of the police station, clinging to its face brick walls, echoing out from the space beneath doors behind which it is discussed daily with gravity and humour. It was part of almost every morning detective branch meeting. The first murder of my time was announced on my third morning, a Thursday.

The meeting began with the daily prayer, followed by the branch commander offering his detectives new stationary. He had boxes of pens, paper, tape and files with him, and pushed these down the long table as detectives shouted, laughed, stretched and thrust

their hands out in the hope of catching them. Picking up a roll of boxing tape, ready to toss it, he joked, ‘Use these with your prisoners.’ One of his detectives responded with a smile, ‘Those were the old days, Colonel!’

Whether with detectives or uniformed officers, the work spaces that struck me as most joy-filled at my four field sites were those in which officers gathered before the day began. In those meeting and parade rooms, in the minutes before the weight of their work was dragged into the room, they were just South Africans who worked for the police, about to begin another day. The rooms were Goffman’s ‘back spaces’ (1990) in which the bearers of stigma gather with the similarly afflicted, dropping the pretence of being anything other than who they are.

The Colonel announced it was time to talk about ‘The Crime’, cases assigned to the branch in the fifteen hours since they had knocked off the previous afternoon. The first incident he described related to a man and his wife who had ventured into the cold spring night in search of paraffin with which to warm their home. While parked outside a fuel station someone had fired fifteen bullets at them, twelve had hit the man, the others the woman. The man had died.

I listened to the Colonel transfixed. One of the reasons I had chosen to work in Mthonjeni was that I believed the narratives of risk, loss, violence and death that are so much a part of the popular imagination in South Africa, originate in such policing areas. They spring from them like wells of dark mythology, flowing out into the streets and *veld* where they are lapped up by citizens thirsty for stories with which to make sense of their chronic insecurity.²⁰

²⁰ It is also for this reason that I devote a disproportionate portion of this chapter to Mthonjeni.

So it was with surprise that while hastily typing notes I realised there had been little change in the room. Detectives sent texts and answered phones; some whispered to neighbours while others exited the room without apology. Nobody seemed particularly interested in the man who had been shot twelve times. The Colonel was saying, ‘If we have a taxi fight going on we must know about it. Everyone must assist. We can’t have a hit man running around here playing cowboys and crooks.’ Another detective chimed in, ‘Maybe we can call the FBI, Colonel?’ It was a joke. In an occupational world that appeared surreal, I would find that humour was injected into these daily engagements with death like a flimsy police cordon set up to keep contamination at bay.

The Colonel led a discussion of the other two ‘serious crimes’ reported the previous evening, a robbery at a shop and another at a private home. From there he moved on quickly, berating the detectives for having only closed 199 of their 400 docket-target for the month. The themes of violence, death and performance targets dominated the meetings throughout my seven weeks with detectives. They were not part of the perfect day but they were part of the everyday. They smothered the early morning joviality and reminded the detectives of their heavy workloads and the performance targets that seemed impossible to meet.

Sergeant Tambo with whom I was spending the week asked if he and I could be excused. We were due at the state mortuary where he was to stand over a chilled corpse and discuss the deceased’s suicide with a pathologist. As we made our way through the August rain into the city, I expressed my surprise at the apparent disinterest of his colleagues in the dramatic murder. His response was one I would hear often over the months, ‘These things are very, very common in Mthonjeni.’

Eleven days later the Monday morning meeting began with the Colonel saying, ‘We had a quiet weekend, a brilliant weekend. We only had three murders.’ By the end of the meeting a fourth had been reported. In a morning meeting a few days later I realised that I, like the detectives, was failing to respond with particular interest when a murder was announced. My note taking was no longer hurried or as detailed, my mind wandered as the Colonel filled the room with words describing death. In just over two weeks I had become accustomed to murder as a common feature of this daily ritual, the Mthonjeni policing area and the working lives of its police. It was a big part of the context in which they worked, and informed the organisational culture in which their lives and identities were entangled.

Mthonjeni (the township): space and place

The Mthonjeni policing area, which includes a number of ‘townships’, lies roughly 30 kilometres from Cape Town’s city centre on the city’s Cape Flats. In legal terms, ‘township’ refers to a measure of urban space, but historically it applied to urban areas reserved for ‘non-white’ residential occupation under apartheid.

Established in the middle of the last century, Mthonjeni began as an expansion of the migrant hostels built slightly closer to the city centre in Langa. Until the early nineties, key features of South African cities were controlled to promote white minority interests (Turok, 2001:2350). The urbanisation of Africans was subject to the strictest regulations, including at times the provision of only temporary residency permits in ‘white’ cities, and only in designated townships. Industrial, commercial and retail development that might threaten white business was banned in townships (Turok 2001:2350, Hirsch 2008:8). In the 1980s when influx control collapsed, overcrowding became common in Cape Town’s

townships, with a growth in sub-letting, erection of back-yard shacks and informal settlements, and a strain on public services (Turok, 2001).

Since 1994, many townships, including Mthonjeni, have been the site of government developmental intervention, predominantly in the form of small RDP houses, schools, clinics and police stations. But apartheid's shadow is long, and today there remain few jobs in most townships, outside of new and old state facilities, or the tuck-shops, liquor and taxi industries that emerged during apartheid.

The Mthonjeni policing area spans less than 14 square kilometres but hosts a population of over 200 000 (Crime Hub, 2014). Ninety-five per cent of residents self-identified as 'Black African' in the 2011 national census, mirroring the demographics distribution of the apartheid era. The area includes old hostels converted into state housing, new state houses, and a small number of old and new standalone homes. Police officers called the latter 'bond houses', highlighting the exceptionalism of a bank-financed purchase in the area, and in the lives of officers. It is usual for those with space to build 'backyard shacks' behind their homes so that the shine and rust of corrugated iron sheets is common. The townships of Bagdad and Mountain View in the area are predominantly comprised of standalone shacks, tightly packed together.

A minority of the area's residents own cars and a slim majority are employed. In the early morning and evening, the streets are busy with commuters making their way to the public transport nodes that connect Mthonjeni to more affluent or industrial urban space. But a large portion of the population remains behind and the streets stay busy.

Having visited Mthonjeni regularly between 1999 and 2001, I was struck during my 2012 return by the impressive development of the area; the new houses, parks, and taxis. Despite this, most residents remained poor. The following table presents census data from

four wards in the policing area, highlighting its residents’ continued hardship. It is against this poverty that crime has been incubated and, like elsewhere in the world (Wacquant, 2014:6), confinement and precarity has been met with state punishment:

Table 1: Select census data for four wards in the Mthonjeni policing area

2011 Census data	Ward 01	Ward 02	Ward 03	Ward 04
Population	43 695	34 393	34 166	22 207
Aged 20 or older and completed high school (matric)	33%	32%	28%	29%
Aged 15-64 and employed	60%	64%	55%	52%
Monthly household income of R3200 (£175) or less	80%	78%	79%	78%
Households living in formal dwellings	35%	37%	60%	72%
Access to piped water in dwelling or yard	54%	73%	68%	75%
Access to flush toilet connected to public sewer system	56%	90%	71%	81%
Refuse removed at least once a week	81%	83%	87%	90%
Use electricity for lighting dwelling	95%	82%	84%	93%

Source: City of Cape Town, 2013b

Mthonjeni (the township): the unavoidable weekend murder

Mthonjeni’s detectives seldom suggested murder affected them negatively, but it did. Most obviously, a murder meant another docket to open, more performance pressure and stress.

Warrant Officer Apolles often joked with me about murder. He said he didn’t know how to investigate anything else, that murder was all he knew. The mantra gave his work meaning, but it also disrupted his life. He said working standby over a weekend meant never being able to relax at home, that he would receive word of a murder before he could set foot inside his house. This was almost exactly how it played out on my third Friday in the

field. I had just returned home from a day at the station when I received his text, ‘on my way 2 de station, dubble murder.’

Apolles arrived at the station after me. He greeted me but his usual lightness was missing. The commander of the uniformed shift casually briefed him: two men had been shot, one was dead and the other was in hospital. As we climbed into the detective car Apolles quipped, ‘You see, what did I tell you? As soon as I get home and open the gate they call me. I don’t know what’s wrong with these people; they can’t go a day without killing each other’. For Apolles and the other murder detectives at Mthonjeni SAPS, a perfect weekend night was one without a single call out, one at home with the family or a stiff drink. But Apolles didn’t believe this a likely possibility.

The crime scene was little more than 700 meters from the station on one of Mthonjeni’s busier roads, so that we arrived within minutes. Apolles parked on the perimeter of the scene, which was bordered by cordons of yellow police tape. In its middle was a red VW Polo with shattered windows and bullet holes in its doors. A blue sheet covered a body in the driver’s seat; cones marked the road where bullet casings lay. Over a two hour period Apolles inspected the scene. When he lifted the blue sheet in the car it revealed a man in his late twenties, eyes and mouth open, head tilted back, clothing soaked in blood. Bystanders had observed a hooded man walk up to the car and fire a volley of shots at it, but they shared nothing more. ‘They never do,’ sighed Apolles.

Over time other detectives arrived. There was Colonel Diedericks, the station’s officer on standby, Sergeant Chub from the Serious and Violent Crime Task Team (SVC), and the cluster’s head of Crime Intelligence. Greeting me on arrival each commented along the lines of ‘Now you see what it’s like here.’ While they had visions of a better shift, this was the reality they had expected when they came on duty. Working standby over the weekend

meant working with murder. It meant a loss of control that brought detectives face to face with the darkest of South Africa's habits. This was the context in which Mthonjeni's officers worked, shaping both the culture of the local SAPS station, and the lives of the officers entangled in its throws.

The Crime Intelligence officer cracked jokes but like Apolles, Colonel Diedericks appeared agitated. Though he often complained about an untenable workload, Diedericks was generally relaxed at the office. But that evening he was unsettled. I commented that the streets were busy, that surely witnesses would provide the information they needed. He laughed sardonically, 'Nobody will have seen anything. That and the language barrier, these are the problems we face.'²¹ Mthonjeni residents overwhelmingly speak Xhosa as a home language while only about half of the detective branch did. In Diedericks' perfect shift information would flow seamlessly.

The other detectives were there because there was confusion over who would investigate the case, SVC or Apolles and the station detectives. Each was trying to pass it on to the other. Diedericks was on the phone trying to convince someone the murder was gang-related and belonged to SVC. But he was unsuccessful. Before leaving the scene he approached me to vent some more:

I need to leave this firm. I have been here long enough. These specialised units like SVC take our best detectives, keep their caseloads down, and then give us all of these other cases for our regular detectives to tackle. Meanwhile they bog management down with all this paperwork, there's too much administration.

Referring to the Crime Intelligence officer he added, 'That guy is a really good detective but he is retiring. He can't take it anymore.' Diedericks struck me as defeated. He

²¹ Steinberg (2008) suggests that such lack of information sharing has its roots in the apartheid era when police were largely absent from townships and not trusted, and where local, non-state security assemblages were turned to for security provision.

was a big, thoughtful man with over thirty years' experience in the SAPS, but that evening he appeared exhausted. It was another murder on a Friday night without immediate leads to follow, another reminder of a community and country haemorrhaging within, looking to the SAPS to stop the bleeding.

It was getting dark and nobody had brought spotlights to light the scene. Just over two hours after arriving, Apolles and I departed. He remained agitated. He said he didn't know how much sleep he would get that night. He would need to complete his paperwork so would save a visit to the victim in hospital for morning. (On Monday he would tell me the nursing staff had not believed him to be a cop, ignored his official police ID, and had denied him access to the victim. He felt slighted by the public's mistrust of police.) But what was clear was that he feared another murder later in the evening, and more on Saturday and Sunday. For each he would need to work through the same rituals. He said he would call me in the morning so that I could accompany him on his investigation but by morning the next murder had been called in and Apolles was lost to a weekend in which four more were added to the 75 he was already investigating. It was the worst possible start to a weekend on standby. His perfect night at home left waiting at the gate.

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Like Apolles and Diedericks, Mthonjeni's other detectives felt it a near impossible task investigating the violent crime in the area. They struggled to illicit leads from the community without paying for them, and despite their best intentions, didn't have the capacity to give each investigation the attention it deserved. In its place they substituted it for organisationally scripted performances that conveyed an image of competence. Given the right fall of the dice, these performances led to arrests and prosecutions. The 'success'

would give the work meaning. But in the detectives' minds this didn't occur often enough. Instead they were left chasing shadows and filing paperwork.

Mthonjeni (the township): the death that follows police home

In 2012/13, the year I conducted my fieldwork in Mthonjeni, over 250 murders were reported in the policing area. That's 13 for every 10 000 residents, or 130 for every 100 000. Additionally, 10:10 000 attempted murders, 46:10 000 assaults with intent to do grievous bodily harm (GBH), 21:10 000 common robberies, and 20: 10 000 sexual crimes were reported (Crime hub, 2014). It was an exceptionally violent area.

But for many of Mthonjeni's detectives and officers, experiences of violence were not restricted to work; they were part of their personal lives, too. Casually beginning a parade briefing, Captain Jacobs, the commander of a Crime Prevention Unit (CPU), announced that there had been two murders the previous evening. Ignoring this attempt to begin the briefing, Warrant Jiyana jokingly asked the captain how he was doing. 'My friend was also shot last night,' he replied, solemnly. The room fell silent. After a pause Jiyana asked, 'Was it that guy you often drive around with?' 'Yes,' replied Jacobs, 'that one. He was only thirty.'

Jacobs told a story about his friend going to a party. He, Jacobs, had also been invited but had not gone. It was while walking home that his friend had been shot. 'The gangsters shot him,' explained Jacobs, 'I drove past his body at about ten past four this morning on my way to the station. I stopped and asked who it was and they told me it was my friend. His body was still warm.' One of the constables offered, 'Sorry, captain,' to which he responded, 'And other than that I don't have any good news.'

Captain Jacobs lived in Manenberg, a part of the Cape Flats notorious for gang and drug-related crime. His story was indicative of a reality many Mthonjeni police faced: they lived in areas wracked by violent crime and they worked in an area saturated in violence. It was as if death followed them wherever they went.

On another occasion I was driving into the station before an evening shift, listening to the radio news. A police officer at a station bordering Mthonjeni's had been shot and killed on duty hours earlier. At the station I asked Captain Thangana, whose CPU shift I would be working with, if he had heard about the death. Having just come on duty he said he hadn't, but he had a response ready nonetheless: 'It's not nice to hear of death. No matter where they work, if they are wearing the blue they are your colleague.'

A little later, while briefing his officers in his characteristic monotone, Captain Thangana slipped into the lecture, 'Earlier today Noah passed away.' He had spoken to colleagues and realised that he knew the deceased officer. 'That guy was funny,' he went on, 'He always made jokes on the radio.' The faces of the officers registered no surprise. Instead, one of the young constables responded without sympathy, 'All of our times will come, captain.' An older warrant officer added, 'You can avoid all the routes but it will come to you. You can go any way you want but you can't avoid death,' laughing. But Captain Thangana was openly moved, he didn't laugh.

Later in the evening while on patrol with Thangana and another officer the captain asked out of nowhere, 'Oh Noah, how can the *skollies* shoot us?' The death was on his mind, 'I wonder how your widow is coping?' His colleague and I remained silent but the message was clear: the lives of SAPS officers were not respected. It is a narrative that informs SAPS identity across the country and one which adds an uncomfortable weight to any shift.

Mthonjeni (the township): crime prevention, stop and search, and street cleaning

It was murder which set the backdrop to policing in Mthonjeni and murder against which the station's Crime Prevention Units (CPU) were tasked with patrolling the area's streets, maintaining order and responding to crime in progress. Whereas murder squad detectives were cynical enough to expect death every time they were on standby, CPU officers strove to end their shifts without a notification of murder.

At all four of my field sites, patrol officers almost all saw 'visible policing' (random patrol) accompanied by 'stop and search' as 'crime prevention'. This was true even in the rural villages. The logic was that given enough police coercion, crime would decline. Police sought to meddle in the lives of poor, young men, to separate the dirty from the clean, and so to bring about a particular notion of order. Mthonjeni police believed murder was concentrated in Mountain View because the prevalence of shacks meant vehicular patrol and locating addresses was difficult. The inference was that crime only existed where police couldn't reach, as if their bureaucratic ordering of space and bodies was enough to quell it.

As I describe below then, during the imagined perfect CPU shift officers would navigate a network of seamlessly connected roads, stopping, searching and sorting young men. The police presence alone would demand residents' respect for the uniform, the law and for life. But that respect was never entirely there and crime was never absent. As such, I believe that by describing the area as impenetrable, officers sought to void themselves of responsibility and lay blame in a realm which they saw as out of their control. The presence of crime in spaces they could not reach, they believed, proved the impact they had, and brought meaning to their nights.

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Within hours of my first two CPU patrols, separate groups of officers had joked that if they dropped me at the side of the road for five minutes I would be killed. They enjoyed highlighting the exceptionalism of the area, jokingly calling it ‘The Republic of Mthonjeni’. They particularly played up its exceptionalism after dark. For these officers, daylight hours were not their concern. They didn’t believe much crime was committed during the day, and they were there to prevent crime. This didn’t mean they sat around idly during daylight; rather they patrolled incessantly, stopping and searching young men. While those below sixteen were obliged to be in school, officers only wanted to know whether they were carrying weapons. Stops seldom involved a request for permission to search the men. Rather, seeing the police vehicle stopping and officers opening doors, groups of men would stop mid-step and wait for the instruction to raise their arms or lean against the car. Sometimes they simply assumed these positions without being asked. It was clear that most were familiar with the routine.

I came to view these rituals as symbolically tainting a black urban sub-proletariat. Behind a veneer of impartiality they marked young men as threatening, offering them a choice between prison or a precarious future on the periphery of the market. The treatment of young, black men in this way - particularly in the urban context, or in that of movement from the countryside to the city – is one that has played out in South Africa for over a century (Glaser 2000; Samara, 2011:19; Super 2013). Today, as always, race and class remain powerful determinants of who goes to prison in South Africa (Super, 2013:82), and the CPU’s actions reminded all of this truth.

Small collections of knives, sharpened screwdrivers, once even a machete, lay about in the patrol cars as evidence of this work. No arrests or formal record of the confiscations

were made. Rather, the implements were simply taken. As far as the officers were concerned, four or five confiscated implements were the mark of a good shift.

During the day the area's streets were busy. Men, women and children of all ages walked and played in them, sat in doorways or in tiny front yards, bringing a life to the area that is absent in the city's suburbs with their high walls and empty streets. Police understood – not least because many lived in comparable neighbourhoods – that a large portion of residents were unemployed and had little means to leave the area. As such, CPU officers simply patrolled, providing surveillance, visiting or chatting with familiar faces and waiting to be called on for assistance.

It was at night that patrol officers' visions of what the policing area should look like and how they understood their role in bringing this about, took a new shape. Once it was dark, but particularly from ten 'o clock onwards, officers were less comfortable with human traffic, they wanted the streets empty and did their best to encourage people off them. As Captain Thangana said to me of the empty streets one night, 'There is nobody here anymore. Now my work is done.' In the simplest of terms this was the perfect night for these officers: empty streets without a report of serious crime meant the community had respected them and they had served their purpose.

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Emptying streets of black bodies - in particular those of young men - has underscored South African urban life for over a century. 'Total apartheid' aimed to deprive Africans of South African citizenship and land rights and relegated them to ethnic reserves removed from key urban centres. For much of the twentieth century most Africans (with the exception of a sizeable minority) were only permitted to venture into white South Africa if permitted to do so and usually only to work. Over time the slicing of urban space into

racially segregated blocks meant that race-based policing was simple. It encouraged the uncritical reading of human bodies, and treatment of groups with a catalogue of pre-defined actions.

The narratives used to understand Sowetan gangs between 1935 and 1970 (Glaser, 2001) were uncannily similar to those I found among police in Mthonjeni and my other field sites. Glaser tells us that from the mid-1930s the most common explanation for urban African juvenile criminality in Soweto was a perceived disconnect between rural and urban life. Where rural youth were deemed respectful and subservient, city youth were seen as corrupted by crime, prostitution and the media. Glaser suggests that similar gangs and discourses probably existed in other urban settings with concentrations of poor city-bred youth with limited employment possibilities, housing, schooling and recreational facilities (Glaser 1998:720).

Likewise, Mthonjeni's police regularly lamented the 'Cape Borners', teen boys whom they described as being born in Cape Town and so lacking rural values. They blamed them for much of the crime in the area. They described December and January as the months when young men migrated to the Eastern Cape, taking their violence with them. Similarly, the rural police in Gompo talked of city youth bringing crime to the countryside over the school holidays.

Mthonjeni's police also frequently referenced the need for the area to be developed so that youth could access opportunities and facilities to keep them from crime. In their minds, like the welfarists of old, it was the lack of opportunities that pushed young men to crime, the precarity of South Africa. Not only was the sentiment almost a century old, but it echoed the narratives through which many officers described their own journeys into the

SAPS: They had joined because they had had few alternatives but once inside, the SAPS had become the foundation of money and meaning on which they built their lives.

The framing of African rural life as ordered and peaceful, and cities as threats to African social values and morality, has a long history in South Africa. Where once apartheid's police incessantly stopped African residents to check pass books before removing many from white urban space, so Mthonjeni's police work to empty township streets of their presence. They call to them, shout at them, search them, and threaten them. The interactions label, classify and stratify (Wacquant, 2013:11-12; Loader & Mulcahy, 2003:43) marking the men as pollutants to an imagined order (Douglas, 1996). If every police-civilian encounter is a 'teachable moment' through which police communicate meaning about the world (Tyler, 2011:260), then the message communicated in these encounters seemed to me to be: *'You look like us but you are not like us. You lack our values. We, the police, have conformed but you haven't. We know your kind. These streets are ours. If you don't behave, one day we will get you.'*

There is one more important overlap between Glaser's depiction of Soweto's gangs and contemporary police. Gang members separated themselves from society by embracing criminality, rejecting work and glorifying violence, their objectives being survival and the accumulation of status. Police were the enemy and their presence was seen as an invasion of territory (Glaser, 2000:81) which gangs believed they ruled (Glaser, 1998:725). Kynoch (2003) has suggested that before 1976 African members of apartheid's South African Police force (SAP) were respected as professionals, other than when enforcing racist legislation. Today, township youth are still often deemed lazy and criminally threatening, while slightly older men from similar backgrounds with precarious prospects are recruited into the SAPS and offered security of income. The engagements that take place between township men

and police officers at the start of the 21st century are in many ways a continuation of old standoffs between men – some in uniform, others not - each vying for place and status in a precarious society that offers few wage-earning opportunities and little security.

Mthonjeni (the township): summary

Murder was the spectre hanging over the work of Mthonjeni's police. A shift without murder was a good shift, but with murder seen as inevitable, it was the seamless flow of information from the public to the police – a mark of professional competence and public respect leading to quick arrests, for which detectives longed.

Officers thirsted for a sense of police-ordained order. They wanted roads and house numbers in place, believing these would support their strategies to stop, search and coerce poorly socialised young men off the streets at night, building respect for their uniforms and reducing crime.

Officers' desire to see reductions in murder and other crime, was related to performance pressure. But it was also fuelled by the fact that many of the young men whom police believed were the root of the area's violence, were very much like the officers themselves. Raised, working and still living in areas saturated by crime, Mthonjeni's officers' lives were enveloped in violence. If Mthonjeni's violence failed to decrease as a result of their professional efforts, neither might the violence in their home neighbourhoods. This in turn challenged the idea that police work was important and worthy of respect, and that the future would be safer than the present. The prevalence of crime in the face of police saturation simultaneously motivated in officers' minds the need for better resources and harsher laws, while threatening the public respect the occupation

might garner. Shifts that promoted the idea of police competence, value and respect, and absent of reported crime, were good shifts.

Yorkton (the affluent city): space and place

The Yorkton police station is one of the Cape Town's biggest and oldest. Its policing area encompasses a large, leafy segment of Cape Town's mountainside suburbs, and a more concrete-dominated business and commercial hub. The area was first settled by the Khoekhoe, pastoralists who migrated from modern day Botswana around 5AD, and is not far from where the city's first stones were laid by Dutch settlers, beginning a long relationship between coloniser and colonised, haves and have-nots. 'The Company Gardens', named after the Dutch East India Company (VOC) that founded them in 1652, and the VOC's slave lodge in service from 1679-1811, stand as nearby reminders of the past that shaped the present.

Today, the Yorkton policing area is a bustling space of office blocks, high and some low-end apartments, very large private homes, boutique shops and restaurants, bars, clubs and theatres. During the day it hosts workers from all over the city, while at night the city's wealthier residents and international visitors enjoy its more luxurious offerings of food, drink and music.

Yorkton's policing area covers almost 25 square kilometres, twice that of Mthonjeni. Despite its size, with around 35 000 residents its population is a sixth the size of Mthonjeni's. In the 2011 census, 53% of residents identified as 'white' and 25% 'Black African'. Almost all of Yorkton's policing area falls within a single ward, the data from which illustrate the overlap between race and class in the city:

Table 1: Select census data the primary ward in the Yorkton policing area

2011 Census data	Ward 05
Population	28 252
Aged 20 or older and completed high school	85%
Aged 15-64 and employed	94%
Monthly household income of R3200 (£175) or less ²²	18%
Households living in formal dwellings	99%
Access to piped water in dwelling or yard	99%
Access to flush toilet connected to public sewer system	99%
Refuse removed at least once a week	99%
Use electricity for lighting dwelling	99%

Source: City of Cape Town, 2013c

Yorkton (the affluent city): the wonderful weekend

While the perfect night in Mthonjeni focused on emptying streets, in Yorkton the busy streets were celebrated. Yorkton is home to some of the city’s most concentrated night life and attracts thousands of revellers on summer evenings. I spent a number of these evenings on patrol with Constable Hendricks.

Hendricks liked to drive the largest of the police vans in the lot. Although the headlights didn’t work, he told me he preferred it to the newer vans because of its size; he believed it commanded respect. Apart from attending to three property-related crime complaints, the first hours of the shift were spent ‘cleaning’ the sector, as Hendricks put it. He stopped to ask apparently homeless people and car guards whom he did not recognise, to leave his sector and made friendly chit-chat with others. It seemed that with most he was popular, but those who didn’t know him were warned to leave.

²² GBP175

Another element of Hendricks's 'cleaning' involved detaining people (not necessarily arresting) in the back of the police van if he thought they posed a threat to his sector or authority. During the course of my first shift with him he detained eight unrelated individuals. A car guard was choked and detained for not vacating the area fast enough (Hendricks later told him he had arrested him because he had embarrassed the constable in public. He would also tell me that the choke was his preferred mode of arrest because it avoided the embarrassment of being unable to control people in public); an apparently homeless man was detained and had his walking stick broken in two because, so Hendricks claimed, he had been warned not to loiter in the area in the past; an intoxicated man sleeping outside a Seven-Eleven was detained at the request of the store manager (who rewarded Hendricks with a bag of fruit) as well as another man who was drunk and standing in the middle of the road; two young men involved in an assault outside a club (though there had been a choice of ten to choose from and Hendricks had just grabbed the two closest to him); and a young clubber in possession of marijuana. All but the last three detentions were of poor men. While the latter three were likely better off, they were young and coloured, like Hendricks. Hendricks piled the men into the back of the van over a number of hours, returning to the station to process them in two separate batches.

I asked Hendricks if his policing didn't disproportionately target the poor. He replied that he had never thought about it (despite growing up poor himself) but that 'research and statistics show that they are the ones who commit the crime'. He thought the statement would impress me but I knew there was no such data. He was presenting a front which he expected me to accept without challenge. Loader and Walker call such claims the state's 'wilful disregard of its own ignorance' (Loader & Walker, 2007:117). It was a mantra which,

repeated enough, Hendricks had accepted as a guiding truth of the city, his work, and his relation to them.

Despite having been assigned to a relatively quiet suburban sector for the night, Hendricks wanted to be where the crowds were. Unlike Mthonjeni, this was not because he wanted to chase people away. On the contrary, he sought them out for their youthful, alcohol and money-fuelled sexual energy. He wanted to be a part of it. As we ambled along the crowded and traffic-filled streets he pointed out the bars and clubs he frequented on his days off. Occasionally he stopped the big van and led me into clubs to greet their owners and receive free Red Bull.

Hendricks also sought out the busy streets because they were where he could flex his muscles in front of an audience he sought to please. His decisions were quick and surgical. If stopped and asked for help, or if he spotted someone he deemed unfavourable to the area, he simply threw the accused in the back of the police van and drove on.

These events meant a good night for Hendricks for a number of reasons. The many arrests made him a good performer in the target-chasing SAPS environment. The swiftness with which he controlled and detained his targets saved him the potential embarrassment of resistance. It also projected an image of efficiency to onlookers. These were the young and affluent, the people he liked to surround himself with on his days off, and the people whose middle-class future he hoped to join. By surrounding himself with them and leveraging the power granted him by the state, he hoped to meet their needs and so extend and cement his place in their affluent networks. They allowed him to imagine an image of the future in which he and they were equals.

Yorkton (the affluent city): the policing web

That the state is no longer the sole provider of security (Loader & Walker, 2007:102) was particularly evident in Yorkton. Police working there occupy a special position in a web of what Brodeur calls ‘police assemblages’ (Brodeur, 2010:4). In addition to the twenty-odd SAPS patrol officers on duty during each shift, an array of other policing actors keep watch over the city’s streets. As elsewhere in the world (Loader, 1999) in Yorkton policing has become a commodity more than a public good (Samara, 2011:17).

The Yorkton Improvement District (YID) – a public-private partnership - employs a hundred ‘public safety officers’ and two patrol vans during each twelve hour shift. Public safety officers are equipped with radios, pepper spray and truncheons; the vans are driven by armed officers. Additionally, the city manages a network of CCTV cameras in the area. It is one of the largest public-private partnerships that have sprung up across the city’s affluent geographies since 2000, the governance of which partially fall under property owners (Samara, 2011:192).

In addition to the SAPS and YID staff, the Cape Town Metropolitan Police Department (CTMPD) also employs crime prevention and traffic enforcement officers in the area. Residents have formed an active neighbourhood watch, including a full-time radio controller who coordinates volunteer patrols and monitors feedback from private licence plate recognition cameras in the area. The watch provides local SAPS patrol vans with hand radios so that resident patrollers can easily call on police for help.

Many businesses, private and public building owners in the area subscribe to private security services, many of which include armed responders. Because of this policing web, the area is saturated in armed men and women on the lookout for bodies out of place in the affluent city.

Finally, streets in the commercial part of the area are populated by what are commonly known as ‘car guards’. These are generally fluorescent vest-clad men, often self-appointed, but at times employed by restaurants and businesses to ‘watch your car’ while owners are away. The expectation is for a small tip in return for keeping thieves at bay.

At the top of this assemblage of policing actors sit the South African Police Service. While it is possible that the various actors don’t revere the SAPS – indeed their presence means the SAPS, like police elsewhere (Loader and Mulcahy, 2003:26), is ‘desacralized’ as the primary provider of security - yet it is the SAPS to whom all must turn when an arrest is made. No other actor has the authority to investigate crime. This position gives Yorkton’s SAPS officers status. Even the most junior officer can call on or instruct a range of independent policing actors in their work. The assemblage brings out the ‘paternalism’ (Loader & Walker, 2007:169) of the state professional who believes s/he alone has the skill and knowledge to govern the security of the affluent city. But when most police working in Yorkton go home at night, it is seldom to spaces as affluent or resourced as the Yorkton area. Rather, most return to the Cape Flats and the urban fringe with its hardship, precarity and violence.

Yorkton (the affluent city): policing (un)familiar worlds

Not all of Yorktonent city): policing (un)familiar worldso believes s/he alone has tfidence to operate in busy, affluent public spaces, so they avoided them.

I spent a number of shifts patrolling the city with Constable Moshoeshoe. He enjoyed his job and the opportunities it had afforded him and his family. He wanted to serve the community, avoid the violence and corruption he believed many of his colleagues were involved in, and make the country a better place. He did this by sticking quite rigidly to his

patrol postings, alternating between long patrols on the back roads of his sectoros residential neighbourhoods and breaks parked under trees. Unlike Hendricks, Moshoeshoe didn't seek out public interaction. When forced to engage with the public, he often did so awkwardly. I sensed that he struggled to relate to and engage with the world he was being asked to police, which was very different from the one in which he had spent most of his life.

Moshoeshoe was raised in a family of ten, a thousand kilometres from Cape Town in the rural Free State province. His family had been desperately poor. He had sold hats to pay his way through high school. His mother tongue was Sotho, not a common language in the Western Cape. Until shortly before we met he had lived in a shack on the poorest outskirts of the city, yet at work he was tasked with patrolling some of its wealthiest neighbourhoods. Its residents were mostly white South Africans and affluent migrants from Europe. They were people whose lives were as different from Moshoeshoe's as any could be.

Because South Africa's divided past continues to shape its present, certain police officers will always be posted in communities where residents don't look or speak like them, or share many of their life experiences. For some, like Hendricks, this difference appeals to them and animates their imagination and work. But because Moshoeshoe was relatively unfamiliar with the language and world of those who called on him for assistance, he struggled to engage with them. Instead, he would routinely ask *me* what I thought he should do. A good shift for Moshoeshoe was one in which he displayed competence and learned new skills.

For others in the precinct, its whiteness and affluence were more familiar to them than was the rural past which had shaped Moshoeshoe's youth. Sergeant Louw and Warrant Officer Kriel were both very comfortable in Yorkton's affluence. Louw spent his days patrolling and drinking speciality coffee. The coffee was an expense most SAPS officers would consider wasteful. But Louw was proud of the fact that, through money earned in afterhours work, he could afford the luxury. He believed that he was in control of the spaces he patrolled, that his presence brought respect and prevented crime. He celebrated the dramatic minority of police work, the chase and arrest, and would tell a related story whenever he could. When a rare afternoon murder in the city was followed soon after by an accidental drug-related death, he relished the challenge of processing the suspect and scenes. As a white South African with an extra job on the side, Louw was confident amid Yorkton's affluence, even if he was not entirely part of it. When he was given the chance to test and prove his skills during a shift, it made it a good shift.

Similarly, Warrant Officer Kriel was at home in middle-class space. He had a small company on the side and was financially stable. He told me he did police work for the enjoyment while earning most his money elsewhere. For him, the best experience he could have on a shift was being shown gratitude by the public.

In a rarity for police work, while on patrol with Kriel we stumbled across a young man running away from a screaming woman whose phone he had just stolen. Following a short chase in which our police van ramped pavements and cut through parking lots, Kriel apprehended the thief. When the young victim caught up to us she burst into breathless song, 'I love South Africa! I love the South African police!' It made Kriel's day.

These may not seem like the kind of moments that should define a good shift. At face value they appear to be the daily rush that many people expect of police work. But as

shown in Chapter Two, popular depictions of policing are seldom true to life. It is because such depictions are so absent from officers' daily experience, that Louw and Kriel took so much pleasure in them. By celebrating their ability to process a rare scene, or intervene in a crime in progress, they acknowledged their relative impotence against the daily victimisation of their clients. In the rare experiences of chase and apprehension they regained some agency in an occupation that seldom allows them to glimpse the final result of their work.

Because Yorkton had such an array of policing actors working its streets, SAPS officers were able to relax more than their township peers. They could pass off certain tasks to other agencies, while carefully selecting those that they enjoyed, or which strengthened their ties to certain groups. The relative order of the area and the breadth of its policing web meant officers could more consciously shape the structure of their shifts. But for those like Moshoeshoe, who were less comfortable with the other worldliness and rush of the affluent city, a good shift was one where they were not asked to do too much, where they were challenged and grew, but in small increments and over time. For over three hundred years Moshoeshoe's forbearers were actively kept out of 'white' urban space. To him, as for many, their affluent bubbles remained relatively foreign; it would take time before he felt comfortable in such contexts.

Perhaps the most important element of the work-worlds Moshoeshoe, Louw and Kriel described in their tales was the gratitude shown them by civilians. In a country where police very often feel unappreciated, gratitude made it all worthwhile. Often, a good shift was one in which officers were recognised for their contributions to the lives of others. When that recognition came from the middle-classes they aspire to join, the shift is all the better.

Yorkton (the affluent city): detectives defending the fortress city

Yorkton officers saw threats to their policing area as originating outside of it, on the Cape Flats where most police lived. As a result, much of patrol officers' work involved monitoring markers of class and questioning those who appeared not to belong in the city after dark. But once a crime had been reported and a suspect identified, it was the detectives who took up the mantle of labelling and ordering the city's bodies. Part of this work came in the form of weekly tracing operations.

In the SAPS, 'tracing' is when detectives follow up on the last known location of a wanted suspect in order to bring them before the court. While individual detectives are free to trace suspects during office hours, Yorkton had a dedicated tracing unit. Once or twice a week it was joined by up to ten other station detectives to conduct medium scale tracing operations. These usually took place at night from around nine in the evening until four or five in the morning. In the next section I describe such an operation as an example of a good night, and illustrate how it shapes the privilege of areas like Yorkton, and the developing spaces of the Cape Flats.

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The detectives arriving for the operation wore comfortable civilian clothing; sweat pants and T-shirts, sneakers and hiking boots. Some carried hoodies and woolly hats in anticipation of temperature drops during the night. The style signature of many was reminiscent of the symbols of deviance patrol officers seek out in young men, a reminder that in South Africa, 'police officer' and 'suspect' are often drawn from the same neighbourhoods and backgrounds.

Captain Januarie was head of the tracing group and was in charge of the operations. He brought to them an impressive presence, an agitation and focus that commanded attention. He began the briefing by asking if everyone had their bullet-proof vests, firearms and handcuffs, repeating the question over and over like a mantra. The inference was clear: they were heading out into the dark night and the tools were vital if the detectives were to make it to the morning in one piece. He berated those who had left items at home. ‘What am I supposed to tell your family if you are hurt tonight?’ he asked with rhetorical anger. He listed his cell phone number and told the detectives to notify him ‘immediately if anything happens’, that they must not be afraid to call for backup, inferring that there was nothing shameful in it. The detective next to me mumbled under his breath, ‘I don’t need your number; I don’t want you as a friend.’ Not everyone agreed with Januarie’s approach.

Two young detectives arrived mid-briefing. Making her apologies, one of them said she had been on duty until 5pm and had then needed to provide transport for the night shift. The Captain lashed out at her, chiding her for not ending her day shift early. He said that her sleepless state would dull her senses and ability to ‘cover [her] partner’s back’. Then, carrying on with his briefing, ‘I want all male suspects handcuffed behind their backs, no exceptions. And if there’s a wall to jump over, you had better all jump. Don’t make me chase you, I brought my cane with me!’ inferring that he would assault slackers. ‘And if we fight, we fight together. If you are a *sissy*²³ and don’t want to fight, go home now. Lastly, nobody is fucking left behind!’

The drama was tangible. Having been tracing with detectives from Mthonjeni where comparable operations lacked anything close to this urgency, I found myself surprised by it all. While Mthonjeni’s detectives regularly traced suspects wanted for murder and other

²³ A pejorative term suggesting an absence of implied masculine traits such as courage and bravery.

violent crimes, Yorkton's generally sought those suspected of involvement in petty thefts, traffic accidents and fraud. It was the age old ability of police agencies to manufacture fear and infuse the night with purpose.

A successful tracing operation was one that resulted in the arrest of a good number of those being sought, preferably in as little time as possible, and without injury to detectives. What would become evident, however, is that for Captain Januarie a perfect night included stamping his authority on the neighbourhoods that his suspects (and many of his detectives) called home. He wanted to mark the bodies of their young men as undesirable and he did so through bullying and force, encouraging all to follow his lead.

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The parts of the city through which the Yorkton detectives moved on their tracing operations were markedly different to those of Mthonjeni's. Mthonjeni's suspects almost always lived in the policing area. Detectives there saw it as a space of people at war with themselves. They would knock on the door of a shack or house within minutes of leaving the police station, and the commute to successive houses was brief. In contrast, Yorkton's detectives travelled 15 to 40 kilometres out of their policing area before reaching their first address. The threat to their policing area came from elsewhere, from outside.

There was a force in the Yorkton detectives' presence as they made their way out into the dark streets. Typing notes into my phone on the back seat of one of the cars in the convoy I called it a 'Snake of Power'. I was struck by the speed and recklessness of the procession of five unmarked state vehicles.²⁴ We sped through the backstreets of the Cape Flats, driving through red lights and stop streets. My first thought was that if anyone was to be harmed that night, it was likely to be the result of reckless driving. Police in South Africa

²⁴ 'Unmarked vehicle' is the term police use to refer to police vehicles that don't carry any official police markings. Detectives tend to use these in their work.

never wear seatbelts. They believe that they slow them down and, ironically, pose a risk to their survival should they suddenly need to leap from a car. What is more likely is that their dismissal of seatbelts is symptomatic of South Africans' general dismissal of those basic laws that are not regularly enforced. On the one occasion that we did stop for a red light the driver of my car explained that it was because there was a traffic camera covering the intersection. He stopped because his infringement may have been punished, he was coerced.

Because they were unmarked, there was nothing about the collection of speeding, weaving cars that identified them as those of the police. There were no flashing lights, no fluorescent strips and no sirens. Nor were any of the detectives wearing police uniforms. The firearms tucked into trousers looked more gangster than officer. If it weren't for their bullet proof vests one might have thought them an armed gang. As we tore through darkness I imagined parents ushering children indoors and pedestrians fearing a violent gang on the loose. But perhaps residents expected this behaviour from the SAPS and knew who was steering the snake.

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Samara (2011:187) suggests that urban renewal in Cape Town has taken the form of crime containment. The logic is that socio-economic development depends on economic growth which itself depends on a foundation of security. It is a context in which security is pervasive; with security becoming the lens through which social problems are defined and acted upon (Loader, 2006:208). Unable to provide equal security across the city, security provision comes to mirror Cape Town's historical divisions, with an immense architecture in place to protect affluent city spaces while policing focuses on young, black men who live

outside affluent borders. The flow of Yorkton detectives out of their policing area and onto the Cape Flats was part of this divide.

Cape Town as a whole protects its affluent spaces and social groups while regulating poorer spaces and disciplining their populations (Samara 2011: 190, Hannah, 1997:171), it expels the poor from the affluent city while containing them in townships like those found in the Mthonjeni policing area. Meanwhile, rural citizens migrating to Cape Town usually settle on the urban fringe, in its township's backyard shacks. As the townships swell, the state extends its resources to them while cultivating the presence of private policing in the city's centre and suburbs (Samara, 2011:193). This allows the wealthy to self-govern while the poor are contained in impoverished silos where state resources label young men as threats to the peace.

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The speed and recklessness of the driving was not motivated by a need to get anywhere quickly. This was clear because, rather than restricting their work to the tracing of suspects, Yorkton's Snake of Power regularly made sudden stops in the crowded evening streets. Following the lead of Captain Januarie's vehicle, detectives leapt from their cars and pushed young men up against walls or down on the dusty ground. These stops were particularly common in the first hours of the evening. In them I found group violence incomparable to what I'd seen in my two months patrolling the Yorkton policing area, nor indeed anywhere else. I wondered whether the detectives felt at greater liberty to mistreat the men because there, tens of kilometres from their own policing area and without official markers by which they might be identified, they were unlikely to be held accountable. It was also apparent from the way the detectives discussed the neighbourhoods as we drove, that

they saw them as soaked in deviance and criminality, in contrast to the relative cleanliness and order of the city.

The irony that most of the detectives lived in, or had grown up on the Cape Flats was not lost on me. I wondered to what extent their violence was the acting out of frustration over the crime, violence and damaged masculinities they saw in their home communities; the young men through whom like mirrors in the night, they saw themselves, their fathers, brothers and sons, and how this reflection animated the belief that state coercion and force would fashion the young men of the Cape Flats into something respectable.

The desire for respect was a theme that ran throughout my engagements with police in the field. But if it was recognition and respect for their authority that Yorkton's detectives sought on these tracing operations, they buried their desires in silence. Whether leaping from vehicles or knocking on doors, detectives almost never identified themselves as police officers. They didn't announce their presence and didn't show any identification. They simply barked instructions and resorted to force and aggressive language when people questioned their actions or talked back at them. When during one of these operations I asked my car mate, Constable Jali, why this was, he responded, 'People know the *skollies* don't knock,' as if the fact that detectives were knocking late at night was signal enough that they represented the state and should be obeyed. But it wasn't enough. On a number of occasions the occupants of houses and shacks refused to open doors, even after claims of officialdom had been made, believing that whoever was outside was only *pretending* to be a detective so that they could rob the resident.

A particularly unfortunate example of such an encounter – and one that I don't believe would ever have occurred within the Yorkton policing area – played out when detectives tried to gain entry to a backyard shack. The shack was built behind a house

which police had already searched without finding their subject. Discovering the shack, a 20 year old and very zealous student constable - the future of policing – began banging on its door with the butt of his metal torch. He was soon joined by others, constables and warrant officers, demanding that the occupants unlock the door and metal security gate, threatening to break the door and window if they didn't. Nobody seemed to ask why they were targeting this shack. Rather, on realising that somebody was refusing them entry, all responded with indignation.

A terrified sounding woman screamed from within while a man muttered in lower tones. She wanted him to open the door before the shack was damaged but he feared 'the *skollies*' were waiting outside. In the quiet of the night the shouts must have carried to many ears in the cramped neighbourhood, but few neighbours stirred.

It was only after five minutes of this that detectives identified themselves. By then Captain Januarie had arrived and was trying to force the security gate from its hinges. A resident of the main house leant out her window and shouted to the terrified shack residents, assuring them that the men destroying their home were police, but this didn't help.

Eventually, Januarie's efforts paid off and the security gate parted from its frame. Hearing it break, a middle aged man opened the door from within. Wide eyed and clad only in underwear, he shouted, demanding an explanation for the invasion. Behind him, cowering on the bed, which took up half the shack's single room, lay a tear-stained woman next to a toddler, the latter sitting upright, silent, and alert.

Immediately Januarie stepped forward. From what I had seen of his work, I expected him to strike the man. But he didn't. Instead he stood a foot from him, looked him in the eye and shouted, 'When the police tell you to open your door, you must open your door!'

Realising, exasperated, that the detectives were looking for a neighbour ('What?! You're looking for her?' as if flabbergasted by the simplicity of it, 'I'll take you!'), the man pulled on a pair of trousers and marched across the road to a nearby clustering of shacks from where the woman (who must have heard the commotion and known she was being sought), consented to leaving with the detectives. The alleged thief - it turned out she was wanted for shop lifting - had been seized, but at what cost to her neighbours?

It is notable that this show of force, this malicious damage to property by police, didn't serve any official purpose. Rather, detectives were affronted by the shack residents' resistance and responded with rage. It was hard to imagine them using the same force and venom with the wealthy residents of their own policing area. But the Cape Flats represented a world closer to the one many police came from, one which many hoped to leave behind in the years ahead. They did not hide their disdain.

Outside the neighbour's shack, Captain Januarie continued to lecture the man. Januarie removed his SAPS appointment certificate from his wallet and stuck it in man's face as if to say, 'Next time you see this you must listen!' But until then nobody had made an effort to produce any form of identification, they had only banged and broken. The whole performance seemed indicative of a yearning by detectives to have their authority respected. Without it the night would not be close to perfect, at least not for the loud and forceful among them.

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If in some instances Captain Januarie and his team had their authority undermined, there were always opportunities in which it could be reclaimed. Minutes after apprehending the shop lifter, the Snake of Power came across four coloured men in their twenties in the empty streets of Mthonjeni. The fact that they were coloured in a predominantly African

area signalled to the detectives that they were drug dealers. Suspect drug dealers, it seemed, deserved special treatment.²⁵ The men were forced to lie on their stomachs, aggressively searched, shouted and sworn at, walked over, hit with a metal torch, kicked and forced to eat a very small package of marijuana found on the ground nearby. This time a second student constable joined the first in leading some of the violence together with Captain Januarie; the new learning from the old.

A few minutes into the interrogation a marked police car rolled past a few meters from where the men lay. It was the Railway Police patrol, a special branch of the SAPS with offices at a nearby train station. I wondered if they would intervene in the assault but as they passed us by the driver simply met my gaze with a nod and continued into the darkness. Perhaps I should have expected this. If police officers don't respect one another's actions, who will?

Back in the car Constable Jali said he didn't like working the way we were that night. I wondered if this was a reference to the beatings but it wasn't. He said the late night cut into time he would prefer to devote to preparing dockets for inspection, meeting a performance target. As an afterthought he added that he didn't agree with his captain's violence, either.

We returned to the station at four o'clock on Thursday morning. The detectives had worked hard. Five arrests had been made in six hours and muscles had been flexed in the face of resistance. It was a near perfect night, at least for those of Januarie's ilk.

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Samara suggests that in Cape Town there has been a shift in city governance from township residents as victims to township residents as problems (Samara 2011:153). In his

²⁵ In chapter 4 I introduce a layer of irony to this interaction. Whereas these detectives felt those fitting the category 'drug dealer' deserved beating, Yorkton's undercover drug squad had a policy of never interfering with drug dealers because it would mean an inability to meet quotas for possession arrests.

view the state no longer ventures into townships. Instead it sticks to their peripheries like the apartheid forces of old monitoring the flow of residents from spaces in which the state is otherwise absent, a form of punitive containment (Samara, 2011:154, 193). I disagree. The Mthonjeni policing area had up to seven patrol vans on the road at any one time, while the state more broadly had invested in a court house, Home Affairs office, and clinic, in the policing area, not to mention all the RDP houses it built. The state was not absent. Did it engage with (poor) township residents differently to (affluent) city residents? Definitely. While Mthonjeni's police stopped and searched, labelled and sorted through their own daily rituals, Yorkton's detectives took their muscle to the township streets after dark and engaged with residents in ways that were very different from their interactions in the affluent city. The threat to the Yorkton policing area was portrayed as emanating from 'outside', as external to affluent space. The detective's response was one Loader (2009:248) identifies as increasingly common where appetites for security result in 'literal and symbolic trenches [being erected] between a familiar inside and hostile outside' to which one responds with violence. These concepts and their related police practice echo and reproduce the apartheid-era geography of inside/safety and outside/danger. It was a discourse animated by old, lingering narratives and characters with dark skins and meagre opportunities to whom a less forgiving governance and policing was tailored (Samara, 2011: 183).

Yorkton (the affluent city): summary

Yorkton's largely affluent and white residents are policed very differently to those of Cape Town's poorer black townships (Samara, 2011:121). While select governance attends to the needs of wealthy residents, policing in townships targets large swathes of their populations,

generalising young men and crime. This approach confines the dispossessed to ‘penal circuits’ of poverty, violence, arrest and prison (Wacquant, 2013:13) while the affluent are shielded from the poverty and police practice on which their comfort has been built.

Against this context a good shift for Yorkton’s patrol police meant being given opportunities to appear skilled and efficient in front of middle-class audiences. On those occasions when the audience expressed gratitude or respect for the police, it made it all the more worthwhile. Such incidents supported the idea that public policing is relevant, respected and appreciated.

For detectives, a good tracing operation was one in which a handful of suspects were apprehended. It was also good if detectives were able to return to the Cape Flats on which many lived, and communicate – often through force – their disdain for their poor, young, male, ‘criminal’ peers. In so doing, they reminded themselves of the path they had managed to avoid, and reminded communities of the power their job provided them.

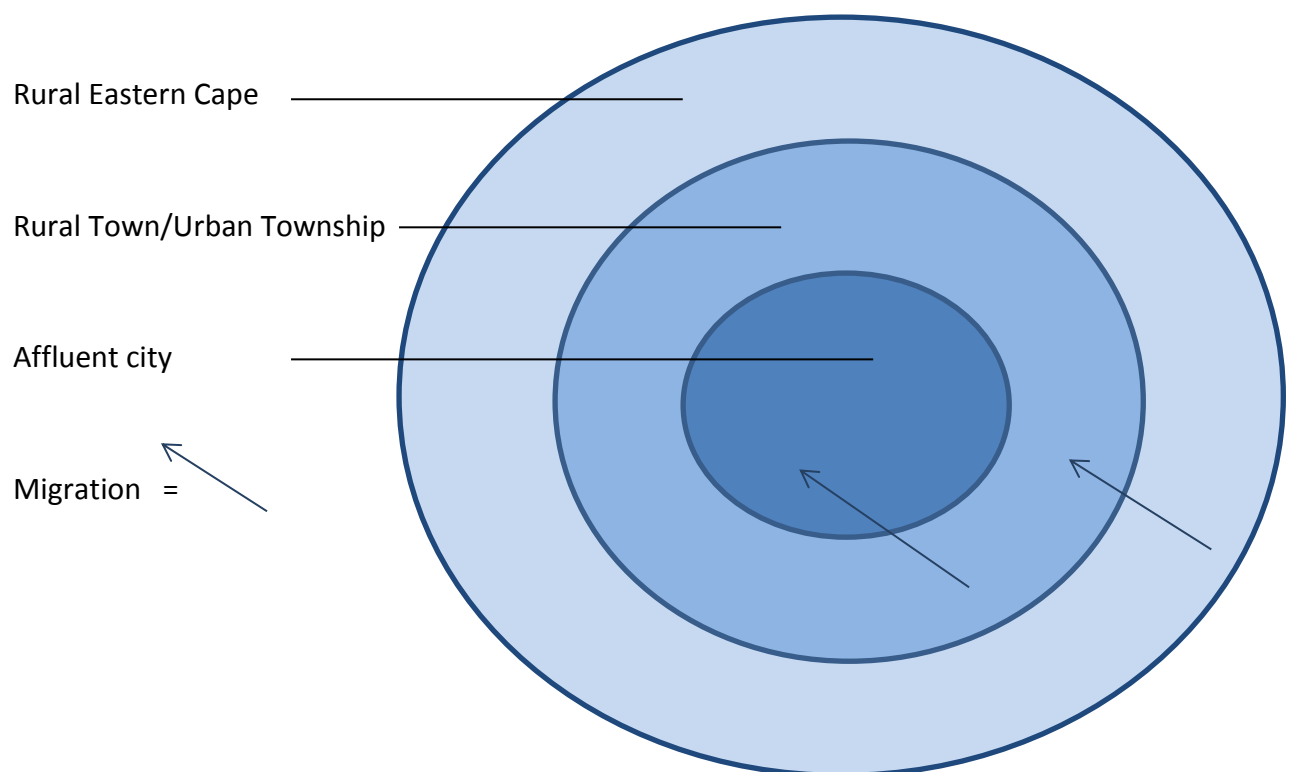
Patterson (the rural town): a bridge from village to city

I suggested in the introduction that many of the police with whom I spent time in the field thought of the rural Eastern Cape, with its nearest border nearly 600 kilometres away, as home. In a sense, the large rural parts of the province – particularly those that lie within the boundaries of former homelands – form another ‘outside’ to the affluent ‘inside’ of Cape Town’s affluence. However, while Yorkton’s police saw the township ‘outside’ as a threat, those in the township saw the rural ‘outside’ as a space of order.²⁶ But between these two zones one can identify a fourth: the rural town. Occupying a space between the rural village

²⁶ That said, the Cape Town city council has framed the rural Eastern Cape as a threat to the city’s overall prosperity due to the steady flow of people migrating from that province to the city, straining services.

and the urban fringe, the town – in this case Patterson – becomes a site where ‘rural order’ begins to unravel. One might think of these different sites as three circles, as in Figure 2, below. At the centre are the relatively rare affluent spaces in South African cities, such as Yorkton’s affluent city. Outside of this one finds the urban periphery, townships like those of the Mthonjeni policing area, some developing, others not, most still poor. I believe the rural town also falls into this zone. Patterson, like city townships, is a space of transition. It is the closest urban centre for many rural villages but struggles to attract investment or development other than from government. Instead, it draws in those from the countryside who qualify for RDP houses, and introduces them to the relative anonymity and inequality of small town South Africa. It also introduces them to the state’s sorting apparatus of the police.

Figure 2: Common imaginings of migration and space





Patterson is a town in the Indwe municipality of the Eastern Cape. It was established as a British base during its 1834-35 war with the amaXhosa, and later became the administrative centre for the region. The surrounding area was once the settling ground for a British-German Legion introduced outside East London as a defensive line for the British Cape Colony. The Germans and their kin remained for over a hundred years until, in the 1960s, many were forced to make way for the establishment of the Ciskei, a 'homeland' or Bantustan established for Xhosa South Africans. As in many of apartheid's homelands, the land was arid and inhospitable, and employment opportunities were few, forcing residents to seek poorly paid employment in exploitative South African sponsored factories or in white cities. In 1972 the South African government declared the Ciskei a self-governing territory, and in 1982 an independent republic. The area was only restored to South African status after the 1994 elections. When I visited it remained poor, though with signs of government developmental intervention all around.

Today Patterson remains an administrative centre. The Patterson SAPS station serves as the accounting or 'cluster' station for five smaller rural stations in the surrounding countryside, including Gompo where I spent most of my time in the province. Descendants of the European settlers have mostly moved on, however, with only 50 of a population of over 24 000 self-identifying as 'white' in the 2011 census. The vast majority identified as 'Black African'. The station covers an area of approximately 750 square kilometres. In addition to the police station, Patterson is home to a number of other government institutions including a hospital, traffic department, welfare services, public works and court house. Government is the largest employer in the town.

In the Indwe municipal area under which much of the policing area falls, 40 per cent of residents were unemployed in 2011, only 5,8 per cent had access to a flush toilet, and average household income ranged from R9601 (GBP527) to R38 200 (GBP2097) per annum (Indwe Municipality, 2014:20-21). Few houses had internal plumbing, though many had access to a nearby tap. Pushed by these circumstances, the municipality's population shrunk by 8.1 per cent between 2001 and 2011, very likely as a result of out-migration to cities, including Cape Town. Many of those who are employed, and have access to indoor plumbing and decent incomes are likely based in Patterson, where hundreds of new RDP homes have been built in recent years. Surrounding villages, then, are even poorer than the figures suggest. The Patterson policing area covered both the main town and a number of villages.

Patterson police believed that their efforts prevented crime. They told me that if there was a rape in two villages one month they would concentrate resources there and the next month there would be business robberies in a different village. The inference was that police coercion led to change, but never to control.

Against this understanding of crime, patrol police in Patterson followed many of the same strategies and held the same views as their Mthonjeni counterparts. In other words, they believed that empty streets were safe streets, and spent their weekend evenings stopping, searching and chasing young men, calling this 'crime prevention'. The chasing was unique among my field sites. Relatively often, seeing the police car slowing to a stop, individual men, or groups, would take off at a sprint. Sometimes police gave chase, sometimes they just laughed. As in Mthonjeni, police in Patterson could collect five or six screwdrivers and knives over the course of an evening, simply by stopping and searching (but never formally arresting or processing) young men.

As in Mthonjeni, at its core, patrol police in Patterson seemed to feel that civilian compliance with stop and search made for a good shift. While they chased every other man who fled, they generally failed to catch them. On one occasion a constable sprinted down the untarred road, chasing a group of teens. When he was a hundred meters away and out of site, two gun shots went off. In nine years shadowing police officers I had never witnessed anyone firing on duty. And yet the police officer who'd remained at the car with me didn't flinch; the gunshot was normal to him.

It struck me that the town was like a bridge connecting the countryside to the township fringes of the country's cities. It was urban enough to provide a core through which police could randomly patrol a space that offered residents relative anonymity, but rural and disempowered enough for police not to worry about following rules. Likewise, the anonymity, peri-urbanism, relative underdevelopment and scarcity of job prospects meant that in important ways the town mirrored the township.

Later in the evening we spotted the group of teen men once more. After a short pursuit, this time in the police car, the three constables I was with cornered one of them. Immediately they beat him with fists and feet, stopping after twenty seconds. One of them retrieved a knife from the ground. Chuckling, he told the beaten teen that next time he should just stop and hand the knife over. With the knife secured, the officers had their evidence of work well done and we departed.

Patterson (the rural town): summary

A good shift for Patterson's police borrowed from both Yorkton and Mthonjeni's. They sought to empty streets of pedestrian traffic, but were also concerned to make a good impression on the elderly. While they could be aggressive with the young, they were more

clearly respectful with those older than them. Whether questioning a tavern owner who had faked his business license, chatting to the neighbours of a village shop owner who was robbed at gunpoint, or helping an elderly man – intoxicated and bleeding heavily – break into his dormitory room after being robbed, their posture, demeanour and language was always respectful. It was almost as if in the rural town, the police were slightly more extreme at both ends of the service spectrum: they were more respectful of those they believed deserved respect, and more punitive with those they felt needed correction. It was the romanticised good of the village, with the violence of the township. If Patterson’s police were sorting and ordering young rural South Africans as they moved from the village, possibly through the town, on their way to a life in the cities, it seemed it was teaching them that violence was a means to command respect.

As for the village, was it as ideal as Yorkton’s police had remembered? I explore this in the remainder of the chapter.

Gompo (the rural village): the romance of rural life

Gompo is a small village off of a dirt road, 30 kilometres from Patterson. The Gompo SAPS station is actually closer to another village, which lies between the station and Gompo.

Village houses in the area are mostly old and dilapidated, though from time to time one finds newly built structures accompanying old, likely built with money sent by family in the cities.

The Gompo policing area spans nearly 500 square kilometres. Nobody at the station had a firm idea of exactly how many villages fell within its boundaries. An A4-sized hand drawn map on the wall of the CSC suggested 19 villages, while a white board listing crimes by village suggested 14. In 2011 the policing area was home to nearly 7000 residents, almost

all of whom are recorded as ‘Black African’ and Xhosa speaking (Frith, 2014). During my time there the Gompo station employed 33 staff – a tenth of Yorkton or Mthonjeni’s stations. Five of these were student constables who would not necessarily be placed at the station once they had completed their training. About eight employees worked office hours, with the remainder divided into patrol shifts and detectives. With some officers out on investigation, attending court or meetings, or patrolling at any one time, the actual station was generally very quiet. Sheep, chickens and dogs wandered onto the property to graze and scavenge. In this quiet arena, the mostly-young police officers complained of boredom. When they heard that I planned to spend seven weeks with them many exclaimed that it was far too long, that nothing happened there. Officers passed the hours replaying a limited selection of pirated movies on the CSC computer, text-chatting to friends on their Blackberries, or sitting idly.

On the other hand, having a comparably limited workload meant plenty of time for socialising. Very few of those based at the station had grown up in the area. Rather, they had moved there for the job, and lived in decrepit old houses in the surrounding villages. As a result they knew few people. The police station became both their place of work and their place of belonging and community. For most, there was little else in the vicinity. Amongst those who had been based at the station for many years, a great collegiality developed, and laughter regularly spilled out of offices as colleagues humoured one another in the midst of their quiet days. When it was time for shifts to change, some officers hung around to chat to their relief, preferring to socialise rather than head home to solitude and rest. I had never before witnessed anything but a rush to get home by police. Gompo was different.

But at other times the station was silent. No sounds of cars, no chatter, just birds, animals and the wind in the large gum tree that stood in the station’s front yard.

Station officers who had worked in bigger towns or cities shared stories of those places with colleagues. They described a world where things were more dangerous but also more interesting. Few had been to Cape Town but nor did many seek to visit. They had friends or family who had moved to that city to find work, they knew it as a place of crime where police were hunted and killed.

While Gompo SAPS generated comparably little crime compared with city stations, the station still generated data. As part of the national policing machine, it had to report its figures up the line, just like the busy city stations. Meetings with community members still needed to be arranged, and complaints followed up on. But perhaps the greatest effort of this sort went into reporting work planned or completed, to project an image within the bureaucracy that things were afoot. This was coordinated by the energetic station commander, Captain Dlamini. Each morning he drove the 65 kilometres from his home town, to bark orders at his colleagues as they arrived and knocked off from their shifts. When he was present, the station had a life to it, but often this vanished with his frequent departures.

There seemed to be another reason that police at Gompo were able to lament the boredom of being stuck at the station. On those occasions that they were called on in response to a crime or dispute, residents treated them with an authority and respect that was far rarer in the city. It was relatively difficult for anyone to remain completely anonymous in the area's villages. If an alleged offender escaped apprehension one day, police could be fairly certain they could track them down another day. There was not the challenge of anonymity found in large cities. I imagined that these factors lowered the anxieties more common of city policing. In this environment, a good shift was one where

something rather than nothing happened, something different to challenge and distract the officers from the boredom. The case of the puppies, discussed below, was such a challenge.

Gompo (the rural village): puppies, police learning and respect

It was just after noon. I was sitting in the Gompo CSC after another slow morning of little activity. Constable Nxuba, a stocky, relaxed man in his early thirties walked into the CSC carrying a shopping bag of *vetkoek* and two litres of Stoney soda. Comparably unhealthy diets were widespread amongst many of the police I shadowed.

Chewing on a *vetkoek*, Nxuba started chatting to a village resident who, it emerged, had walked from his home two hours away to discuss a problem. The resident, clad in an LA Galaxy football shirt, owned a dog and had agreed to mate it with the bitch of a resident in a neighbouring village. In return, the owner of the bitch had said he would provide the man with two puppies from the resulting litter. But the puppies had been born and the bitch owner was refusing to honour the agreement. Could Nxuba help, the man wanted to know. Nxuba agreed and the three of us climbed into the van and sped out into the hills.

As we drove I asked Nxuba what his role would be in the negotiation. He said he was ‘just going to talk’. Arriving at our destination, he asked a child to call the man he sought, then began respectfully engaging him, explaining why we were there. The conversation was in Xhosa so I could not follow its literal flow. However, what was clear was that Nxuba wanted to keep the two men calm, and wanted to control the conversation’s flow. He indicated when they could speak and when to be silent, he told them to lower their voices when they became excited and he pulled the bitch owner aside and talked to him quietly when he sensed the mediation was faltering.

While Constable Nxuba spoke calmly, there was a rising tension in his stature. Sweat formed on his brow and he turned his police cap backwards (in a fashion that would never be tolerated in a city), calling for the child to bring him water. The negotiation took ten minutes after which, reluctantly, the resident retreated behind his house and returned with two tiny puppies. Nxuba looked relieved and thanked him. The complainant grabbed hold of the puppies and tossed them into the van, and we left.

Retreating back through the hills, Nxuba explained why the puppies were so important to the man. The breed, though not pure, was a form used in the area for ‘illegal hunting, springbok, wild cats and the like. They can be sold for R1500 or traded for a goat.’ He didn’t have an opinion on the illegality of the hunting, and didn’t see it as his role to interfere in the resourcing of the enterprise. His was the role of dispute resolution and this he had done.

Arriving at the complainant’s village we came to a stop. Puppies clutched between his fingers, he thanked Nxuba and walked away. It was three o’clock. He had devoted most of his day to approaching the police for assistance and Constable Nxuba had met his expectations. For his part, Nxuba was pleased with himself. He had been challenged, and had risen to meet it. It seemed that police officers in the area occupied a place of importance in the lives of residents in ways I had not witnessed in the city. It was the respect, longed for by Mthonjeni’s police, which was central to the city cops’ description of rural life.

Gompo (the rural village): city discourse in the countryside

Patrol might seem an odd concept in a policing area like Gompo with its limited resources (one patrol/response van) and vast swathes of land between sparsely populated villages. At

best a van on patrol all day might pass through each village once, lingering for only a few minutes. And yet, the language and accompanying ideology of patrol, stop and search and coercive deterrence against crime filled the minds of Gompo's management and officers as if it, and thus coercion, were the golden key to a crime free society. Asking me late one night what I thought of Gompo's 'crime fighting approach', a constable pre-emptively excused what he saw as the station's shortcoming: 'If we had a van in every village there would be no crime, but we only have this one.'

Another illustration of this logic: the station employed a full time 'Crime Analyst'. He presented himself as analysing crime patterns to guide police action. However, because crime was relatively rare in the area (fewer than ten reported cases per month), he simply recommended patrols wherever the last crime had taken place. He didn't check that patrols took place. As long he had written instructions on the white board or pinned a patrol plan to the wall, he believed he had performed his function, had worked a good day.

Similarly, on the outskirts of the area were a small collection of holiday houses belonging to wealthy city residents. Occasionally these were burgled. In response Captain Dlamini sought to increase patrols in the area and convince a private security company to provide their own patrol. Patrolling police appeared particularly vigilant when driving through the cluster of houses, on the lookout for their illusive burglars. However, when asked, they admitted that they had never caught anyone in the act in the area. Pushed further they conceded that the patrols had little impact on the crime there. And yet they acted out the rituals as if to not do so would be expose policing for what it most often is – a performance in reassurance which rarely accomplishes much else.

Gompo (the rural village): summary

Gompo's police, like many of Yorkton's, felt that residents respected them. Theirs was not the challenge of public disdain, but of professional boredom. As such, life was predictable and ontological security within reach. A shift in which their minds and skills were put to the test, was a good shift.

In the same way that Gompo's police appropriated a city policing discourses of coercion-based crime prevention, they borrowed from city narratives of risk. They inserted them into the imaginary of the otherwise peaceful rural space and a quiet police station. They referred to crimes like rape and hijacking as if common in the area but when queried would concede that they weren't. In the same way that a good shift was one that brought challenge to a quiet day, I wondered if the purpose of these narratives was not primarily to manufacture meaning. In a crime-hyped country that has historically coupled police work with 'crime fighting' and repression, rural policing seemed too distant from the narratives of urban risk that dominate the national media. By inserting urban narratives into their own, the Gompo police connected themselves to something bigger. They brought meaning (and ontological security) to their shifts, and to their lives.

Summary and Conclusion

In this chapter I have introduced the four policing areas in which this research took place, and described the key ways in which policing unfolded in each. By so doing, I have described the 'work' element of my research question, and shed more light on the contextual forces at play in officers' private and professional lives. I have highlighted the ways in which officers' lives are entangled in violence and risk, and how this informs the SAPS

organisational culture, which in turn shapes personal narratives. Relatedly, I have introduced the meta-narrative which officers use to understand the country in which they live. This presents the countryside as a place of order and respect, much like the city's bubbles of middle class wealth, and sees these as threatened by ill-socialised youth raised on the urban fringe. Often these youths' lives mirror those of SAPS officers. It is through the SAPS organisational culture in which officers are entangled, that they re-write their personal narratives to distance themselves from the men with whom their work brings them into confrontation.

Across the four policing areas in which I conducted this research, police officers shared certain ideas regarding the constitution of the perfect shift. But there were differences between them, too. These ideas shaped the manner in which they practiced their profession, while variances in practice shaped the spaces in which they worked, and the lives of those who inhabited them. In the township their focus was on marking, labelling and ordering the bodies of poor young men through constant surveillance and coercive interaction. In the affluent city the same practices were applied, but because the poor were a minority, they were not repeated as frequently. Instead, the poor were encouraged out of the affluent spaces to which police felt they posed a risk, while the wealthy were allowed to move freely. In the villages and rural town there were almost no affluent spaces. The stark inequality of Cape Town was absent, as were its levels of crime. With an absence of ideas, officers there extended the practices of their urban counterparts into the villages, building on century old narratives about the threat rural Africans pose to city space.

For many, the idea of the perfect shift involved working through sets of rituals, box ticking, in the hope that this would lead to their desired outcomes. In some instances, these

were the absence of death, while in others they were the number of people locked up for the night, a body count indicative of their 'performance'. For others the perfect shift was any respite in the managerial pressure they felt hanging over them, any distraction from the dockets needing completion and closure. Against this pressure, many officers sought out both public and institutional gratitude, indications that their work was valued. Public celebration of police action and expressions of gratitude and respect were amongst the greatest rewards officers could hope for. They washed away the doubt that South Africa may not want the police it has.

For some it was about getting through the night without having their competence or authority challenged, while for others it was about putting their skills to test, being able to grow as a professional and avoid boredom. Ultimately it was about buying into a narrative about the place of the SAPS and its officers in the nation and community, about the experience of being a South African working in the police environment, and about the desire for respect, dignity and ontological security. This was particularly important in light of the fact that much of the criminal threat police saw it their job to subdue, originated from the same neighbourhoods in which they lived. In other words, officers' as individuals were continually entangled in the overlap between their private and professional lives, and with the broader local and national contextual forces around them. As such, their work became a contest of legitimacy between that proposed by young men believed to be involved in crime, and the men policing crime. It was a contest to define and shape the futures of both the alleged offenders and the officers, and as such, the future of the country. A shift that bolstered the narrative that the police way was the right way was a perfect shift.

Chapter Four: Ways of lying

Manufacturing the perfect shift

In this chapter I explore the practices of deception and related culture of suspicion that exist in the SAPS. In so doing I suggest that like most police agencies (Muir, 1977; Manning, 1974, 1997, 2009; Skolnick, 1994), the SAPS is an organisation heavily invested in the production of a fiction, its aim being to justify its existence and give legitimacy to its actions. This fiction is that it is a rational, effective, evidence-based and rule-bound organisation made up of well-trained officers engaged in common-sense activities that make South Africa safe. I suggest it is a fiction that is shaped by the South African context (sphere 3 of the conceptual framework) in at least three important ways. The first is that South Africa is a country with an historically divided population, often mistrustful of one another. The second is that, as the enforcer of apartheid's laws the SAPS' predecessor, the South African Police force (SAP), was widely distrusted and feared (sphere 2 of the conceptual framework). While the SAPS has made great strides in building an image of objective professionalism since 1995, scandals such as the 2010 corruption conviction of its National Commissioner, Jackie Selebi, and the 2012 shooting of 112 striking mine workers in Marikana, have damaged it. Finally, and most relevant to this thesis, the SAPS is largely staffed by generations in transition (sphere 1 of the conceptual framework). By this I mean that most SAPS officers recruited in the last two decades have found themselves securing a good job in a difficult and unequal economic environment. Their personal narratives are entangled in the overlap between socio-economic and historical contextual forces and the SAPS organisational mandate and culture. Many are the first in their families to secure comparably stable work. It is natural that police, like all workers, do first what is required of them to get by. Families are their

priority; surviving, getting ahead and securing a better future. It is a search for ontological security. The SAPS and public take priority for many only in as much as they are the provider and subject of income and security. This disjuncture means that at times shortcuts are taken to meet organisational targets. The appearance of performance gets officers ahead in the space in which national and organisational context overlap with personal identity (where officers' lives are entangled in organisational and broader contextual forces). It brings them recognition and advancement. But where unofficial or illegal practices are carried out to simulate performance, their revelation can lead to an officer's downfall. Some officers trust one another only to the extent that each knows the other capable of exposing their own lies. Against this background, the SAPS' fictional front seeks to positively frame a tainted profession. By participating in the construction of this front, I suggest, officers' personal identities are shaped, and through their work, so is the country. In pursuing this line of argument I demonstrate how the SAPS organisational culture (sphere 2), already shaped by the national context (sphere 3), moulds personal identity (sphere 1), or who SAPS officers think they are.

Lies, trust, ambition and policing in South Africa

Social attitudes surveys repeatedly show that South Africans distrust one another. In answer to the question, 'Generally speaking, would you say that most people can be trusted or that you must be very careful in dealing with people?', 81 per cent answered 'Must be very careful' in 2013 (Afrobarometer, 2013:83). In a separate national survey in 2009, 52 per cent of South Africans were generally distrusting of one another, 22 per cent were neutral and only 26 per cent generally trusting (Mmotlane, Struwig, Roberts, 2010:6). Trust is

greatest within South African families and weakest between strangers (Afrobarometer, 2013:83). Experimental research among a small sample of high school students (n=337) suggests trust is influenced by racial identity with all South Africans least likely to trust (fellow) black South Africans (Burns, 2004:7). A national household survey found less than a third of South African adults trust their neighbours, and significantly less trust strangers (Posel & Hinks, 2011:19-20). This study found that trust increased with economic status.

There are a number of explanations for this mistrust. The first has to do with the country's history. Until 1994 the state's nation building project was predicated on the idea that there existed four clear 'population groups'²⁷, that each was inherently different from the other and thrived best when kept separate. Built into this hierarchy were an unequal distribution of resources, opportunity, wealth and power, and a coercive fear of the racial other. Because groups were kept relatively separate from each other, there emerged between South Africans an ignorance of one another.²⁸

In limiting the life courses of most individuals based on race and promoting a minority, apartheid created a society of deep inequality, which remains today. Survey data finds that trust in South Africa diminishes with living and educational standards (Mmotlane, Struwig, Roberts 2010:5). This is unsurprising when vulnerable people have far more to lose when deceived, and that most South Africans are, at least economically, vulnerable. Inequality also correlates with crime (Elgar & Aitken, 2010) and in South Africa crime correlates with inequality, unemployment and poverty (Demombynes and Özler, 2005), so that economic vulnerability leads to multiple insecurities. One might imagine this precarious

²⁷ The category 'African' was further divided into nine linguistic-cultural groups.

²⁸ During my research it was not uncommon for officers to ask me questions about the lives and practices of white South Africans, as if I could speak on behalf of all so identified.

space as the overlap between personal identity (sphere 1) and the South African context (sphere 3) for most South Africans.

While perhaps obvious, it has been empirically shown in the United States that groups once oppressed are less trusting than others (Alesina and LaFerrara, 2002). Oppression-based mistrust can be passed on to children not directly affected by the original oppression (Posel & Hinks, 2011:2). Young black South Africans have been shown to be less trusting than their peers (Ashraf, Bohnet & Piankov, 2003:24; Burns, 2004:7). Other predictors of mistrust are a recent history of trauma, being ‘unsuccessful’ in education and finance, and living in a community with high income disparity (Posel & Hinks, 2011; Ashraf, Bohnet & Piankov, 2003). As illustrated in Chapter One, many of these inform the South African context (sphere 3), and so apply to the majority of South Africans.

Inequality is a current running through and shaping the lives of many SAPS officers, driving high levels of crime and insecurity. In response the government swells the numbers of its police, hiring new officers annually. It hopes that once police secure physical security, human security and development will follow (Samara, 2011), but it also uses them to project a healthy government façade. At the same time, most officers are born into precarious livelihoods. Denied a strong education or financial support for further study, they turn to the SAPS. The job improves their lives but many remain tied to networks of the working poor, the vulnerable and distrusting. This in turn slows their ascendance out of financial precarity and distrust. Again, the confluence of these forces coalesce at the centre of the three spheres, where officers personal identities are entangled. Two related factors that may influence trusts in South Africa are superstition and aspiration. Most South Africans (85,6 per cent) identify as Christian (Statistics South Africa, 2014c). Many of these incorporate aspects of traditional African religion into their faith while others are solely

guided by the wisdom of their deceased ancestors. Christianity's emphasis on the temptations of Satan overlaps with beliefs about witchcraft. For those invested in the latter, life:

[E]ntails a continual presumption of malice. People must be constantly vigilant against occult attack [from within one's community]... Such wisdom, however, makes trust inordinately difficult' (Ashforth, 2005:80).

The second factor almost contradicts the idea that in the 'new' South Africa everyone has the right to dream of a better life. This is the suggestion that many South Africans become intensely jealous if their peers succeed but they don't. This has been shown among poor rural adults (Steinberg, 2009) and urban adolescents (Bray *et. Al.*, 2010). Most SAPS meetings and briefings I attended were opened with a Christian prayer. Similarly, among the police I shadowed, at least five were Christian ministers and two Sangomas. The former's crucifixes and the latter's beads and animal skin arm bands were reminders that many police remain invested in invisible forces that can shape their lives for better or worse.

Data on South Africans' trust in state institutions is more positive than between individuals. The national broadcaster is most trusted, followed by the army and the courts. Data suggests only about half of citizens trust the police, with a near equal portion believing 'all' or 'most' police are corrupt (Afrobarometer, 2013).

None of this is surprising when considered against South Africa's history of inequality and separateness. Not only does the country remain one of the most unequal in the world, but it is the poor majority who bear the brunt of the unemployment and poverty, and their criminal by-product (Demombynes and Özler, 2005). It is those with the least who

must trust in strategic people and networks, including the state and its police, in order to survive.²⁹

The state of precarity which dominates the lives of most South Africans then, is amplified for those whose lives are characterised by poverty, geographic seclusion, lack of quality education and belief in the witchcraft. While perhaps obvious, it is not often acknowledged that many police are recruited from the poor, disempowered, religious and superstitious bulk of South Africa's population. They are people scooped out of lives of precarity and provided reprise within the institutional cocoon of the state. Imagined in relation to the conceptual framework, their spheres 1 and 3, applicable to all South Africans, overlap with sphere 2, the SAPS organisational culture. In this new space, a job in the SAPS is something to be coveted and held onto for most recruits, even if it does not represent the life they had once hoped to live. It is perhaps unsurprising that the suspicion that pervades South African society is tangled up in the SAPS. The result is a deeply mistrustful and misleading organisation.

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A lie is a lie when the liar knows her statement to be false (Grover, 1993:479). Often this is done to achieve specific outcomes, including the maintenance or improvement of a particular self, organisational or 'team' image (Curtis 2003:294, Tyler &Feldman 2005:372). But not all deceit in the policing context is illegal. In both transparent and illicit ways police are rewarded for their lies (Hunt & Manning, 1991:52). Many justice systems, including South Africa's, allow for entrapment of the criminally accused through carefully planned police deception (Skolnick 1982:40, Alpert & Noble 2009:237, 242), while interrogating

²⁹ By June 2014, 45.5 per cent of households received at least one social grant from the state (Statistics South Africa, 2014c:12).

detectives might leverage half-truths and misinformation to lead suspects to implicate themselves. But police are also expected to be trustworthy, honest and guided by integrity (Alpert & Noble, 2009:238). License to lie in one aspect of police work, even if in the ‘interests of justice’, opens a road for lies in other, illegitimate areas (Skolnick, 1982:46, 48). This has been called ‘noble cause corruption’ (Punch, 2009), which can include perjury in court, the denial of police brutality or torture, or the manipulation of crime data. Where good cops feel that gaming the system gets them ahead, they will deceive. Where deception in the workplace is encouraged and/or undetected, its severity and pervasiveness increases over time (Fleming & Zyglidopoulos, 2008:837). The harm lies do is cumulative and hard to reverse (Bok, 1979:25). But what might lies and deceit have to do with personal identity in the SAPS?

Von Holt (2010) suggests that the South African state’s aspiration to establish an effective bureaucracy stands in contradiction of its desire to rapidly develop a black middle class. While the former is dependent on skill and expertise, he suggests, the latter requires ambivalence towards merit. Subsequently, he suggests, the state resorts to face saving practices, asserting a public façade of competence while deflecting criticism that might expose the mediocrity behind it.

Relatedly, in South Africa children and young adults construct positive images of future selves living long and successful lives (de Lannoy, 2011:62). But 45 per cent of the ‘born free generation’³⁰ who started school in 2002 had dropped out by the time their peers completed high school in 2013 (Wilkinson, 2014), while unemployment among those aged 15 to 34 stood at 36,1 per cent by mid-2014 (Statistics SA, 2014a:vi). Although many South Africans have succeeded in achieving qualification, employment, wealth and status

³⁰ A term used to describe those born in 1994 and after.

greater than their parents, tens of thousands of others have not. Many of the SAPS officers I shadowed understood their place in the organisation as one signifying bigger dreams lost. But once they had secured a policing job most worked to protect the image of the organisation. Sometimes this was done through dedication to legitimate task, but at other times, it was achieved through deception, smoke and mirrors. This had to do, in part, with their attempts to shape the manner in which the public interpreted what the SAPS stood for, and so how police officers were understood at home and at work. In this sense, their deception served two purposes. The first was the maintenance of the organisational façade of efficiency and effectiveness, desired by the state. The second was safeguarding an organisation that is key to shaping the way officers are received in their home communities. It was about deploying select social performances to construct a positive image of the SAPS that they hoped would shape their own image in the world so that they would be respected.

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In Chapter Two I noted three points about public police. The first is that their legal recourse to force may pose a threat to security. The second is that they present themselves as fighters of crime and maintainers of order, while little of their time is spent on these tasks. Both of these can be thought of as lies that sit at the heart of policing. Due to their centrality to the police image and idea, it is important that they are borne in mind when considering the third point: that police are central to the shaping of communities and nations, and to fostering feelings of belonging or exclusion among their publics. Police officers communicate symbolic meaning and shape how crime and disorder are viewed and responded to (Loader & Mulcahy, 2003); they reflect what a society believes and expects of itself (Manning, 2009:461)..

Closely related to the police's shaping work is the official or frontstage (Goffman, 1959) reality produced by the police bureaucracy, through annual reports, presentations to parliament, press statements, the annual release of crime data and other institutional performances. The ability to deliver such performances requires the constant collection and flow of information through the bureaucracy. This feeds the public front that says police are protectors and crime fighters, a front which is their greatest asset, because it garners support and longevity, but also their greatest burden because they are so limited in preventing crime (Manning, 1997:29).

In South Africa, police officers like bearers of stigma (Goffman, 1990:150), are viewed both as regular citizens and as members of a tainted group. Because of their SAPS affiliation, officers embody a national anxiety. They are the object of daily news and argument concerning what they ought to be and do. This is compounded by the fact that policing is no longer the sole purview of the SAPS but instead one contested by a range of policing actors vying to rearticulate the security arena. In this arena the governance of crime has emerged as a barometer of government performance (Hornberger, 2011), latched onto by critics in their attacks on the ANC (Super, 2013:33-34). It is through the SAPS that government in part shapes and disseminates a strategic narrative about South Africa and its people, what it is and should be. The result contributes to the official image of the country. The management of this front, central to sphere 2, resulted in the manifestation of two trends among officers social performances and personal identities. The first was the range of ways in which they misled, deceived and lied to colleagues, managers and the public, in an effort to present a particular image of their work, and themselves within the work. The second was that this propensity to mislead contributed to a culture of suspicion in which police came to believe - in part because of their own intentionally misleading performances

- that almost everyone was lying to them. The result was a work environment steeped in mistrust.

Deception in the SAPS is not limited to a set of carefully controlled and sanctioned actions. As I illustrate in the remainder of this chapter, recruits are hired and trained in an environment of both unintentional and purposeful deception, and deceit and lies quickly become entrenched in daily practice, bolstered by a broader mistrust between citizens. In this way, SAPS organisational culture (sphere 3 of the conceptual framework) shapes the social performances and personal identities of officers entangled the overlap between it and local and national contextual forces.

Teamwork, learning to lie and securing the job: Gompo

In my first week at Gompo I was introduced to four student constables assigned to the station as part of their field training. They had already spent a year at police college and were being given the chance to apply themselves at the station. But the word ‘training’ can be misleading. For three consecutive days in that week, the four students arrived in the morning, pulled a table and chairs from the offices into the sunshine, and sat writing in their pocket books.

In the SAPS a pocket book is a personal diary used to record every action taken during the course of a shift. The students said theirs were due to be inspected by trainers and that they were getting them ready. So there they sat, for three days, exchanging stories, laughing and singing songs, while neatly filling in their pocket books. For much of that time, I sat with them.

As the hours past, sheep wandered onto the station lawn to graze, cows called from the fields and chickens and puppies from the neighbouring homestead scurried around our

feet. At one point a chicken wandered into an empty office. Moments later a boisterous clucking filled the air. Student Constable (SC) Mmaya, a tall artist-turned-police recruit, said the noise meant the hen had laid an egg. SC Debeza responded, saying she had recently found eggs in a corner of the station property. I asked if she had eaten them. ‘No,’ she replied, ‘I didn’t know if they were fresh’. Mmaya stretched his long body into his chair and laughed loudly, ‘If you put them in water and they sink, then they are fine. If they float they are bad. How can you grow up in the rural areas and not know that?’

I smiled. The students were discussing how to tell a rotten egg from a fresh one behind the whites of their smooth shells. Yet there they were, neatly writing up their pocket books in an artificial policing environment, weaving perfect line-by-line accounts of what they may (or may not) have gotten up to in the course of their duties. The completed entries would appear flawless, absent of the scribbles, scratches and omissions that are common of pocket book entries. There the students had all the time in the world. Their Field Trainer was based at the cluster station in Patterson, 30 kilometres away and only checked on them once a week. It was likely he had instructed them to engage in the exercise. Once ready he would sign the entries, as if they had been inspected each day. The books would appear flawless if reviewed. It would be clear to any officer that they were doctored; they just looked too good. Whoever was to examine them would have to be complicit in the performance. But if the trainers or students were ever audited, the pocket books would present a picture of active, hardworking students out on the beat, with impeccable pocket book writing abilities.

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It is wishful thinking that individuals will bring change in a collective practice of deceit (Bok, 1979:258). The students, like other recruits, had signed up to join a police

agency, not to change it (Brodeur, 2010:149). In other words, they had chosen to become entangled in sphere 3, the SAPS organisational culture. Deception is common among those wanting to make good impressions (Keyes, 2004:44-45) like SAPS students working to secure their place in the organisation. They did what they were told and would likely copy whatever they observed. But once introduced to deception, reinforced behaviour persists.

Goffman provides a helpful framework for understanding officers' social performances. In his words, social groups – such as police - form 'teams' (1959:85) whose members collaborate to produce shared 'fronts' (1959:37). These fronts promote stereotypes such as 'police catch criminals' and 'police make things safe', which become part of the collective representation of the team. When a new actor, like a student constable, joins the team (when spheres 1 and 3 first overlap with sphere 2) they find their role pre-defined for them. As a result, the longevity and normalisation of the institutional front is extended. Through 'team work', the police role and presence becomes an accepted aspect of contemporary life.

In public, police officers rely on each other to maintain the institutional front. As members of the police 'team', each has the power to expose the SAPS performance for what it is. Because they are bound by their shared public performance, when they are alone in the 'backstage' (Goffman, 1959:114) or 'back spaces' (Goffman, 1990:102) officers can and must drop or alter the social performance because each knows it to be false. There, in offices and patrol vans, they can relax and tell stories that cement shared understandings of what constitutes a good performance (Shearing & Ericson, 1991:318). A key theme to these stories is the importance of a suspicious posture to the civilian world. The organisational culture and 'team' promote the telling of such stories and suspicion, which in turn shapes officers' personal identity.

It has long been observed that despite officers requiring stints at police colleges or training facilities, their real socialisation and learning occurs in the field. This is another deception common to the police profession. While an official version of the shared front is introduced to recruits in their initial training, it is not expected to stick. Rather, the everyday front is learned on the streets. For Goffman, this is where roles are internalised, even when actors disagree with them. In time they accept their roles to save the team from being exposed and shamed (Goffman, 1959:31), and to foster peer respect. The same is true in the SAPS, as illustrated in the work of Kutnjak Ivkovich and Sauerma (2012, 2013). The two have twice replicated Klockers *et al.*'s popular (2004) integrity survey among SAPS officers. Included in the survey are questions probing the likelihood of officers reporting various abuses in the organisation. Their findings 'indicate the presence of a strong code of silence' (Kutjak Ivokvich & Sauerma, 2013:23). In other words, the officers play a role that protects the team. Furthermore, a quarter of surveyed supervisors would allow police bribery and theft to go unreported or sanctioned (2013:22) and a 'non-trivial percentage of respondents did not recognise even the most severe forms of police corruption as violations of official rules' (Kutjak Ivokvich & Sauerma, 2012:1). Of particular interest was a finding that recruits hired after 1994 expressed attitudes associated with lower levels of integrity than their older peers. These findings suggest that SAPS officers are becoming increasingly resistant to exposing one another's infringements, choosing to save institutional, and thus personal, face rather than challenge the status quo within the team, and that these changes have been brought about by shifts in the organisational (sphere 2) and national (sphere 3) context.

Kutjak Ivokvich & Sauerma's findings echo some of my own in previous research. Through semi-structured interviews with 77 station officers across three stations, I found

that most (n=54) believed corruption to be a problem at their stations, while almost all believed it to be a serious problem in the SAPS at large (Faull, 2011a:16). The views replicate those of the broader public, 52 per cent of whom believe ‘some’ or ‘all’ police are corrupt (Afrobarometer, 2013). There is mistrust both within and outside the organisation, and yet a desire to protect the colleagues one distrusts.

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While sitting with Gompo’s students as they filled in their pocket books, Mmaya showed me a SAPS training manual. It was titled *Basic development learning Programme: Module 1 - Professional conduct learner’s guide*, and was the first textbook given to the students. I read through it while they wrote.

The first page of the manual, written in all-caps, stated that it was the copyrighted property of the South African Police Service. This, I would learn, was ironic because the manual itself borrowed from other texts without proper citation. Furthermore, despite having been in use for three years, the manual contained a number of glaring contradictions.

The book’s summary of outcomes for recruits included to ‘Conduct oneself in a professional manner’ and ‘Apply knowledge of Ethical principles, standards, and professional conduct’. Specific outcomes included ‘Demonstrate the understanding [sic] of the Culture of the organisation’, ‘Apply customer service principles’, and ‘Demonstrate the ability to execute group marching activities’ (SAPS, 2010:ii). The first point of order in training a SAPS recruit was for them to replicate the official institutional script, to learn to work for the team.

The first chapter began by stating that ‘South Africans expect to be provided with a professional service’ and that ‘Non-professional behaviour [sic] by SAPS officers... [means]

the nation experiences the SAPS as an ineffective institution and loses trust in [it]' (SAPS, 2010:1). But how 'professional' was the manual? Aside from its numerous grammatical errors, parts were clearly cut and paste from other government documents and websites, and borrowed from Wikipedia. Phrases such as 'as per new research' (SAPS, 2010: 10) were not followed by citations. It seemed that from their first days in training, students were taught to accept, internalise, and reproduce patterns of questionable statement and dubious fact. Indeed, outlining some of the organisation's key standing orders, the manual stated that:

'[A Constable] shall obey all orders with deference (respect) and execute them without delay, his/her first duty being prompt, immediate and unhesitating obedience to his/her superior. Should an order appear to be unlawful or improper, he/she may...afterwards complains [sic] to his/her Commander' (SAPS, 2010:27).

Furthermore, '[A Constable] shall refrain from being overzealous or meddlesome and should, therefore, not concern him/herself unnecessarily with trifling matters' (SAPS, 2010:28). While one might expect a police curriculum to encourage respect for its hierarchy, when the information communicated is from the beginning flawed, the integrity of the institutional structure is surely weakened.

Page 49 of the manual presented the 'Structure of the SAPS' followed in smaller font 'as on May 2010 [sic]'. Key positions depicted in the tree, like the Deputy-Minister of police and the National Commissioner, had since changed (SAPS, 2010:49). A section on police oversight discussed the Independent Complaints Directorate (ICD), a body whose official transformation and renaming as the Independent Police Investigative Directorate (IPID) had begun two years earlier in 2011 and had been final since April 2012 (SAPS, 2010:39-40). When I asked the students if they knew which body was responsible for investigating complaints against police they mumbled various incorrect titles before questioningly

settling on ‘the Independent Complaints Directorate?’ waiting for me to confirm it.

Similarly, the manual used both the terms ‘Department of Police’ and ‘Department of Safety and Security’ interchangeably (eg. p.38). The former had replaced the latter in 2010. I asked the students, teasingly, which of the two departments they fell under. After a short silence Debeza responded, ‘Police, *andiyazi*³¹, they are the same?’

I told the students their manual needed updating, that they were being taught out of date information. They seemed offended and retreated to writing in silence. Nobody wants to be told that their performance is a fraud, let alone that they are being taught a false performance. After all, the manual sought to produce recruits who followed instructions. It was not their place to question its content. By doing what they were told they hoped to secure work in the public sector, a steady income and promising future. With such high stakes there was little incentive to question authority, at least not at that stage of their training.

The silence that followed my statement was broken by the *beep-beep* of SC Cethe’s cell phone. Glancing at the screen he leapt to his feet, turned his cap to the side, and started dancing:

Life is very, very good! From now on I will eat whatever I want to eat. My phone will be singing! I must buy some red wine from Robertson. Each and every time that I’m craving wine I will just pore!

The other students chuckled. I asked who the message was from. Debeza answered knowingly, ‘He’s getting his back pay,’ outstanding money owed by the state. Because at the end of the day that’s what these performances were about for the students. It didn’t matter if they were being taught slightly incorrect information, or trained to present false pocket books to superiors who would pretend they were authentic. As long as a secure job

³¹ ‘I don’t know’

with steady income remained on the horizon, they would learn what they were told to learn, write what they were told to write, and dance when the money came in.

Teamwork, learning to lie and securing the job: Yorkton

I had experienced something similar to my Gompo experience, in Cape Town, a month earlier.

It was sweltering hot outside the SAPS' provincial recruitment offices on Cape Town's foreshore. I was relieved to enter the air-conditioned protection of the building as detective Constable Noble led me and her two students through security. She had been assigned to mentor them during their field training at Yorkton, and was generous with the energy she invested in them. Whereas other detectives simply sent their students to the offices, she had brought them personally and now walked them to their meeting.

Like the students at Gompo, the trainee detectives were to be inspected in subsequent weeks. The inspection would review everything they had done in their six months at the station, their 'portfolio of evidence'. This was a thick folder of forms outlining the range of tasks which trainees were required to complete at the station, serving as proof that they had done so.

We entered a room where we found the other fifteen-odd student detectives from Yorkton seated at a long table, portfolios of evidence in front of them. A large, middle-aged man was shouting instructions and questions at them, 'If there is a gap next to any mentor signature then please just get any detective to sign it at the station otherwise there is going to be a problem!' He asked students to raise their hands if they had not completed various tasks, many had not. He told them to list these in the 'development plan' section of their

portfolios. ‘Here you are saying you will do them in time. Write that your mentor explained this process to you.’ The students responded with silence and the movement of pens.

There it was again, new recruits being socialised into a culture that dictated behaviour, and where the messages formed an official, untruthful record, as their lives became entangled in the SAPS organisational culture in a national context of risk and precarity. Students could not graduate without having been exposed to these cases, or at least having been talked through the investigations. But whether their station mentors had explained the tasks to them or not, they would officially record that they had, because that was what they were told to do.

Watching the performance reminded me of firearm training I had received as a police reservist in 2011. All police officers and reservists had had to undergo new training in response to a change in legislation. The problem was that thousands of officers had not been trained and time was running out. So corners were cut. While our range instruction was thorough and well regulated, the theoretical training was very problematic. Not only was the class given false information regarding when police could use firearms, but we were given the answers to the written test. We filled in and marked the multiple choice element of the tests as a class, under the guidance of the instructor, a Captain. The class included at least one Brigadier and two Colonels, ranks senior to the Captain, and yet nobody questioned him as he led us through an organisationally sanctioned fraud.

My experience was published in a paper in 2012 (Bruce, 2012) and put to the National Commissioner of Police, Riya Phiyega, at the Farlam Commission of Inquiry into the police killings at Marikana. The National Commissioner’s response was that she simply didn’t believe the claims. But the claims are true and are not new. I had similar experiences during my initial reservist training in 2004. These practices followed old trend in the SAPS,

which appeared to be alive and well in the training of the 2012/13 recruits I observed. If officers were encouraged to deceive during their early training and unquestioningly participated in group fraud during ongoing training, perhaps it is unsurprising that the National Commissioner reverted to immediate denial when standing on the most public of stages, she needed to play her part as the ‘team’ leader and maintain the strategic front. I shared my story with Constable Noble as she ushered me out of the meeting room. She was not surprised.

Noble led me to the recruitment offices where she thought I might enjoy speaking to recruiters while we waited for the students. There we met Warrant Officer Potgieter who welcomed my civilian ear to bend with his views and tales. He talked of many things, of mass recruitment and the ill-disciplined officers the organisation was stuck with as a result, and of training always changing. But what was most important was what he said of actual recruitment. He said that for every 200 new posts advertised in a year the province received ten to fifteen thousand applications. In December 2012, eight would-be traffic police died while participating in a fitness test as part of a recruitment drive (@City_Press, 2013). The eight were part of a short list selected from 150 000 applications, competing for 90 posts. South Africa’s is a landscape of desperate job seekers where only a fortunate few are lucky enough to get as far as a SAPS training college.

The conversation moved on to corruption in recruitment. Potgieter had been told by colleagues working at a police college that gangs were buying their way into the organisation. ‘It’s beginning to make me worry about the future of our country,’ he said. The previous month the deputy-minister of police had acknowledged that ‘favouritism, nepotism, allegiance and prejudice...fraud and corruption’ were indeed present in SAPS recruitment (Sapa, 2013). At least the organisation wasn’t lying about everything. But then

again, like tackling the ‘bad apple’ of police corruption to mask the ‘bad orchard’ of a systemically damaged organisation (Punch, 2009:9), admitting some fault is often the best way to avert exposure of much bigger problems.

Constable Noble’s cell phone rang; her students were ready to leave.

Police lies as police practice

Because police agencies present themselves as disciplinary organisations, it is unsurprising that patrol officers and detectives who work alone or in pairs, are particularly inclined to secretive and self-protective behaviour (Manning, 1973:292). While they and other state institutions present themselves as rule, record and strategy-driven (Manning, 1973:292), for the sake of pragmatism, ‘street-level’ bureaucrats from police officers to teachers do not typically perform their duties according to the standards set for them. With large workloads and limited resources they develop shortcuts (Lipsky, 2010:18), while maintaining a veneer of order and formality. Some of these shortcuts have been noted in the SAPS (Altbeker 2006, Steinberg 2008, Hornberger & Vigneswarn 2009, Hornberger 2010, Faull 2010b). But police work to support the fiction that there are no informalities, while all know they are making things up as they go (Manning 1973:293).

Since 2005 the SAPS has adopted a performance management system styled on the NYPD’s CompStat. Like police elsewhere, the SAPS resorts to crime statistics and performance chart data as a measure of its impact. White boards in briefing rooms and offices list reported crime, targets set, met or missed, and activities planned or carried out. Such data are both notoriously inaccurate and consistently critiqued, but remain sacred in the policing arena where they become ‘a version of the backstage that can be read off as “accurate” and valid in frontstage presentations’ (Manning, 2009:452). But if we accept

Bittner's assertion that police intervene when something is happening that ought not to be, then the data they produce has little to do with their practice. Rather it reflects a mixture of public calls for police assistance and the reactions and judgements made by police in responding to them (Manning, 2009:454).

Research on organisational goal setting suggests that people perform best when given difficult but achievable goals (Grover, 2005:491). Many of the goals given to police are not achievable (Manning, 1978), while much of their work is not measurable. The more concerned one is about the opinion of others, the more likely one is to tell lies (Keys, 2004:83). Police managers are concerned about what the government and public think of them and in turn pass their anxiety onto their subordinates. As a result, proxies are used as evidence of action and the 'team's' strategic, deceptive front is reinforced.

The notion that the SAPS will make South Africa safe is a fiction. But recruits enter the organisation with it as the driving theme. They are trained in an environment of uncritical and unquestioning acceptance, and taught early on that they are expected to maintain the SAPS' façade. This is not unusual in public policing. But in the general context of precarity in South Africa, lying within the SAPS is central to officers' search for ontological security, and to that of the people in the networks they support. Lies become part of officers' social performances at work, and so part of the story they tell themselves about themselves which they believe to be true (personal identity).

Against this background, I use the remainder of this chapter to explore four categories of lies which I believe are most common within the SAPS.

Four categories of deception

Reflecting on my time in the SAPS I came to group the deceptions and lies I observed, into four broad categories. I have called these 1) Public performance lies, 2) Data lies, 3) Internal and External Lies, all of which lead to and are connect by a 4) Culture of suspicion. Despite my efforts, the typologies do not fit neatly defined boxes. Rather, each overlaps with, or builds on the others. All are connected by an organisational culture of deceptive team work.

1) Public performance lies

By *public performance lies* I refer to how police officers purposefully engage with public space with the intention of presenting a façade of visible policing, public engagement, or other popular notion of police work. Whether or not they are doing anything of substance, they *are seen to be doing* something. A clear example of this was the weekly ‘community outreach’ patrol at Mthonjeni. The stated intention of the patrols was to build relationships with communities, encourage the formation of anti-crime street committees, and to promote engagement with the station. At face value, these are good intentions. But in practice they were not true to intent.

Patrols took place up to twice a week and involved around fifteen employees. However, only about five were police officers. The majority were civilian staff who, happy to be relieved of desk work for a few hours, donned fluorescent ‘POLICE’-branded bibs and hit the streets on foot. A marked police car would lead the group, while two walkers carried a banner reading, ‘Take your street. Own your street. Fight crime.’ The remaining patrollers sought out residents, or gaps in doors and fences, to offload hundreds of photocopied pamphlets of ‘safety tips’ and contact information.

But the pamphlets unwittingly contributed to the disorder of the streets. When patrollers accidentally dropped them they seldom picked them up. Residents, too, occasionally tossed the pages into the street after glancing at them. Towards the end of the patrols, if there were still lots of pages to distribute, whole wads would be dropped into yards. Patrollers didn't seem to associate dirty streets with disorder, something I return to in Chapter Seven.

Civilian staff, at times, played up the fact that they looked like police officers. For instance, an administrator repeatedly admonished and threatened with arrest, a woman selling chickens next to the road. The administrator believed the chickens were being abused. The threats were aggressive, but unbeknown to their target, the police-bib-clad administrator had no authority.

In this way, the association of the SAPS was mobilised by patrollers when it suited them, but packed away when it didn't. Similarly, when the wind blew the SAPS banner was difficult to hold and so was put away very quickly, only to be brought out again for the camera. Photographing the patrol, particularly police/administrator-resident interactions, was central to the events. Photographs were snapped throughout as evidence of public engagement. But they reflected little of the patrols real substance. Instead, they became a medium through which the SAPS misled itself.

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Another example, and one which overlaps with those I describe as *data lies*, took place on the Easter weekend near Patterson in the Eastern Cape. South Africa has one of the highest road death rates in the world. With 31.9 per 100 000 citizens, the country ranks 177th out of 182 measured (WHO, 2010). Easter weekends are particularly deadly as hundreds of thousands speed their way across the country. The weekend has become a

focus of law enforcement with hundreds of roads blocks set up to check sobriety, road worthiness, speeding, and overloading. Whether these interventions save lives or not, there is no doubt that through them, police are *seen to be doing something*.

On Good Friday, the start of the long weekend, I accompanied Captain Dlamini, Gompo's station commander, on a cluster roadblock operation outside Patterson. Each station in the cluster had contributed officers; fourteen all together. Dlamini recorded their names and force numbers on the attendance registry. Once finished, he asked for my SAPS appointment certificate and copied its details onto his form. Then, counting the names under his breath he muttered, 'fifteen'. He had formally booked me on duty. It wasn't that he wanted me to work, but every name added made the operation appear more impressively staffed. Relatedly, as in the Mthonjeni outreach patrols, I was given a fluorescent police bib to wear. Mine then was another name on paper and body on the roadside, which appeared to the organisational and public eye to belong to a police officer.

The SAPS does not have a specific mandate to enforce road legislation, and officers seldom do. The SAPS sees itself as focused on crime, and traffic as peripheral. Officers are also regular transgressors of almost every traffic law, as I discuss in Chapter Seven. At this roadblock, however, they were accompanied by four provincial traffic officers to aid their work. A few kilometres outside Patterson on the national road, police set up the road block and waited for the instruction to begin stopping cars.

When police officers started stopping cars and engaging their drivers they did so with little intent. All they did was request drivers' licenses and confirm that they, and car registration papers, were valid. Some half-heartedly searched car boots as if they might uncover something illegal. On the surface they appeared to be doing police work. But what they ignored is perhaps more important. More than half of the drivers, and almost all

passengers stopped at the road block were not wearing safety belts. None were fined and only one was asked to fasten his belt before departing. This he did but let the belt retract again as he pulled onto the road. While his car was searched, a driver urinated next to it, while another dropped a Coke can at the feet of an officer. Police ignored these offences. They were too busy recording the names and license information of drivers to care. As long as the information was recorded they could report a successful roadblock to their superiors.

Driving back to Gompo after the operation, Captain Dlamini volunteered, 'It was a very successful operation! We issued lots of fines, eight or nine!' But I knew they could have issued thirty more, and potentially saved lives. What was most successful for Dlamini, I felt, was that he had a list of about fifty cars and their drivers with which he could prove that his officers had worked. At the same time they had been present on a busy national road for two hours, delivering a very visible public performance which would have been noted by all those passing through.

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In addition to the data-based deception, which I discuss in the next section, the community-outreach and roadside performances serve an important purpose. Like most 'visible policing' in South Africa, they reveal and make mundane the presence of police and particular notions of 'police work' in the lives of residents and road users, making otherwise invasive interjections part of the everyday. They burn the police presence into the public mind so that they won't say the police were absent, while simultaneously entrenching the SAPS' right to insert itself, uninvited, into their lives when it deems fit.

If a thousand road users die, police will not be responsible; if a community protects its offenders, police can say they tried to build bridges. With an impossible mandate and inadequate tools with which to carry it out, SAPS officers repeatedly rehearse

these and related performances to defend their centrality of place in a country that expects more of them than they can ever hope to deliver.

2) *Data performance lies*

Public performance lies often link to *data performance lies*. The latter refer to the data generated by public performances, or forged in the absence of organisationally-required public performances. Captain Dlamini's record of cars stopped and fines issued is an example, as are the posed photographs taken during outreach patrols.

The largest segment of the SAPS 2012/13 Annual Report is titled 'Performance Information'. Data ostensibly gathered at roadblocks, patrols and other operations make up this section of the report. Because police work is low visibility work, it is the data that police generate which serves as evidence of work completed. The listing of such evidence informs the police claim to make authoritative pronouncements about the country, 'and have [their] power of naming not just taken seriously but taken for granted' (Loader & Mulcahy, 2003:46). The figures add an additional layer of formality and obviousness to the *public performance lies*. Counting and listing suggests there is something of value to be counted and listed. This entrenches the idea that what the SAPS counts represents what the SAPS is accountable for doing. Using statistics in this way, police become the manufacturers and gatekeepers of 'official wisdom' on crime and policing (Manning, 1997:122), while shielding from public view the backstage where their dirty work takes place.

The Annual Report includes various claims of action taken by police, including road blocks (46 079), stop and searches (2 902 917), vehicle searches (7 392 543) and person searches (20 357 564). Notably, the latter equals 40% of the country's population.

The information is reported with confidence and pride, as if evidence of a police organisation fulfilling its mandate. But the figures are almost unbelievable. A critical observer must read them as exposing the excess of a punishment-centred ideal of security, rooted to police coercion, promising more than it can deliver (Loader, 2009:243). This is why the SAPS resorts to obtuse figures. Like the SAPS' public performances they communicate meaning about police and their role, normalising their existence and actions. They say to their audience, 'Of course these are the actions you expect of police, and look how many we have achieved!' But the evidence such reporting produces is shaped by policy and political pressure (Manning, 2009:462), as well as individual self-interest (Grover, 1993:481), not improvements or deteriorations in order and/or police action.

Apart from the invasive and coercive nature of these otherwise unjustified actions, they obscure two important points. The first is that the figures reduce millions of complex social interactions between the state and public down to a handful of figures. Secondly, they hide what are very flawed systems of data generation. I have given an example of the latter by describing the pushing through of student constables in training. The Annual Report claims that of 5068 recruits trained in 2012/13, 99% were 'found to be competent' (SAPS, 2013:36). But as I have suggested, it is very difficult to fail in a system that is rigged to ensure success, at least on paper.

I have touched on other examples of *data lies* elsewhere (Faull, 2013). This related to the manner in which Crime Prevention Unit (CPU) officers in Mthonjeni were tasked with visiting taverns and shebeens to record information about them. The operation was guided by a pro-forma sheet which officers were required to complete at each venue. But rather than enter every venue and examine them in person, some officers simply called managers outside and completed the form based on whatever the managers claimed. They

did not check identification documents, as required, nor whether anything they were told was true or not. They wanted to fill in the forms and be done with it.

Similarly, in Patterson, officers were tasked with visiting alcohol outlets and filling in pro-forma documents. There they put a lot of effort and energy into the inspections. Where the Mthonjeni police spent five minutes, the Patterson police spent half an hour to an hour at each venue, not only inspecting the premises but chatting cordially with owners. When the record-taking officer filled in the sheet he did so in a manner that appeared considered, reading each question aloud, following the words with his pen, before ticking 'yes'. He never ticked 'no'. Because he appeared so careful, I assumed he was filling the form in correctly. But at the fifth tavern I looked over his shoulder as he ticked 'yes' to the question, 'Are any persons under age at the premises?' I pointed out the error to which he replied, 'I see what you mean, it should be "no".' The form had been incorrectly filled in, at least for this question, at every premises visited. It made me wonder what other mistakes might have been made, and how common they might be in the millions of forms officers complete each year.

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The examples above do not suggest any significant intent to deceive. Rather, they indicate the imprecise manner in which 'evidence' of police performance is produced, and how this normalises what the public (and police) expect of them. The next three examples illustrate a more intentional focus on deceit through data.

At the end of each shift Mthonjeni's CPU commanders were required to record and report to the cluster, the numbers of actions carried out. These included Vehicle Check Points (VCP)³², stop and searches and tavern visits. But commanders were often also

³² Usually smaller than standard road blocks, at times staffed by as few as two police officers.

required to attend management meetings early in the morning following late night shifts. As such, data would sometimes be captured well before the end of a shift so the commander could return home to sleep. Lacking confidence with computer work, Captain Thangana asked me to assist him with this task on a few occasions. As a result I had direct experience of the manipulation of data for organisational use. For instance, only a few hours into an eight or ten hour shift, Thangana would ask me to help him capture the required figures. Because the bulk of the shift had yet to happen, the data had to be estimated. Similarly, following an operation in which patrollers, armed with search warrants, raided five homes looking for drugs, Thangana set about capturing the results of the operation, which he had not participated in. He soon realised that officers had failed to record the names of residents at some of the houses raided, so he made them up. The spreadsheet also required that he note whether the raided homes were close to churches and schools, whether they were council built or private. He told me to simply tick the 'no' and 'council' boxes as others had done for previous operations. He had not been on the raid but I had, and I was fairly sure his information was incorrect. He told me to input four VCP's carried out and sixty people stopped and searched.³³ These are the numbers which make up the SAPS's annual reports and their performance claims. They are the acts which police believe signal their dedication to their mandate. But like their mandate, they are largely imaginary.

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The second example relates to VCPs in Yorkton. There, shifts would regularly be tasked with conducting up to five or six VCPs per shift (one per patrol van). This involved setting up a small road block, stopping passing cars, checking license details and searching

³³ One might think this a very high number for a twelve hour period. The fact that the captain thought it a reasonable and believable figure illustrates the type of police work he believes his superiors expect of his unit.

for illegal substances or weapons. However, while this occasionally took place, most of the VCPs recorded as having taken place, didn't.

This is how it worked: The officer would park on the side of the road where the VCP was meant to be carried out. This was so the car's AVL (Automatic Vehicle Location system) would show it had been in the area should anyone check. The officer, at times asking for my assistance, would then write down the make and license information of passing cars before inventing fictitious names and driver's license numbers, and recording them on a pro-forma sheet. At the end of the shift the sheet would be handed to the shift commander as evidence of cars stopped when, very often, none had been stopped at all. On those occasions when cars were stopped, when a *public performance lie* was enacted, no action was ever taken against drivers. Again, this included ignoring un-roadworthy vehicles, expired licenses, overloaded taxis and seatbelts. Although the officer would threaten people with fines, because he had no intention of issuing any he didn't carry a fine book. A few times, perhaps emboldened by their wealth and fancy cars, drivers challenged the officer, asking him what the purpose of the stop was. He would either ignore the question or mutter something non-committal about it being 'police work' or 'routine stops', appealing to the idea that whatever police are seen to be doing should be accepted as what police should be doing. Of course he couldn't divulge that it was a *public performance lie* intended to generate misleading data. The interactions illustrated the vagueness of what police work entails. Like stop and search in Mthonjeni, VCPs normalised invasive police practice in the eyes of the public, coupling the actions with the idea of police work in both the minds of the public and the police.

Importantly, the officer would usually only fill in one pro-forma sheet per staged VCP before heading on. VCPs were meant to be staged for a full hour. As one officer told

me, management must have known the data reported was fake because an hour-long VCP would generate many pages of data, yet they only handed in one per VCP. So while it was clear from the shebeen examples that the SAPS was an organisation deceiving itself, my VCP experience suggested that management knew they were being lied to, and that they were fine with it. Everyone was lying while pretending not to know they were lying or being lied to.

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The final example relates to Yorkton's 'ghost' squad. The policing area is home to some of Cape Town's most active, moneyed night life. It is also home to a vibrant recreational drug trade. Yorkton's ghost squad was made up of about eight men, all in their twenties and early thirties. Tattooed and pierced, they would walk the streets in casual clothes, addressing this challenge.

The Yorkton area's night life is concentrated around a main strip of bars and clubs. One might expect the job of tackling a drug trade in such a concentrated space – and one with the CCTV network mentioned in Chapter Three – to be fairly easy. In 2003/04 the station recorded just over 800 'drug-related' crimes. In 2012/13 this figure stood at almost 2000 (Crime Hub, 2014).

At the station the ghost squad kept to themselves while making their presence known through shouts and laughter. They behaved as if they ran the station. While I wasn't able to shadow them, rumours about their work flowed freely through the station. The most common rumour – confirmed by one member of the squad – was that they purposefully didn't arrest drug dealers, only drug buyers. The reason was simple: drug-related crime fell into the category 'crimes dependent on police action'. In this category, higher numbers were viewed as evidence of police at work. If drug dealers were arrested and the trade

squashed, there would be fewer buyers to arrest and meeting targets would be difficult. So while the squad knew where drugs were sold, rather than raiding the venues, they waited outside and arrested their clients.

Other common rumours about the ghost squad related to their use of force. Uniformed police and detectives whispered about the squad having thrown a suspect from a second story window. In recounting these stories officers told me I should avoid them, which is what everyone else at the station did.

A month before I left Yorkton a man died in the station's cells. When I arrived for the day shift hours after the death, the rumour at the station was that he had tried to swallow the narcotics he had on him and that these had killed him. But it soon emerged that many officers didn't believe the story. They knew the ghost squad's reputation. They knew it was common to strangle anyone trying to swallow drugs, to prevent them from doing so. They suspected the squad had murdered him.

Indeed, before the day shift was over I would see the squad arriving for work, joking with loud bravado about how the IPID would be investigating them for murder, pretending to be scared. But did the rest of the station care? No. Anyone who suspected anything, anyone who told me they might know something about it, said they wanted nothing to do with the investigation. They would put their heads down and get on with their jobs. Because at the end of the day, this was what was important to them, covering their asses and holding onto their jobs. In the meantime, the ghost squad would continue producing arrests and the illusion of efficacy.

3) Internal deception and external lies

The formal, systematic manner in which the SAPS generates misleading data is supported by regular, informal, *internal deception*, lies and, as in the case of the ghost squad, silence. By this I refer to the ways individuals and groups in the SAPS seek to deceive one another for personal gain. Similarly, the public is sometimes lied to, to protect an officer's interest, an *external lie*. These practices, such as calling in sick to work, are not unique to the SAPS, but they do appear to be endemic in the organisation. An accompanying trend of theft within the SAPS means many officers plainly distrust their colleagues. This erodes officers' pride in the organisation and their association with it, and so their self-esteem.

Police officers liberally take sick leave, often when not sick. Some are open about this. Yorkton's Constable Hendricks told me he always took all his sick leave, often to go partying. He justified this with, 'You only live once and I'm going to make the most of it. I know I have responsibilities to the organisation but the SAPS is not going to shut down just because I don't come to work.' With income and employment secured, he felt free to address the social aspects of his identity and search for ontological security.

Similarly, Constable Ndungwane in Mthonjeni joked that if he wasn't granted leave to return to the Eastern Cape for his brother's initiation, he was 'going to go AWOL. One of my children will become sick'. He would create a reason to skip work, even if he needed to blame his child. To this his colleague, Constable Deyi, responded with his own story, laughing throughout:

Last year I did the same. My Christmas leave was denied. Then on the 23rd of December I saw an opportunity. A truck hit a child in Mountain View, it ran over its legs and crushed them. So I went to that white Captain, because she's sympathetic – the Colonel is hard and would have told me to be strong, and she called the social worker and told them I was not okay. They were very happy that I called them and said the police should call them more often. They booked me off as unfit. The next day I went to the Eastern Cape and didn't come back until after my holiday.

While he may well have needed what the SAPS calls ‘stress leave’, Deyi chose to present his story as if he had cunningly manipulated the system, as an organisational norm.

Because abuse of leave is common in the organisation, extreme measures are at times taken to catch abusers: Following the Yorkton parade one morning, Captain Khumalo told me to accompany Warrant Officer Kriel visiting two officers who had reported being sick, ‘because they are often bullshitting’. The measure was extreme. One of the officers lived 70 kilometres out of the city, taking us out of the policing area for three hours. What’s more, having visited the first officer’s house, Kriel was unable to locate that of the second. She lived in Mfuleni, an area on the outskirts of the city in which the many government built houses look similar to one another. When people on the street denied knowing where the officer lived, Kriel dismissed their statements with derision saying, ‘People always deny knowing who lives in a house if it’s the police asking.’ Not only did he question his colleague’s claims of illness - in his words, ‘To them [sick leave and family responsibility leave] is their right, they must take all the leave available to them,’ – but he mistrusted the public, too.

Driving back to Yorkton WO Kriel shared a story which gave context to the visits to sick members’ houses. He began dramatically and without warning, ‘A few years ago I lost it.’ He had been working at one of the country’s prisons, he told me. Back then he had been a detective tasked with investigating crime at the facility. He began investigating station based detectives when he realised they were involved in corruption at the prison, and arrested five of them. All five were given bail and began threatening Kriel. He said one of the five had confronted him while with his family at a mall, that he had wanted to ‘kill him right there’. A few days later he booked out an assortment of firearms from the police safe intent on killing him. He laughed, recounting how his commander had not questioned his

behaviour. He said he had been halfway to the detective's house when the SAPS Task Force, finally tipped off by Kriel's commander, had caught up to him. He was sedated for two months and put on leave for two years. But what Kriel wanted me to understand was that:

Because of that experience I will never be friends with a police officer again. I don't trust the police and I tell my family not to trust the police. If the Colonel or Captain visit my house when I'm sick, they know they are not allowed to come inside, they know they are not welcome.

While Kriel's distrust in members of the SAPS was extreme, it was not as rare as one might expect of members of the same 'team'. Constable Bhele, also at Yorkton, told me he had been robbed by police from another station. He had been off duty, had been very drunk and was speeding in his car (an offense he, like many cops, admitted freely). Because he was so intoxicated he didn't realise he was being chased by police. In retrospect he surmised they must have radioed for backup from Khayelitsha where he lived, because as soon as he exited the freeway he was surrounded. He recalled dozens of guns pointing at him, being thrown to the ground and patted down by multiple hands. One of the officers came across his SAPS appointment certificate and the group let him go (ignoring his intoxication). But when he arrived home he realised they had stolen his cell phone and cash. 'Until I experienced this I didn't believe people when they complained that police robbed civilians,' he said, 'Now I do'.

This deep mistrust between colleagues manifested in mundane forms, too. For example, at Mthonjeni detectives almost never left their offices unlocked, no matter how short their absence. This wasn't because they contained anything of particular monetary value. Primarily, detectives feared their colleagues stealing stationary, coffee or milk from them. There was also the possibility that someone might steal a docket and sell it to a suspect.

Similarly, officers would openly lie to one another or the public, at times using official channels, in order to protect their own interests or hide inactivity. It was not uncommon for officers assigned to a complaint to report to radio control that they had attended the scene and no action was required, when they hadn't been able to find it. Such practices are common elsewhere, too (Manning, 2009:454, 460). Another was when officers dispatched to various complaints or calls for assistance pretended to be otherwise occupied, or asked probing questions before deciding whether or not to respond. While on patrol with Constable Moshoeshoe in Yorkton, for example, he received a call for assistance from the neighbourhood watch. Although we were only patrolling quiet back roads, Moshoeshoe's response was calculated, 'I am busy with a docket but what is the problem? Maybe I can help.' When the neighbourhood watch said they needed assistance searching someone, Moshoeshoe agreed to help. As we drove he volunteered, 'I lied to them about being busy because I don't want to be called to see a person who has been beaten.' A few days earlier he had told me he didn't agree with the violence his colleagues sometimes employed, nor the force sometimes used by the neighbourhood patrol volunteers. I pointed out that, had it been a call relating to an assault, he could have intervened in defence of the victim. But his preference was simply to avoid confrontation, so he told his lie to buy himself time and ensure his day wasn't more complicated than he wanted it to be. He was pushing back against select ways in which the organisation threatened to shape him.

This is an example of an officer lying over an official radio to a formal SAPS partner. But the manipulation of truth was more common in police-public engagements. Many times I witnessed officers giving false information to members of the public, generally so they would not have to do additional work, but also to spite people. Examples included sending complainants to other police stations – claiming crime could only be reported in the area in

which it occurred (false); sending complainants to alternative justice institutions to pay fines which could be paid at a police station (false); patrol police telling victims to report directly to the police station because they needed to attend to other business (false); patrol police telling a victim they will not arrest a wanted person because it's better to do so on Fridays so that they spend the weekend in jail (true but abusive); and police not taking action relating to an attempted rape because the mother of the victim was drunk.

4) A culture of suspicion

Literature on police culture is replete with reference to organisational 'cultures of suspicion' (eg. Reiner, 2010). The suggestion is that police work requires that officers remain suspicious of everything and everyone. However, this generally refers to the detection of illegal activity.

The culture of suspicion to which I refer is different. While SAPS officers remain alert and suspicious in accordance with the literature – indeed while they are particularly suspicious of predominantly poor, black men - they are also deeply suspicious and mistrusting of many claims of victimisation from the public, and of each other, in ways that are not as common in the literature. This isn't to suggest that police suspicion of peers has not been noted in the past, it has (Manning 1973:291, Reus-Ianni & Ianni, 1983), but rather, that in the same way that any lie affects its teller (Bok, 1979:26), with every lie police tell one another, the bonds within the SAPS suffer. It is as if, while all know they are part of a 'team' working together to create a frontstage fiction, they are unable to fully abandon their lie-telling in the backstage. This was most notable at Yorkton, and amongst Mthonjeni's detectives; environments with demographic diversity. I believe this is linked to

South Africa's economic, spatial and racial divide. Because of it, many 'race' stereotypes prevail. A survey of 25 000 Gauteng residents in 2013 found 73 per cent of Africans agreeing that 'Blacks and whites will never trust each other'. Forty-four per cent of whites, 55 per cent of coloureds and 61 per cent of Indians felt the same way (Sapa, 2014). To live in a racially integrated area, attend a racially integrated school, or work in a racially diverse workplace that is not stratified by race, one needs money. Money and class, to some extent, neutralise old racial divisions. But most SAPS officials don't have that much money, nor do they work in heterogeneous or power-neutral environments. Instead their work environments mobilise race labels to describe victims and suspects³⁴, and guide action, while they engage in daily squabbles over the police radio about which language should be used on air.³⁵

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But officers were also suspicious of the public in ways that echo the literature. This was clearest at Yorkton where many officers refused to believe the numerous, generally middle-class or international tourist victims of street robbery (almost 300: 10 000 in 2012/13), pickpocketing and theft (around 1700: 10 000 in 2012/13) who daily queued to report their crimes. Rather, they felt they were abusing the SAPS in order to claim from insurance. I believe this doubt was born of many officers not occupying a world of insurance premiums so they did not know cash cannot be insured. While victims were never turned away, they were often derided in private. It was as if the claimed value of items listed by the mostly wealthy victims was so incongruent with the worlds inhabited by most officers that

³⁴ Eg. 'Three Alpha males' means 'Three African males'. 'Whiskey' = white, 'Charlie' = coloured, 'Indigo' = Indian.

³⁵ English is the formal language of radio communication in the SAPS, but it is the mother tongue of a minority of officers.

the only plausible explanation was that victims were lying. Such backstage derision (Goffman, 1959:173) or dehumanising of audiences (1959:209) builds morale amongst teammates, the organisational culture promoting a patching over of the mistrust officers feel for one another.

In another Yorkton example, Constable Moshoeshoe and I were called to an elite private hospital where an elderly patient had died prior to undergoing a minor surgery. A senior nurse told us the deceased's son had requested an autopsy, believing that the death might relate to an earlier fall. Moshoeshoe realised he was missing important paperwork so, knowing that I was a police reservist, asked if I would take the nurse's statement while he returned to the station. This I did, over 45 minutes, recording as many details as possible in order not to prejudice the investigation.

Because I had recorded the primary statement, I was more familiar with the event than Moshoeshoe, or the two officers who arrived to relieve him at the hospital. And yet, the first thing the relief officer said to me on arrival – not knowing I had taken the statement, nor having read it, was, 'This is a waste of time. The son is only after the money. He doesn't know the operation hasn't happened. He wants to blame the hospital.' She was performing for me, not knowing that what the nurse had told me made her reading of events unlikely. She automatically reverted to her default suspicion of a greedy middle-class out to waste police time in the pursuit of self-enrichment. Perhaps it was a hint of the jealousy and resentment that Steinberg (2009) and Ashforth (2005) have understandably suggested those who 'have not' feel towards those who 'have'. As long as South Africa remains the socially and economically fractured society that it is, such suspicion and derision will likely remain. Because police work was for most of those I shadowed first about income and ontological security – the support of children and social networks – it made

sense that they projected the same attitudes onto the public, especially those who were living the life they strove to live themselves, but which for most remained out of reach.

Finally, because so many officers I met were deceiving their superiors, deceiving the organisation, deceiving each other and the public, it seems unsurprising that some assumed everyone in turn was out to deceive them. This is especially so in the context of a citizenry which, so the surveys cited above suggest is often distrustful of one another, as well as of its police. The work of Kutnjak Ivkovich and Sauerman (2012, 2013) and me (Faull, 2011a) referred to earlier suggests that SAPS members simultaneously view their colleagues in a dubious light while conspiring to protect their violations. However, the conspirator who hides another's offence finds herself with power over their colleague. Because a majority of the SAPS 'team' is involved in the manufacture of an official façade, not to mention those involved in the dirtier side of backstage corruption, torture and murder, many are both bound to, and under threat from, their team mates and fellow conspirators. As such their personal narratives are entangled in an organisational narrative that vies to shape them.

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Others have explored these themes in South Africa before me. Hornberger has suggested that in deploying violence behind an official image of respectful, human rights-based policing, 'human rights as a state practice is actually in itself a form of violence' (Hornberger, 2011:152). Similarly in relation to imprisonment, Super has suggested the prison has become a symbol of government's willingness to 'rehabilitate' offenders. Together they suggest the language of 'human rights' and 'rehabilitation' function as screens behind which sinister and punitive practices continue. In this chapter I have illustrated the very mundane manner in which these deceptive fronts are rendered from the earliest and smallest of police actions, and throughout the organisation.

Summary and Conclusion

In this chapter I have illustrated how officers' personal identity is shaped by the social performances prescribed by, and emerging in response to, the SAPS organisational culture, and how this in turn shapes their work. I have suggested that officers seek to maintain strategic symbolic fronts to ease organisational performance pressure and satiate public scrutiny of them as individuals and a group. I have focused here on organisational deceptions, and how these organisationally sanctioned social performances contribute to officers' own suspicion and mistrust of the public and of each other. In so doing, I have suggested that the SAPS shapes both officers' personal identity (the story they tell themselves about themselves) and the way they do their work. This is one answer to the research question, though I use the remainder of the thesis to develop this further.

Against the regular absence of the perfect shift, the SAPS is a 'team' of actors working together to present a fictional front. The SAPS organisational culture rapidly socialises recruits to embrace their prescribed roles as reproducers of this front, so shaping their personal identities. Its purpose is to present the organisation as one that is rational and rule bound, and to make its presence and practices common sense in the citizen mind. It is a fiction which the SAPS does not want challenged, so the 'team' employs secrets, smoke and mirrors to deflect interrogation, and leverages its autonomy to define its own criteria for 'mistakes', 'truth' and 'police work' (Manning, 1973:303). The official reports police produce are designed, recorded and shaped with frontstage audiences in mind. They are not an objective science but rather present what the police 'team' want the public to know (Manning, 2009:463) such that the meaning they make and the order they bring is

accepted as desirable and truthful (Loader & Mulcahy, 2003:46, 54). Officer-knowledge that SAPS performances mislead, erodes their trust in organisational processes and logic, and their attachment to, and pride in the organisation. This detachment opens a space in which many distance themselves from a personal identity invested in the organisation. Instead they frame themselves as visitors passing through the SAPS on their way to better things. As I explore in Chapter Five, many officers planned to leave the SAPS, should opportunities emerge elsewhere. Such attitudes, together with the realisation that a job in the SAPS offered opportunity and security difficult to match elsewhere, resulted in a tension: embarrassment of association with an at times tainted organisation, and the desire to make it something better through which long-term ontological security might be secured.

That the SAPS lies is not surprising. Lies and deception are built into the generic public policing model. Pressure to produce evidence of work done, when so little of what police do is measurable, encourages deceit. The more officers think of themselves as involved in a 'war on crime', as those in the SAPS often do, the more easily the 'ends justify the means', and lies are defended (Alpert & Noble, 2009:250). The resulting casual lies are diametrically opposed to the interests of the public who rely on police for honesty and transparency (Bok, 1979:xvii). Where an officer is publically exposed as a liar, the whole 'team' is discredited (Goffman, 1990:40). But officers are internally castigated if they don't achieve 'successes' at work. This leads to shame, which, as I discuss in Chapter six, can lead to violence (Gilligan 2000, 2001). One way of protecting against shame, is to employ strategies that preserve positive self and organisational images (Tyler & Feldman, 2005:371). Where the means to sustain 'team' pride and individual self-esteem is a choice between brutality and lies, perhaps lies are the lesser evil.

I have suggested that the SAPS' symbolic front is informed by four categories of deception. These are: 1) *public performance lies*; 2) *data performance lies*, 3) *internal and external lies*; all of which build on and feed; a 4) *culture of suspicion*. If the test of an acceptable deception in a democratic state is that it is openly debated and consented to in advance (Bok, 1979:191), then a great deal of what SAPS officers do in their daily practice is unacceptable. Where lies hide torture, abuse of force and even murder – as alleged at Yorkton and Marikana, an organisation is in dangerous waters.

From the ill-referenced, contradictory and out of date training material to the pushing through of recruits, from the staged operations on the street to the forged data fed up the organisational hierarchy, the SAPS is an organisation hiding behind a multi-layered mask, and a vast, intricate performance, working to justify its place and practice in contemporary South Africa. In the midst of this, where the lives of officers become entangled in the SAPS organisational culture, and the local and national context of South Africa, individual officers do what they must to forge a secure sense of self, and with it, to colonise their futures.

Chapter Five: More than just police work: personal narratives, precarity, responsibility and ambition

In Chapter Four I suggested that deception is integral to the daily functions of the South African Police Service (SAPS). As their personal narratives become entangled in the SAPS organisational culture, officers both produce and receive these deceptions. By towing the institutional line officers reproduce the myths central to public policing while easing the organisational strain placed on them as individuals. By not questioning incompetence, by turning away from illegality, and by actively participating in organisationally-manufactured deception, officers succeed in the ways the organisation wants them to succeed and avoid life-complicating attention from superiors.

This chapter is about another deception central to the lives of SAPS officers, against which many struggle daily. This is the notion that joining the SAPS should secure their material ambitions and ontological needs. In the following pages I illustrate that most officers are recruited from contexts of precarity. The job serves a primarily instrumental purpose; it opens a road to upward mobility. As such it reduces risk, feeds ambition, and improves officers' prospects of securing ontological security by empowering them to meet their social responsibilities. Throughout the chapter I focus on the ontological security, precarity, and personal identity aspects of the conceptual framework. It is against this exploration that the deceptive and violent police practices discussed thus far, and the violence and contributions to disorder discussed in subsequent chapters - the way officers work - are best understood.

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In a society characterised by poor educational outcomes and mass unemployment, the SAPS offers a portal into an easier world, with life-long job security and a starting salary nearly twice that of the average African male-headed household. As such, police work is an occupation rich in life-changing potential, as illustrated by Warrant Officer Skrikker's self-narrative in Chapter One. But while the job certainly changes the lives of officers, the change is not always what they had hoped. Most officers belong to intimate networks of people whose potential has been systematically stunted for generations. Within these networks it is often accepted that what belongs to one must be shared with all (Ashforth, 2005:28). Self-pride is frowned upon. It ignites jealousy, making one a legitimate target for attack, spiritual or physical (Ashforth, 2005: 35). So while on the one hand even the most junior officers earn a decent income, it seldom belongs to them alone. It must be shared, and shared with humility. As a result, it is far more common to hear SAPS officers lament that they do not earn enough to survive, than to hear them, like Skrikker, celebrate their privilege. Goffman calls such performances 'negative idealization' (1959:49). While people with aspirations of upward mobility may idealize those of higher standing, he suggests, they may play up their lower status where it benefits them. To feel confident in one's membership of a stable political community is to feel secure (Loader & Walker, 2007:166). This is presumably true even when that community is materially poor. So where a job in the SAPS may change an officer's life - securing their material needs and improving their prospects beyond those of their neighbours, it can simultaneously open new fault lines that obstruct ontological security. By appealing to the idea of their financial struggle, SAPS officers create a buffer against intimate networks who desire a share of their fortune. At the same time officers' complaints that they are underpaid provide them a defence against the

demands of a security-obsessed public who insist they must deliver the impossible: a crime free South Africa.

Many SAPS officers are recruited from the country's dominant poor. They are the first in their families to secure jobs that offer comparable security, remuneration and potential for long-term income and class-progression, and the first to hold positions of significance in a modern institution (eg: Steinberg, 2008:104). But with the dismantling of apartheid and lifting of race-based discrimination in the early nineties came an outpouring of hope and expectation from most South Africans that life would improve significantly. The first two decades of democracy have seen attempts to embrace free-market neo-liberal economic and social policies, and to support citizens just enough to help them help themselves. This paradigm suggests that if government provides a baseline of services then individuals will be empowered to carve out their own futures. Effort will reap proportionate reward and wealth. But in the face of widespread deprivation, a culture of conspicuous consumption has emerged, wherein the few who *have*, consistently and crassly remind the majority that they *have-not*.

Police work is symbolic work, it shapes communities and nations. Similarly, a job in the SAPS shapes officers' lives, symbolically and instrumentally as their personal narratives become entangled in those of the organisation. To appreciate this one must consider the job in the context of these personal (or self) -narratives. Though varied, these are often united by the themes of original poverty, a struggle for upward mobility, and a vision of a better future for one's children. Almost no officers I met wanted their children to join the SAPS. Rather, they saw their employment in the organisation as a stepping stone from which they could propel their children, and so a piece of themselves, into a brighter future. From my vantage point as an observer from a more privileged past, the fieldwork allowed

me a glimpse of generations in transition. Those born into the families of police officers will benefit from the rewards their parents' jobs offer. At the same time, the South African public will receive a service delivered by officers understandably preoccupied with their own trajectories in a country where life for most remains precarious.

Gompo: A job that changes the world

I want to return to the four students writing in their pocket books in Gompo's early autumn light. They were the organisation's future. Where had they come from? What paths had they walked before arriving at that table? In subsequent weeks they allowed me insight into the narratives through which they made sense of their lives.

When I introduced Student Constable Mmaya in Chapter Four I described him as 'an artist turned police recruit'. I learned about his artistic past a few days before meeting him. I had been chatting to residents of the village where I was living, 15 kilometres from Gompo. The village was rare in the area. It had managed to attract attention from wealthy, skilled South Africans and the international donor community, and as a result was home to various experiments in rural health provision and income generation under *The Arago Fund*. The fund describes itself as offering 'support for the most vulnerable, [striving] to address the challenges of widespread poverty and disease through holistic and creative programmes and partnerships' (Arago, 2014). Before joining the SAPS Arago had been Mmaya's life blood. Like so many officers he had been recruited from the country's 'most vulnerable'.

When I first met Mmaya I asked him how he had moved to the SAPS:

I matriculated from high school in 2000, then I sat at home because there was no money for further study. I started working at the Arago Art Project. It was my first time to do art. I was very fortunate to be selected as one of four people from the

project to be sent to PE³⁶ to study fine art, so I have a three-year diploma. I then returned to Arago where I applied my skills as an artist. But then I decided to join the SAPS. You can't support yourself with community projects. You can have money for food and clothes but that's all. It's not enough.

Mmaya had joined the SAPS in the hope that it would offer the 'enough' he desired, a path towards ontological security in a context of precarity.

Mmaya knew where he would be posted after graduating from SAPS College eight months later. He was to be sent to a small town 65 kilometres from his home in Gompo. He was grateful that it wasn't too far. He didn't have a car so would have to rent accommodation there on work days, but he would be close enough to return home for his rest days, a luxury not available to all officers.

Almost every African police officer I had met during my six months in Cape Town spoke of the Eastern Cape as 'home'. It was where they had been born, where they knew their ancestors to have lived, and where they imagined themselves growing old and being buried. But while they pegged the narrative of their own beginning and end to that part of the country, they knew the bulk of their working lives would be spent in Cape Town. So Mmaya was lucky. For his part he had only visited Cape Town once, 'to visit a friend, but I wouldn't want to stay there. It's a rough place. The way people live there is not right.' It was a view of cities shared by most of Gompo's officers. They were seen as places of jobs and opportunity, but also of violence and risk. Cape Town was viewed as particularly violent, a place where police were hunted and killed. A posting in a small town close to his village excited Mmaya.

If Mmaya's story was different from those of many other officers I met, it was not because he had come from harsher conditions, but because he had been luckier than many. While it had taken him eleven years between leaving school and securing permanent

³⁶ Port Elizabeth, a city nearly 250km away.

employment in the SAPS, he had been fortunate enough to complete a sponsored tertiary qualification and to have some work, during that time.

The phrases ‘there was no money’ and ‘the money ran out’ were common to the self-narratives officers shared. They were almost always used to explain why tertiary study could not be pursued, to indicate the loss of a dream and explain the accident of their occupation. For these officers they hoped the SAPS might fill the space left by dreams they had deferred to their children.

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Gompo’s Student Constable Cethe was luckier than Mmaya. He had managed to join the SAPS directly out of high school, but this had not been his plan:

I live in Bruce³⁷ and went to school near the police station. I walked to school every day, it took me forty minutes each way. Every day when I got home I washed my shirt, then went to soccer practice at five. When I came home I ironed my shirt, watched TV and went to sleep. In the morning I left home at seven again.

This was how he described his childhood. As an afterthought he added, ‘I wasted my time doing pure maths and pure science for matric because now I have ended up in the police.’

The single school shirt symbolised the poverty in which he was raised, while the school subjects were markers of possibilities no longer available to him.³⁸

Mornings and afternoons in Gompo’s policing area still saw dirt roads lined with children walking to and from school. Not every village had its own school, and most residents were too poor to afford transport so that the daily migration was a feature of the arid landscape. But Cethe wasn’t unhappy that his daily walks had led him to the SAPS.

When I queried what sounded like a tone of resignation in his story, he responded, ‘When you are inside the SAPS you see that it is nice, there are lots of opportunities. But to the

³⁷ A village 10km from Gompo police station

³⁸ In South Africa maths and science are considered the most important school subjects needed to secure a place in an industry or business oriented tertiary degree programme.

person outside they just see a uniform chasing a suspect.’ It seemed that he saw his future in the SAPS as one that might meet his needs, even his ambitions, but that he feared being reduced to something lesser in the eyes of the public: a symbol of the state who did its begrimed bidding.

Sitting around the table with the four students I asked them what they thought of SAPS salaries. ‘Right now it’s not a salary,’ said Mmaya, ‘it’s a stipend. But as long as you are not a baby factory then the police salary is a good one.’ I asked what he meant. Cethe laughed, ‘It’s very common for a policeman to have six babies with different women.’ Mmaya finished the thought, ‘As long as you don’t do that, the money will go far.’

It was a reference to notions of sex, reproduction and family in the country, one in which masculinity can be emboldened through proven fertility, but weakened where fathers can’t financially support their children (Hunter, 2006). In 2013, 39 per cent of South African children lived only with their mothers, while just 4 per cent lived only with fathers. Thirty-three per cent lived with both parents (SAPA, 2013b). The SAPS is a male-dominated organisation. While I explore aspects of South African masculinity in more detail in Chapter Six, at this point it is helpful to touch on fatherhood. In the introduction to their edited volume on the subject, Richter and Morrell (2006) provide the following insights: Historically – perhaps especially since the country’s industrialisation - many South African men have not fully participated in their children’s lives. Half of 22 000 children born at a Soweto hospital in the early 1990s had no male support, while 26 per cent of 11 year olds in the early 2000s reported almost no contact with fathers since birth. Some of these trends likely have roots in the migrant labour system established in the early colonies and formalised under apartheid. Through them African fathers working on mines spent a bulk of time removed from their families. On the one hand this meant many assumed a responsibility to financially

support a distant homestead – a part of them and their narrative located far away. But it also meant men assumed that women would parent, leading to fatherly neglect and abandonment (Richter & Rampele, 2006). There is evidence these trends are slowly reversing, but their inertia remains. Of 67 000 (mostly men) court ordered to pay maintenance in 2002, Richter and Morrell write, only 7000 did. Most young people in Cape Town live in homes forged around maternal kin networks (Braye, *et al.*, 2010:94). Absent and unsupportive fathers increase the burden on women, already bearing the brunt of the social strains wrought by the country's HIV/AIDS pandemic.

Results of the 2011 census confirm the extension of a four decade trend, which has seen fewer couples choosing to marry. Hunter (2006:206) suggests this is in part because men can't afford the bride price expected for a traditional marriage. To restore the value of fatherhood, Richter and Morrell write, South Africa must tackle both the unemployment disproportionately affecting the African population, and the historical emasculation built up over centuries. In some respects, a job in the SAPS promises to address both these factors for male officers. Still, I met many with children not living with them, often born to different women. The resulting pressure to support them threatened their vision of upward mobility and their quest for ontological security.

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Following on from Cethe and Mmaya's joke about babies, Student Constable Debeza asked me if I had children. She was surprised when I said I didn't. 'I have one,' she volunteered, 'She's four years old.' Debeza was in her early twenties. I asked if she would like her child to join the SAPS someday. She exploded in exaggerated gasps, 'Yoh! No, no, no, no!' If so, I asked why, had she joined? 'Job scarcity,' she said, 'Most of those in our

intake joined because of job scarcity. They don't want to be police but once you are in there you start to like it and develop a passion.' She reflected on this change in herself:

It's strange when you go from shouting at police to liking the police. I was shouting at the police before I joined, when they closed the tavern, when we were still having a good time. Now I won't. It was wrong. And I will tell my sister not to shout at the police either.

How quickly the state and its job-giving-salary-paying machine had changed her perception. Giddens calls moments of great change, such as deciding to get married or switch careers, 'fateful moments'. They are points in life, such as joining a once despised police service, where the appeal of fortune is strong, but where ontological security is challenged. After all, how does one reconcile becoming that which one previously despised?: by making major revisions to one's self-narrative (Giddens, 1991:113). For many, joining the SAPS required re-interrogating and rewriting the stories they told themselves about themselves (their personal identity) and their relation to the SAPS. A large part of this included resigning themselves to any stigma attached to the job, in return for a reduction in other risks, and an advancement towards a more ontologically secure state of being. A person who suddenly develops a stigma quickly experiences a change in personality (Goffman, 1990:157). They know how they are perceived by others because they were once part of those who judged the similarly afflicted. In the SAPS then, people who once judged the police from the outside quickly join the SAPS 'team' and play the part expected of them, when offered a job. This includes telling lies and deploying violence against those who would challenge their claim of a secure occupational identity. In other words, officers' entanglement in the SAPS organisational culture, in a context of general precarity, moulds their personal identity and shapes the way they do their work.

The similarity in Debeza and Cethe's revised narratives made me wonder if it had been strategically deployed by trainers when they welcomed the students to the SAPS. If so, one might imagine trainers seeking to pre-emptively strike down the resentment they knew many might bring with them, and to shape it into something positive. But however much Debeza told herself she enjoyed the SAPS, she didn't wish the job on her family or child. They deserved something better.

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At some point during those three days I commented to the students that they were lucky to be training in rural areas where rent was cheap. I had been struck by how little those officers without homes in the area were paying, usually less than R100 (£5.50) a month. The highest rent was paid by Lieutenant Nkomo, who lived in the nearby SAPS barracks and paid R1000 (£55) a month. The police station and barracks were by far the newest and sturdiest buildings in the area, and among few with indoor plumbing. Despite this, officers preferred paying token rent to mind the dilapidated rural homes left by those who had migrated to cities. Because so many officers had grown up in poverty, they were happy to forego the luxury of indoor plumbing for the cash they saved.

Mmaya told me that when he moved to take up his permanent post he would rent a shack in the township outside town. 'I don't need to be one of those city coconuts. I have lived in the city before [during art training], I don't need to now.' He said the shack would cost him R300-R500 (£16.50-£27.50) a month and that it would only be a twenty minute walk from town. Again, saving money was more important than living in a brick house.

On a sunny afternoon a month later I asked Mmaya and Cethe what they would do with their first salaries as fully fledged constables. Despite his prior song and dance about eating and drinking through his back pay (Chapter Four), Cethe replied more seriously this

time. ‘I have family responsibility,’ he said, ‘I must support them, my mother, father, sisters and brother. They are not working.’ A week later I passed Cethe’s family home while on patrol. It was a small rectangular structure, possibly big enough for two small bedrooms, on an overgrown plot. Its outer walls were dirt-covered white and one of its barred windows was broken. Cethe would later describe the *rondavel* he hoped to build for his parents, with a second for himself, over the property’s wild grasses. His answer to my salary question was emblematic of a theme that ran through the lives of the majority of police officers I met: they felt pressure to support familial networks. Mmaya’s answer was very different, but equally representative of those I had shadowed, ‘I must be honest with you, Andrew; I need wheels.’ He was grinning from ear to ear.

Instrumentality and police work

For many, perhaps most of the student constables and constables I met during my fieldwork, a job in the SAPS meant two things: a responsibility to support immediate and extended family, and access to new goods. Considering that South Africa’s is a society intentionally structured to grow a ‘black middle class’ on a foundation of historical race-based inequality and deprivation, this is perhaps unsurprising. After all, government is South Africa’s biggest employer (Rau, 2013) and the SAPS is one of government’s biggest departments.

The notion that police officers are people predisposed to the law and interests of objective justice, is central to state-promoted policing narratives in liberal democracies. But in most societies, what is as true today as it was at the birth of modern policing, is that the men and women who make up the ranks of police agencies are in general recruited from a society’s poor. They take the jobs because they need work. They are given a foot up over

their peers, encouraged to believe and promote the state's ideologies, and used to control the communities that raised them. The same has been true in South Africa, and remains true today.

To illustrate these trends in the South African context, and to locate them in relation to possible links to violence, shame and respect in the daily work and lives of SAPS officers (part of the 'how it shapes their work' discussed in Chapter Six), the remainder of this chapter describes the paths others walked, leading to their employment, and touches on the work that they pursue on the side to help realise their dreams and ambitions.

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While poverty is often most visible in South Africa's cities, the country's poorest still live in rural areas. Gompo's Constable Mbelani was born and raised in a village less than an hour's drive away. We got chatting one evening a few hours before the end of an eventless shift:

I am from a village in the Patterson area. I grew up with my mother, brothers and sisters, and attended my local village school. Halfway through high school I moved to a school closer to Patterson, it had a better matric pass rate. It's a common trend in the area, everyone moving to attend better schools. There are schools that have closed down because everyone leaves. My first school used to have about one thousand students, now it only has something like one hundred and ninety.³⁹

After school I moved to Woodside to study financial management at an FET college.⁴⁰ It was a two year course but after one and a half years I decided to drop out. I lived in Extension 6⁴¹ and the college was on the other side of town. I didn't have money for transport so had to walk there and back every day. It took over an hour. Class only ended at eight-thirty in the evening. I would only get home an hour later and would be too tired to study for my tests so I dropped out and applied to the SAPS. I kept my phone on all month, waiting for them to call but they didn't.

³⁹ In support of this observation, Soudien suggests 'a distinct realignment of socio-economic groups is taking place in [South African] schools, with the large-scale exodus of middle-class parents and their children out of the former [Black, Coloured and Indian] systems into the former white system.' (2004:106)

⁴⁰ Further Education and Training College

⁴¹ Amongst the poorer parts of the town, on the outskirts, consisting of many government built (RDP) houses.

The phrase ‘I dropped out’ was about as common as ‘the money ran out’ in the stories SAPS officers told of their lives. They were the signposts marking the forks in their biographical roads, after which the SAPS became their destination. ‘The other thing is that Woodside is a crazy place,’ he continued:

While living there I was shot at, chased with *pangas*, chased with an Okapi [knife]... This scar on my face, I was coming home from the club and saw these people fighting over a lady, I tried to break them up and one of them stabbed me in the face. Then they laughed, stopped fighting and left. I was just trying to help that lady.

Mbelani’s face carried a scar four centimetres long, running from the bridge of his nose to his cheek. Over my weeks at the station he would recount in detail his many encounters with violence and death in Woodside, including how he had almost stabbed someone in a premeditated revenge attack a few days after he had been robbed. When I asked him if he had reported the incidents to the police he said that he hadn’t. Even in retrospect, as a police officer, the idea didn’t seem obvious to him.⁴² But those stories came later, during that first discussion he continued:

The people in Woodside like to slaughter things. They are from the rural areas and are used to it. The youth are dying there, they are dying. Every weekend blood is spilled. I was living in an RDP house there with a friend, he had his room, I had mine. Then one morning I woke up and just told him I was leaving. I couldn’t take it anymore, there was too much crime. The next day he left, too. I returned to my home village. About a month later the SAPS called.

I didn’t enjoy my course in Woodside but I hadn’t ever imagined joining the police either. When you are growing up you think of being a nurse or a teacher or a lawyer, never a cop. But now that I am in the SAPS I have grown to like this job, I enjoy it. Now that I am here there are so many options. You can be a cook or a sports trainer or a teacher. I got lucky getting this job, *yoh!* I got lucky.

⁴² Steinberg (2008:64, 98) has convincingly suggested that in the absence of objective law enforcement during apartheid, informal providers of security and coercive force emerged across the country’s townships. Township residents grew accustomed to an informal market of security and violence. Against this background the SAPS, he suggests, has yet to secure its place as the dominant provider of security. I think this goes a long way to helping understand South Africa’s violence, and the fact that Mbelani and a number of other police officers I met, didn’t for a moment consider turning to the SAPS for help when they were victims of crime.

Working in the rural areas like this I can save lots of money. The first thing I must do is buy a car, before the end of this year. I need something which matches my level, constable, something like a VW Polo. Most constables are buying cars like that. It will be about R2400 (£132) or R2800 (£154) a month, then insurance. So it's affordable with what I earn. My rent is only R100 (£5.50) a month. I stay up the road here. I have an outside tap and boil water with the kettle if I want to have a bath. But if I was living in town my rent would be R1000 (£55) or R1500 (£82), so I am lucky. Once I have a car I must save for a cow. You know with Xhosa people if you have cows but no money you are still rich! If you need money you sell one. Many people send their children to study by selling cows. Then when they graduate they get a job and buy the cows back.

I don't yet have a wife or children but I do have to pay for my family. The more money you have, the more problems you have.

There it was again, the future car embodying the life the young officer hoped to live but the family pulling him back, bringing him 'problems'. Steinberg (2008: 101-109) found the same among the police he shadowed almost a decade before me. They were men and women whose parents had toiled to provide them with the education and language required to enter the SAPS. In return, the officers were obliged to share their relative wealth, not only with their parents but with their siblings whose own futures had been sacrificed to provide for the officer-to-be. Put another way, a young constable's money is seldom his or her own. And while constable salaries are fairly good by South African standards, at approximately R10 00 (£580) a month, 'the money runs out' fairly quickly when aspiring to live a middle class life.

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Intra-familial remittances have a long history in South Africa, closely tied to inequality and exploitation. All three share roots in migration, and continue to send ripples through South Africa's social fabric.

For most of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, rural-urban migration in South Africa was the result of economic and tax systems designed to control and leverage cheap African labour. When diamonds and gold were discovered in the late nineteenth century

white miners were privileged over black. Confined to single-sex compounds, African miners could not return to their rural homes at will, or co-habit with their families. Mine life introduced them to criminal and civil codes that shaped gender, sexuality, marriage, property, land tenure, succession and inheritance (Marks, 2011:104). When they returned home, usually once a year, it was with experience, wages, and ideas about identity, class and Christianity, which shook up rural life (Etherington, Harries & Mbenga, 2009: 375). The introduction of cash into the countryside led to new patterns of consumption and class consciousness among rural residents (Etherington, Harries & Mbenga, 2009:390). When migrants returned to mines and cities they held onto their rural ties, remitting money to those they left behind. This insured them against unemployment and reserved them a place for retirement (Posel, 2003:3). Migrants often hoped to be buried near their rural homes after death, too (Lee, 2011:228).

While plenty has changed since these early migrations, their inertia remains. In 1993, over 70% of the money received by the country's poorest citizens, came in the form of private cash transfers (Seekings & Nattrass, 2005:290). While government grants have since replaced remittances as the most important source of income for the poor, the perceived obligation to support kin remains powerful. This was true for many of the officers I shadowed. When they spoke of money it was often couched in language suggesting investment in, and identity shaped against, rural communities and vulnerable relatives whom they felt obliged to support. Their personal identities - the stories they told themselves about themselves and their networks - were steeped in precarity.

Post-apartheid state welfare has significantly altered remittance patterns. In 2002, between a quarter and third less money was remitted to rural households that received pension grants than to those that didn't (Jensen, 2003). In 2008 nearly half of unemployed

people lived in households supported by an employed person, while 13 per cent received only remittances (Leibbrandt, Finn & Woolard, 2012). Unemployed people with no links to labour market (remittance) networks rose from 30 per cent in 1997 to 42 per cent in 2008, probably because income from grants has replaced some remittances (Leibbrandt, Finn & Woolard, 2012). By 2013, 45.5 per cent of households received at least one grant from the state (Statistics South Africa, 2014c:12), making grants the second most common household income (Statistics South Africa, 2014b:14). But remittances remain important, as do the social expectations tied to them, especially for black South Africans. The Cape Area Panel Study survey revealed that 40 per cent of young black adults felt obligated to support two or more kin, compared to only 2 to 3 per cent of white and coloured respondents (Seekings & Harper, 2010:11). That '[o]nly among black young adults is there strong evidence of acknowledged obligations to a wide range of kin' (Seekings & Harper, 2010:7) is likely linked to the vulnerability of African social networks. Fifty-one per cent of black respondents considered at least one kin member to be poor, compared to only 3 per cent of coloured and 1 per cent of whites (Bray, *et. Al.*, 2010:17). In this context it is not surprising that so many police officers spoke of the burden to support kin. Like Cethe and Mbelani, they felt obliged to help those close to them whose lives were significantly more precarious than their own. While the state's grant provision architecture may have shifted the burden of the poorest from remittances to welfare, the perception of expected support still weighs on the minds of those lucky enough to escape original poverty.

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As if to dodge the heavy motive of his story, Constable Mbelani moved the conversation from his life to his day. He and Constable Mashile had been called to a village where two teenagers had assaulted an elderly man. With great drama he explained how he

and his partner had chased the teens up and down hillsides while the villagers stood and laughed. 'They will never help,' he said:

Only for something serious like a rape or murder. But they must *feel* the police. At least now they've seen us and will *feel* us. They will know what happens when they throw stones and they won't do it again.

He was inferring that he and his partner had offered a social performances in line with the police mandate, with a sufficiently large audience, so that the community knew the police meant business and should be respected. He laughed, recounting how he had been drenched in sweat by the time they apprehended the younger teen and how the older had gotten away, 'But we know where he lives. We will get him.' These were the privileges of rural policing, today's escape was tomorrow's arrest. As long as a suspect was known, they had nowhere to go.

Mbelani removed his pepper spray from its belt pouch and started flicking its safety cover. I asked if he had had to use it with the teenagers:

No, you can't use this stuff on a child, they might go blind. But if you spray a mentally disturbed person with this it doesn't do anything, they will stand there with their eyes open, tears coming down their face, but they will just keep talking.

He told me he had done just this with a man accused by a village community of being a rapist:

That guy was lucky because those villagers can be vicious. When those people come together they are dangerous. They are used to slaughtering animals and things. That's why those places like Woodside and the cities are so dangerous. It's those people who come from the farms, they move to the cities and the towns and then they kill each other. Even the people in the locations in the cities will say that these people have their origins in the rural areas but when they come together they fight. Then in December they all move back to the rural areas and they fight here.

He laughed as he told the story. I found his take on migration fascinating after the way officers in Cape Town had talked about the Eastern Cape. The two narratives overlapped but contradicted one another in important ways. A dominant view among Mthonjeni's police was that it was the young men born in Cape Town, the 'Cape Borners', who caused the crime there, specifically because they had not grown up in rural areas where they would have learned respect. They said that Mthonjeni's crime declined over December when people travelled back to the Eastern Cape, but framed this not as the result of rural marauders taking their crime home, but as Cape Borners taking the city's crime to the countryside.

Mbelani had described both Woodside and the rural villages as hotbeds of violence. I asked him whether he had a preference between living in a city or the countryside. He responded with muddled confidence:

Even the people who move to the cities retire in the rural areas. They come back here and do nothing. I like it here. When I go to PE to visit I get bored. Even here I am bored, there is not much to do. At least in the cities you can go out if you have money. But the cars are all going *whoop-whoop*, and there are crazy people up all night. Here everyone is asleep at night because there is nothing else to do. But I am from here so I'm fine with it.

I wasn't sure what he was saying. It seemed he believed life in the city was good if one had money but that his salary didn't go far enough there. If he was going to be bored at home, he preferred to avoid the aggravating presence of those who had money to spend, those who reminded him of what he didn't have. I asked how he had entertained himself as a child in his village:

When I was growing up in the rural areas we would play games, pretend we were action heroes from TV, or we would shoot birds in the trees and eat them. Sometimes we stole peaches from the trees in peoples' yards. If we were caught doing something wrong we were badly beaten and wouldn't do it again. We did other bad things, but not what we had been beaten for. Even at school they would

hit us on our hands with a stick. It still happens today, children are being hit in school. They know it is their right not to be hit, they know it is abuse, but when the school tells parents they will kick children out for smoking *dagga* or pills, the parents say, 'Don't kick them out, just give them a beating.' They support it.

It was a reference to the everyday violence of his youth, and the violence to which children are still subjected. Mbelani's stories were full of violence. He laughed about the concept of 'grounding' children, which he knew of through American television. He had learned his childhood lessons through force, he had *felt* the presence of authority and the judgement of his actions, and he had changed accordingly. This was the story he told himself about himself and about the way order is created.

How had we gone from stories of hardship and aspiration, to ones of police work, violence and coercion? While I doubt he intended it, I think the themes are intimately related. To strive in a context of precarity is to be vulnerable. To be an accidental police officer requires a re-writing of one's self-narrative, convincing oneself and others that the new narrative is true, and convincing all that you should be respected. One of the easiest ways to do this is by describing others' narratives as illegitimate. The *skollie* and the 'criminal', are among the simplest at hand. They were the nodes to which Mbelani and all SAPS officers could return when they felt their sense of self beginning to fragment. Through them Mbelani and others pushed past the idea that they were accidental police officers, and positioned themselves instead as important, contributing members of society.

We had talked all through the afternoon. It was dark, almost seven o'clock and time for Mbelani to go home.

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Young's work on identity in late modernity (1999, 2007), provides a useful framework for understanding the anxieties of life for South Africa's majority, including those forging new paths through the SAPS. Though South Africa is not 'late modern', there

is plenty of overlap between the ‘late modern’ project and the ‘new’ South Africa. In the following discussion I apply Young’s ideas to South Africa, before returning to the lives of specific officers.

Contemporary South Africa, like late-modern societies, is characterised by diversity and stratification. Since its introduction to global capitalism in the nineteenth century, market forces have upturned material certainty and uncontested values, and replaced them with risk and uncertainty. This has led to economic and ontological precariousness, tied to increased expectations and demands. In this state, people are constantly striving, but often failing to succeed. Energies are focused on self-realisation, while the notion that individuals are responsible for forging their own lives is championed (Young, 2007). As through early mine-migrations in South Africa, new proximities (urban and virtual) have introduced South Africans to a plethora of new ideas, products and information over the last two hundred years. These new proximities, though long evolving, have been felt most powerfully in the democratic era. Uncensored media has introduced new narratives about the groups to which people think they belong, and those they have never met. South Africans have learned that their own culture, beliefs and norms are not necessarily best or correct. Pluralism has replaced certainty.

This is what occurred in late eighties and early nineties South Africa. As influx control broke down, Africans previously restricted to homeland states moved to cities in great numbers. In Young’s late modernity it is the foreign immigrant who brings difference to a country, but in South Africa, difference was domestically manufactured. Amidst shifts in domestic migration since the nineteenth century, but particularly since the eighties, South Africans were increasingly exposed to people, products and ideas from which they had

previously been kept. In this context, old stereotypes of rural and urban-born youth morphed.

With the advent of democracy, long-held notions of who people were, what they deserved, and what they might hope to achieve, were upended. After centuries of structural oppression, individuals were free to carve their own trajectories. But contemporary South Africa exposed people to others' comfort and wealth. Precarity has become personal, as individual lives have become disembedded from sedentary communities. This has allowed for the reinvention of the self but, simultaneously, ontological insecurity in the face of a plethora of options and risks. Waged work is central to identity, a source of reward and mobility which both promises and withholds happiness. But the wage-earning system is very unequal, making the development of self-narratives difficult. At the same time, family and work no longer offer the security of trajectory or biography that they once did. Failure to thrive in the market economy can lead to humiliation, which is countered through consumption and, as I suggest in Chapter Six, through violence. Mbelani talked of his arrival in the SAPS as 'lucky', it was not something he had predicted or been able to significantly control. He couched it in a narrative of precarity. But, secure in the SAPS, his next goal was to buy a car, so consuming himself into a narrative of respect.

SAPS officers aspire to existential security, certainty and solidity in their lives. To do this in contexts of precarity, one must erect barriers against others, sorting and categorising them in one's mind. Where the state does this by identifying 'criminals' and 'terrorists', the exercise becomes simpler. They become the 'others' against whom self-narratives take form. The officers I shadowed were both part of this state labelling apparatus, and leveraged off it in forging their own self-narratives. The ways Mbelani, Cethe, and Deyani discussed the fateful moment when they joined the SAPS and 'realised' they liked it,

exemplify this. Suddenly the organisation had become a container in which they could re-write their self-narrative, a container rich in notions of the ‘other’ against whom their identity could be forged anew.

A job in the SAPS provides officers a vantage point from which they can look both up the class hierarchy at those whose lives they envy, and down at the poor. The poor remind them of where they come from, but also to where they might fall should they not make a success of the police occupation. In response they carry out the dirty work required of an exclusionary system. They demonise and label those different enough from them to be called ‘criminal’ or ‘*skollie*’, those whom the state has marked as threats to prosperity. The entanglement shaped their identities and so shaped their work, as was evident when Mthonjeni’s officers incessantly stopped and searched, and in the Yorkton’s detectives violence. These ‘others’, together with the uniforms, insignia, cars and firearms, help SAPS officers find a semblance of solidity in their sense of self, and a place to feel secure.

Mthonjeni: of home, township, village and violence

Rewind four months to Mthonjeni. Arriving for a 6AM-2PM shift with a Crime Prevention Unit (CPU) I found the officers gathered around a table. They cracked jokes with each other while they prepared their pocket books. Captain Jacobs passed around a Crime Intelligence report listing information on gang members wanted by the SAPS. I asked whether the names of the gangs had any relevance. Jiyana responded with a smirk, ‘You are the one who is from Cape Town, Andrew, you must tell us what they mean.’ Then, after a short pause, ‘Take us back to the Eastern Cape. We don’t know this place. Deyi, are there gangs in your home village?’ Constable Deyi replied that there weren’t. Despite Jiyana and the three

constables having spent half their lives in Cape Town, they didn't think of it as 'home'.

Home was the rural Eastern Cape, the former homelands of the Transkei and Ciskei to which most Xhosa South Africans had been restricted during apartheid.

The conversation shifted to crime in Umtata, the former capital of the Transkei:

Yes, it is a dangerous place. The people from the villages are committing the crimes there. The ones born in Cape Town are raised on cornflakes and oatmeal; they are slow like chickens eating all day, sitting under that light, getting fat and growing quickly. But in the Eastern Cape they grow up chasing cows and goats on the hillside. When they come to Cape Town they can still run and jump, only here they jump over walls as if they were goats while they run from police.

Jiyana grinned as he told this tale. It was the same narrative I would later hear in Gompo. But it wasn't the narrative most common at Mthonjeni, not even within this CPU. It was much more common for these men to blame the 'chickens eating all day' for a violence they believed sprung from the young men's' city-born greed.

The group broke for patrol. I was posted with, Deyi and Ndungwane. We collected Constable Yoyo – the shift's only woman – at her shack, which she rented near the station, and spent the day patrolling.

A few hours into the shift I asked the constables what they thought they would be doing if they weren't in the SAPS. Ndungwane had fallen asleep, so only Deyi and Yoyo answered. Deyi started:

Before I joined the SAPS I was a taxi driver. I started driving when I was in high school. The taxis used to pick me up outside school and then I would work. I didn't have a license at the time.

I asked if he had ever been stopped by police:

I was once almost arrested. I was driving people from Cape Town to the Eastern Cape in December. I was pulled over in Leeu-Gamka and didn't have a license. But we negotiated with the police and offered to buy them some cool drinks.

Buying a cop a ‘cool drink’ is a euphemism for paying a bribe. I asked how much the cool drinks cost him, ‘R250,’ he said. Asking if the SAPS had not looked into his past during recruitment he replied that he hadn’t even had an interview. Yoyo said she had been interviewed but that she couldn’t remember anything about it. ‘They didn’t ask anything important,’ she said, ‘Just the usual, ‘why do you want to join the police?’ and so on.’ I heard the same from others over the months. It seemed that interviews for recruitment in the SAPS achieved nothing but the ticking of a box, much like those I had been instructed to tick as part of the fraudulent firearms test.

‘When I joined the SAPS in 2008 I didn’t really like the job,’ continued Deyi. Then after a short pause, ‘Actually, I still don’t like it. You have to get angry with people. I wasn’t raised like that.’ It seemed he didn’t like the role the SAPS had scripted for him, and continued to struggle to assimilate aspects of the job into his self-narrative.

Returning to my question, Yoyo said that if she had the means she would start her own business, but when I asked what kind of business she imagined, she said she hadn’t thought that far. ‘I just know that it must be in town, not the location. Here in the location they rob the shops all the time.’ For Yoyo a ‘business in town’ symbolised freedom and money, and an escape from the violence that surrounded her at work and home.

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The morning patrol was quiet, the 6AM to 2PM shifts generally were. The most entertaining part of the day was giving a lift to a drunk SAPS officer who we found standing in the middle of an intersection trying to hail a taxi. He belonged to the Railway police unit stationed nearby and was relieved when our car stopped next to him and Ndungwane offered him a lift. ‘Thank you,’ he gasped, ‘These *cockroaches* don’t trust you when you are in uniform. Nobody wants to stop for me!’

After dropping him at work the CPU constables burst out laughing. They found his intoxication hilarious. I asked if his drunkenness (while carrying a firearm) was not something they should intervene in. ‘No,’ came the answer, ‘he was reporting for duty. That is for the station commander to sort out.’ They were turning a blind eye, making sure their own performance was sufficient while judging but ignoring the illegal behaviour of their colleague.

An hour before shift-end Deyi said it was time to pick up the relief officers and head home. The first stop was Yoyo’s. Her shack was only five hundred meters from the station, wedged between the cramped dirt embankment that surrounds Mthonjeni’s brick and mortar houses. She lived with the townships poorest residents, meters from where one of Mthonjeni’s detectives had been stabbed in the face during a tracing operation the previous month. In subsequent weeks she would tell me how difficult it was to live in the community she policed: ‘It’s not easy. The *skollies* talk to me in the street, make comments like “We need to do something about this constable.” I just tell them to do what they must do.’ But it was clear that life there scared her. This is why we had collected her. The short walk to the station in uniform wasn’t worth the stress that must threaten the narrative through which she justified her position in the SAPS.

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Occasionally I joined Mthonjeni’s officers, together with the city’s Law Enforcement and Metro Police departments, on operations to address illegal alcohol sales (e.g. Herrick & Charman 2013; Faull 2013). I spent one of these with the Constable Qoboza, who oversaw a ‘trap boy’ tasked with purchasing a beer at a neighbourhood shop. It was entrapment targeting a small trader but seizure of alcohol and the shutting down of illegal outlets are key to the SAPS’ public performance and data lies, and Constable Qoboza thought the effort

worth it. Three cars full of uniformed bodies parked around the corner from the target and waited. To pass the time, Qoboza told me about his life: ‘I’m from the rural areas,’ he said, ‘I started school at the age of ten, I’m now thirty-seven. I have children. My daughter is brilliant!’ His face lit up when he talked about her:

She is 10 years old now and is already in grade three. So if you think that I started school when I was ten and she is already two years into school at the same age...it’s amazing!

My children live with their mothers. You know it’s our culture to have children with different women, one with that woman, another with that woman and a third with another woman. But it’s changing because it’s expensive to have children these days.

I got my first job in 2001, I was twenty-six. I worked in a factory that made fake leaves, the kind used to decorate walls. I worked from five-thirty in the afternoon until six-thirty in the morning and was paid R50 (£2.70). I couldn’t believe how little it was but we had to take it or leave it.

My next job was as a garden boy. I earned R80 (£4.30) a day, so R400 (£22) a week. That’s when I applied to the police. In college I was being paid R2800 (£154) per month after deductions.

I’ve been in the police for eight years now, since 2004. I’m due for promotion soon. I earn R11 500 (£631) per month and receive about R8900 (£488) after tax and deductions. It isn’t bad. When I become a sergeant I will earn fifteen or sixteen thousand. The SAPS pays well considering you only need matric. I try to have a positive attitude about everything, this is why I appreciate my salary.

I was studying for my diploma in policing before but I stopped after two years. I realised people were being promoted without any additional education so it doesn’t make a difference.

It was fairly common to meet constables pursuing diplomas and degrees in ‘Policing’ through the country’s biggest distance learning university, the University of South Africa (UNISA) or the Tshwane University of Technology (TUT). Very few studied anything else. But it was also common for those who had completed the degrees to lament that they did not result in promotions. This was really what they were after, a piece of paper that would lift them into a new pay grade. Not once has a police officer told me they learned anything

valuable or interesting while pursuing this degree. For them it was just another performance, a *data performance lie* bridging their private and occupational worlds, to please an audience who could advance their career.

My appreciation for the place of education in officers' lives would develop in subsequent months, but to clarify I asked Qoboza, 'So you were studying only to secure a promotion?':

Yes, but now I want to study commercial forensic investigation because there are lots of posts at the forensics laboratory and they all start there at warrant officer. Warrant officers start at about R19 000 (£1 043) a month, good money!

So Qoboza hadn't lost all interest in studying, though what remained was linked to advancing in rank and salary as rapidly as possible. I don't mean to demean him by this. The same current runs through most occupations. But if one is to understand who SAPS officers think they are and how it shapes their practice, then this is key.

The trap operation was being held near a football stadium, a developed area. We were parked in a side road lined with houses. The trap was due to take place around the corner – a different world made up of corrugated iron sheet-shacks so tightly packed together that only small foot paths allowed navigation between them. Qoboza pointed to a house across the road, it was larger than most in the area bordering the informal settlement:

This probably costs about R350 000 (£20 210) in Cape Town but in East London⁴³ it would only be R120 000 (£6 586). I used to own a house in Eersterivier [in Cape Town] but I sold it to buy a house in East London. I was able to pay that new house off immediately because it was so much cheaper. My brother is now staying there but I don't charge him rent because he looks after it for me. I currently stay in my mother's two-room flat in Mthonjeni, very close to the police station. She's now living in East London.

⁴³ The second biggest city in the Eastern Cape.

I asked if he planned to move to East London too, ‘No, I don’t see myself moving there until I’m finished with the police, until I retire.’ It was an imaginary that occupied the minds of many of Mthonjeni’s police. They only imagined returning ‘home’ to the Eastern Cape on retirement.

At first I was surprised that he was not renting out his house in East London. His had been a life of struggle, securing stable employment only at the age of twenty-nine. With children to support and only eight years of steady income behind him, I assumed he would have leapt at the opportunity for extra income. But over time it became clear that for almost all SAPS officers, family came first. My blindness was the naïve product of privilege. Within most South African families it is expected that kin support and share with one another (Bray, *et. Al.* 2010, Seekings & Harper, 2012; Ashforth, 2005). As such, it is the poor who, bound to others, share the greatest portion of what they have.

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In Chapter Three I wrote that when I met Yorkton’s Constable Moshoeshoe he had recently moved house. For his first years in Cape Town he had lived in a shack in Harare, the sand-covered farthest corner of Cape Town City. He had since bought a house in Mitchell’s Plain, a far more developed part of the Cape Flats.

‘The area was too dangerous for me to stay,’ he had said of Harare, ‘It was full of *skollies* who would rob people on their way to and from work.’ He had held his right hand over his stomach with his index finger and thumb extended and said, ‘This is how I would carry my firearm under my jacket while walking from my shack to the bus stop and back when I was going to work. I was always *one up*.’⁴⁴

⁴⁴ Meaning the firearm was cocked, a bullet was ‘up’ in the chamber.

He had feared the *skollies* would take his life because they wanted his firearm, and he carried the firearm to protect his life. It was a dilemma numerous SAPS officers shared with me. When I asked why they didn't leave the firearms at the police station, Moshoeshoe and others would reply, 'They won't know I don't have my firearm with me, they will just see the uniform and attack.' This sense of danger resulting from their association with the SAPS bound officers together, justifying the sometimes forceful approach to order maintenance some took, and the lies behind which they hid it.

Knowing he could afford to rent a room almost anywhere in the city on a constable's salary, I had asked Moshoeshoe why he had chosen to live in a shack in Harare. 'I own the shack,' he replied:

The problem with renting is that I have children and my mother is also sick. Sometimes they come and stay with me. If I have a landlord then I must negotiate every time and they will say 'no'.

I asked if he had sold his shack. 'No,' came the response, 'I gave it to my brother in-law. You can't sell when there are others in the family who are suffering.'

So it was with Mthonjeni's Constable Qoboza. Although his had not been an easy life, while owning a house was an important accomplishment for him, he could not rent it out to others when he had relatives who needed accommodation. Later in the day he told me of his hope to buy a second house. He was planning for his future and it was bright.

As we waited for the 'trap boy' Qoboza pointed to the stadium, 'I have some friends who play there,' he said, 'They are professional soccer players. They earn R27 000 (£1 482) a month with bonuses for wins and goals. These youngsters are making money!' Money, salaries and comparative income were among the topics most commonly raised by officers over the months. How much were others earning? How rich was I that I could study at my

age? Where did they feature on this continuum? They were constantly measuring themselves against those around them, and against those of whom they read in newspapers or saw television. Often comparisons left them grateful for the opportunities and income the SAPS provided. But at other times it seemed they felt trapped on a trajectory that, while upward bound, would be too gradual to carry them to the heights to which they aspired.

Later in the morning Qoboza would tell me and other officers that he worked as an extra in television adverts when he could. The money was so good, about R4500 (£247) per day, that it was worth his while to book off from work to do it. He also worked as a boxing referee from time to time, earning around R1000 to R1500 (£55-£82) per match.

I asked Qoboza if he thought his life had improved through the SAPS, ‘Yes, definitely,’ he replied, ‘it’s good to have a job and money, and to learn every day.’ But he said the community did not understand the law or like the police. He said he had recently been on a date with a woman. When he told her he was a police officer she had responded, ‘In our family we don’t like the police.’ When he asked her why, she said that her brother had robbed a shop then shot at police while he fled the scene. Police had responded by shooting and killing him. ‘And she put it just like that,’ he said, ‘pointing out that her brother committed the crime and fired at police first, but she still blames the police.’ He said lots of women in the township thought police officers were attractive because of their jobs and salaries, but that if police needed information relating to a crime, none would share it. In this way officers were attractive for the comforts they could offer partners, but were to be avoided in their roles as police officers. It struck me that for many police themselves, this was the case. The job offered a portal to a world of new possibilities, but it required that they do dirty work with which they would rather not be associated. They feared the dirt would shape the narrative of their lives.

I told Qoboza that I would be heading to the Eastern Cape for further research. ‘In the Eastern Cape you will find police playing cards all day,’ he said:

Some of them have no work to do. They can visit a house party while on duty, sit down and relax, and be given meat to take away and eat on their shift. There the people won’t complain, but if a policeman is seen at a party in Cape Town they will film him with a cell phone.

Here was another ‘other’ against whom Qoboza could compare his own self-narrative. Rural cops were people who shared his job, but were respected by the communities they served. The imagined image contrasted with the one he painted of city officers, treated with suspicion and contempt.⁴⁵ Qoboza steered the conversation to his youth:

When I was a child I belonged to gangs. We would steal things from neighbours. There was no electricity then and people would cook their meat on fires outside. We would throw stones at the house and when the people left the fire to investigate we would steal the pot. We had our own food at home but we were just doing it for fun. In those days we didn’t know about violence, we didn’t use weapons and didn’t confront people. These days when people steal cattle they knock on the door and demand the cattle at gunpoint. They use *muti*⁴⁶ so that they can sense if the police are approaching while they commit their crimes.

It was another contradiction in Qoboza’s depiction of the rural Eastern Cape. While he tried to present his youth as peaceful and idyllic, he recounted his involvement in crime. Then while trying to present its present as peaceful in comparison to the cities, he described armed robbery. As with so many such narratives, the boundaries were blurred. Qoboza wanted to present the rural Eastern Cape as a place of peace in contrast to the violent city, but also wanted to present it as a place that was no longer the paradise in

⁴⁵ This may have been accurate. However, in my first month working with Mthonjeni’s CPU, Warrant Jiyana and I were offered both alcohol and food, once at a memorial service and once at a birthday party at which we had stopped to wish friends well. The welcome was extremely warm. This isn’t to say those making the offer would have approved of police drinking on duty, but enthusiastic efforts were made to encourage us to accept the drinks nonetheless.

⁴⁶ Traditional medicine or enchantment.

which he had been raised. Perhaps, like Young's late modernity, South Africa has become a land of too many competing truths for its police officers to construct clear narratives that explain their lives. For his part, Qoboza had tried, but had not entirely succeeded in this.

Yorkton: police work is (not) enough

At least three of the officers I worked with at Yorkton were involved in significant money generating endeavours in addition to their police work. Sergeant Louw introduced his to me through coffee.

It was shortly after 6:30AM and the parade had concluded. 'Do you want some *good* coffee?' Louw asked. Of course I did. He led me out of the station to a trendy, upmarket coffee shop. I fumbled with my wallet, happy to pay for the coffee as a token of appreciation for the time he would spend with me, despite my thinking the coffee expensive. I've been buying coffee, cool drinks and chips for SAPS officers for many years. It's an easy way to express gratitude, and officers almost never object. So it was to my surprise that Sergeant Louw told me to put my money away, 'There are two things I don't compromise on,' he told me, 'Good food and good coffee. I spend R200 (£11) a day on coffee.' He said it with pride. Then, as if to explain it definitively, 'I have another job. I'm a fitter and turner.' He said that his brothers were also in the trade, and that they split business between them so that he work around his SAPS schedule.

Over a number of shifts with Louw he would tell me he had grown up moving from town to town as his father chased employment. He said he was incredibly 'naughty' as a child, always getting in trouble. He reminisced about being shot at while stealing fruit from a

farmer's orchard and about shooting a bull's testicles with his BB gun. He was always punished for his crimes, he said, but always went back for more.

In the real world he claimed to have shot and killed over three hundred people while on duty for the SAP and SAPS. It's a difficult claim to believe, even if one imagines the most unregulated extremes of apartheid policing. While he claimed these lives with pride, he also blamed them and what he alluded to as various assault charges against him, for his being the oldest member of the shift but still junior in rank. Despite these setbacks, Louw held himself with confidence.

Patrolling the precinct he would point out the large houses he had worked on as part of his side job, describing their interiors, and the characters of their occupants. He was proud of his police work and proud of his side job, which allowed him to eat good food and drink good coffee. In some sense, it allowed him a lifestyle that overlapped in some way with the wealthier residents of his precinct. In this, Louw was luckier than many of his colleagues. As a white South African his parents and siblings – though not wealthy - had access to opportunities denied most of his colleagues' familial networks. His money was his to spend and so shaped his self-narrative in celebratory, rather than with lamentable ways.

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Yorkton's Warrant Officer Kriel also had a business on the side. Like Louw he insisted on paying for my food and drink on alternate occasions. His primary side business involved home renovations and repairs for which he employed a number of full-time workmen. He was also involved in buying, selling and letting properties with his wife. While he patrolled the city he coordinated the activity of his workmen via cell phone.

Kriel lived with his wife, and one of his two sons, in one of the city's more affluent suburbs. His house was not particularly lavish, but it was certainly more appealing than the RDP houses and backyard shacks in which many other officers lived.

Kriel told me he joined the SAPS in order to avoid going to prison. From the age of fifteen he had begun racing motorcycles. He had not had enough money to buy himself a helmet so had stolen one. Other bikers thought he had promise and, through them, he began committing petty crimes. To break away from this group, he told me, he had joined the SAP.

When I told Kriel I had previously thought he was a captain he responded with a sardonic laugh, 'I'm white! No chance of that.' He was cynical about South Africa's affirmative action-based redress. I suspected he invested so much in his other businesses because he believed he had reached a promotion ceiling in the SAPS. He lamented having to send his son to an expensive private college after he had failed to secure a place at a public university. He believed both he and his son were the victims of anti-white discrimination.

Kriel believed government favoured crime because it allowed it to hire more police, and so create jobs. He cited the ghost squad's strategy of only arresting drug buyers as proof of this. When I pointed out that safe cities would attract investment and encourage economic growth, he shut me down, saying the government had no long term vision.

But he had long term vision. 'I don't do this work for the money,' he told me, 'I have my companies for that. I do this because I enjoy it.' He said he might retire from policing once his children were out of university. While suggesting his SAPS salary wasn't needed, he lamented the exorbitant costs of tertiary education, and the private school which his second son attended.

While he seemed cynical about the country, Kriel's rough exterior masked a hidden hope. It bubbled to the surface each time he talked about his children, their potential and promise, despite the challenges he thought they faced. He saw hope in all the country's youth. 'The younger generation is going to change things. The current generation is too tribal, they just follow their elders,' he told me. He referred to Constable Moshoeshoe, saying he was in his mid-thirties but was 'only a constable' and didn't value education. While I didn't say anything to Kriel, only days earlier Moshoeshoe had told me that education was 'the key to success', and that he blamed his father for failing to provide for he and his siblings. As a result, theirs' had been a life of struggle. Moshoeshoe had told me with pride that his fiancé was studying to be a nurse while he supported her. He knew the value of education, he just came from a far more precarity than Kriel. But this was not for me to share. Instead I asked Kriel why he thought so many constables, like Moshoeshoe, were recruited at an advanced age. 'Because the youngsters are educating themselves and aiming for better things,' came his reply. It seemed Kriel knew that most recent SAPS recruits were primarily there because it was the best job they could find. But he didn't seem to notice that just beyond this, many were dreaming of and working towards bigger and better things, much like he was.

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I want to return to my first shift with Yorkton's Constable Hendricks, described in Chapter Three. After I had just been introduced to the shift a constable had eagerly approached me to tell me he was also studying criminology. Then, pointing to Hendricks, with whom he knew I had been posted, 'And that one's studying psychology.'

Later, while rolling through Yorkton's streets I asked Hendricks why he had chosen to study psychology. He answered me with a story:

It started when my father died, when I was in standard four.⁴⁷ So I grew up without a father which means I grew up without a role model because although I had a mother, mothers are not role models. That's how I started drugs. The drugs started when I was seventeen, in my final year of school. I want to be a child psychologist because the children are the future.

He stopped the car to search three teenagers. Afterwards he told me he had not arrested them because 'they were under eighteen so I would have had to call a social worker and the parents, and they were first time offenders.' He would make similar comments during future shifts, presenting himself as empathetic with youth. But in this instance the young men had done nothing wrong. It seemed an obvious example of a self-narrative, in this instance Hendricks' desire to be seen as empathetic, shaping his social performance, and how he interpreted his actions.

Hendricks was in his late twenties and had been in the SAPS for seven years. Unlike most constables he wasn't worried about when he might be promoted 'because I don't plan to stay in this organisation. Not that I am negative about the police, I just have other plans.' As the hours past he shared the rest of his story, and his plans, with me:

When I was eighteen I decided to study oceanography at CPUT.⁴⁸ I had always loved nature, I still do. I had been interested in psychology but was too late to apply in time.

At CPUT I met a Taiwanese woman. She was eighteen and was driving a Mini Cooper, studying actuarial science. Her brother was also driving a smart car. I was attracted to the money and wanted to know how they were making it. I started dating the woman and discovered that her father was a drug lord in Taiwan. She and her brother were selling his drugs on campus, cocaine and *tik*.⁴⁹ I moved in with her and started to help them sell. It all started going bad when we started testing the product. We became addicted. Her father found out and recalled his

⁴⁷ The 6th year of school

⁴⁸ Cape Peninsula University of Technology

⁴⁹ Crystal Methamphetamine

children to Taiwan. I remained addicted and found myself stealing globes from my mother's car's headlights so that I could smoke.

My mother was unemployed and I decided I needed to earn money for the house. I went door to door asking people if I could clean their yards. When people asked how much I charged I told them they could decide how much I deserved once I was finished. Some people gave me R10 (£0.55), some people gave me food. If I said I didn't want food they called me ungrateful and chased me away. Some people deducted R3 from my pay if I asked for water.

After that I started hanging out on corners in places where people picked up day labourers for jobs. But I was the skinny coloured guy behind all the big black guys so nobody chose me.

I went to a job agency, the kind where you go at 6 AM and if somebody calls needing a worker then they send you off. I got some casual work through them, then I got a month's contract at a dairy. They paid R900 (£49) per week but the agency kept R450 (£25) of it.

From there I got a job as a driver for. They offered me R3000 (£165) per month. *Yoh*, it was a lot for me! It was like having R15 000 (£823)!

It was while working as a driver that Hendricks had applied to the SAPS. He believed that the path he had walked from fatherless child to drug seller and addict, from desperate job seeker to police constable, would help make him a good child psychologist. He had completed one year of studies and needed another three or four before he could practice. He wasn't in a rush though:

I know I want to be a psychologist. That is my goal. That will be the last thing I overcome. But I'm not in a rush. I have a job and I enjoy it. I want to qualify by the time I'm thirty-five.

Working as a constable was Hendricks's primary job but it wasn't his only source of income. In another long story, he told me that he was also a professional mixed martial arts fighter and a masseuse.

Hendricks told me he planned to propose to his girlfriend. The act would include introducing her parents to the 'luxury' of Cape Town. His girlfriend already had a bachelor's

degree and was pursuing a second. Together they were a couple from humble origins with great ambitions and bright futures.

It was through his girlfriend that Hendricks had become a masseuse, though she was unaware of this. Having seen him dance, and knowing him to be a police officer, one of her friends had invited him to strip out of his police uniform at a party she was hosting. This had led to other invitations, which had led to him working as a ‘masseuse’. He told me he earned R350 (£19.50) for ‘genital massages’ and R1200 (£67) for ‘selling the product’. All of this - the mixed martial arts fights and the sex work, were done on the side, in addition to his police work.

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The SAPS is repository full with personal narratives (identities), each informed by, and informing (through their entanglement), that of the organisation. While personal narratives are contrasting and varied, dominant themes include coming from a life of hardship and using the SAPS as a vehicle through which to improve one’s lot, and that of one’s familial network. But as illustrated through Kriel and Louw, the narrative is not the same for everyone, with white officers the most common exceptions.⁵⁰

Summary and Conclusion

In this chapter I have located the careers of South African police officers in the context of broader life and national narratives. I have illustrated South Africa’s general precarity (sphere 3) from which most officers are drawn, and the instrumentality of the job in officers’ personal narratives (identity) in the pursuit of ontological security. It is against this

⁵⁰ This is not to say that white SAPS officers generally come from wealthy backgrounds, they don’t. But compared to the levels of deprivation experienced by most South Africans since the late nineteenth century, theirs’ are privileged backgrounds.

background that the police practices and deceptions discussed thus far, and the focus on police violence and shaping work in remaining chapters, are best understood. It is these personal narratives (sphere 1), and their entanglement within the SAPS culture (sphere 2), which help us understand ‘how it shapes their work’.

To summarise, almost none of the police I met had planned to be police officers. On the contrary, many had actively derided and looked down on police, some admitting to involvement in both youth and adult offending of their own. They had turned to the SAPS when earlier dreams had slipped out of reach. Often, they told themselves, these dreams had been lost because they had lacked money for tertiary education. As such, they framed themselves as victims of an unfair society, and the SAPS as a repository for high school-only graduates. But once employed by the SAPS their views of it changed (at least they told themselves and me, mantra-like, that they had changed). They became hopeful of promotion – even if they believed it unlikely, and were appreciative of the avenues to personal development the job offered. As they assimilated into the SAPS ‘team’ they felt stung by the imagined judgements of the public they served, and feared the guns of the brazen *skollies* they chased.

But even those who celebrated the job – like Skrikker and Qoboza, remained on the lookout for opportunities in other sectors. Meanwhile, they deferred their dreams to their children, cocooned in visions of a more prosperous, safe and predictable future.

Most African police officers I met in Cape Town had, at some point, migrated from the Eastern to the Western Cape, or from the former homelands to the formally white city. Even among those born in Cape townships, the rural Eastern Cape remained their ‘home’, to which many hoped to return for retirement and burial. Until then, they sought to invest in cars and houses, symbols of success in the bling and hustle of the young democracy. In so

doing they sought to consume their way out of the humiliation of poverty. This was hampered by the weight of the familial networks which called on them for financial support, but for the most part officers presented themselves as respectful of these responsibilities, sharing what they could.

Many women officers seemed to be single parents, while some men and women had grown up in single parent homes, or been raised by grandparents. Some male officers had children with different mothers, spread across the city or across provinces. While officers generally wished the best for their children they struggled to balance their personal ambitions with the reach of their salary. Where they held tenuous ties with former lovers, relationships were at times considered burdensome. With rural-urban migration, a movement of youth away from elders, and men away from women, has come a shifting of family responsibility from fathers to mothers.

That officers invested in both the city and countryside – most clearly in the expansion of their houses – is an important indicator of South Africa's trajectory should it manage to provide SAPS-like employment on a broad scale. Unlike the police Steinberg (2008) met in Johannesburg who overextended themselves to move to expensive suburbs, the officers I met were either living in very modest settings (shacks) in order to save or share money (including with children and relatives in the Eastern Cape), or were building on the RDP and township houses in which they lived. In this way they were investing in the spaces in which, and people with whom they felt they belonged. They were channelling resources into parts of Cape Town and the Eastern Cape that had historically been neglected or only modestly developed. They were (re)distributing their relatively meagre privilege in ways that will likely make South Africa more secure. So while SAPS officers might make South Africa safer, this may not primarily be through their work. Rather, it may

be through the lives they are able to fashion through the stability and income provided to them by the job.

When I speak of this police majority I do not include most white officers. For their part, white officers entered the SAPS on very different terms to most of their colleagues. They are part of networks of individuals who are both self-supporting, and who offer them additional work beyond the SAPS. Kriel and Louw both suggested that they did police work because they enjoyed it, not for money. In this way they claimed an agency which distanced them from their colleagues, many of whom they saw as having joined the SAPS because it was the only job they could get. The extra work of skilled labour, renovations and property management in which Kriel and Louw were engaged (and the law to which Noble has since moved after resigning) were part of the formal economy, with the potential for substantial reward. In contrast, where African officers considered involvement in side work, it was often imagined as informal taxi, spaza shop and alcohol sales. These are the activities that drove township commerce in the shadow of apartheid's anti-competition laws, and so the activities that appeared within reach to those from disempowered networks. In this way, it is the relative agency and privilege of white officers that exposes the comparable lack of their African colleagues.⁵¹ Similarly, none of the white officers I met spoke of having to support anyone other than their immediate (nuclear) family. The money they earned was theirs alone.

In Chapter Three I sketched a narrative, which many officers I met used to explain the country's violent crime. At its core was the idea that young men were being born in cities where they were poorly socialised and drawn to crime. It is a narrative almost a century old (see Glaser, 2000). But views from Gompo and Patterson, like Constable

⁵¹ It has been empirically shown that self-perceptions of (subjective) well-being are significantly higher among whites than Africans (Posel & Casal, 2010:211)

Mbelani's, were different. Mbelani believed it was the countryside that made rural men violent, and that they took their violence to the towns and cities. The narrative previously sketched, though dominant in Cape Town, was not sufficient for everyone at Gompo and Patterson, so they turned it on its head and at times blamed the rural youth for the country's crime. Perhaps this was in part because they did not all see themselves staying in the countryside. Outside of the job life was relatively dull. Cities offered the fertile soil in which dreams grow. They were where specialised police units were based, where new challenges could be faced and new skills learned, not to mention where most non-state jobs were located. While they saw cities as places where police were in peril, they also saw them as places where their careers might flourish. They didn't dismiss them entirely. Like Young's late modern societies, South Africa is not a place where anyone is very secure for very long.

But, I believe, there is another presence behind the ways police spoke of young men - whether countryside or city born - in such menacing discourse: they were reminders that officers' place in the world was precarious and under threat, often by young men whose lives at time reflected elements of their own. In this way, the idea of a rural home served two purposes. First, it was a space to which officers attached their identity. But more importantly, it was one in which some security could be imagined, while acknowledging a permanent lack of security. In this way they acknowledged that risk was everywhere, and security guaranteed nowhere. To colonise the future with projections of future selves is to remain constantly aware of opportunity to minimise risk, if needs be to re-write one's self-narrative and further one's ontological self. Whether in the city or countryside, most officers were on the lookout for the next step up to a better, easier life. This ambition, and the responsibility to support precarious networks (central to their personal identities), in turn shaped their work.

Chapter Six: Ambition, violence, shame and respect⁵²

Thus far I have used thick description and accompanying analysis to illustrate and unpack the key practices, world views and lived experiences that appeared central to the occupational lives of the police officers I shadowed. My aim has been to expose the tension between officers' personal narratives, the functioning of the police bureaucracy, and the resultant impact on police practice. To recap, this narrative goes like this:

Amidst a national landscape characterised by unemployment, crime and general precarity (sphere 3), a job in the South African Police Service (SAPS) changes the lives that become entangled in it. At the same time, police work is symbolic, cultural work. Through the SAPS a select few of the precarious majority are given a foot up and asked to do the state's dirty work. They buy into the popular myth that coercive policing reduces crime, and they fabricate data to save face when it doesn't. I illustrated this using the idea of the 'perfect shift', and by describing routines of deceit. I showed that deception is deployed to keep the SAPS' frontstage façade intact. With this secure, officers hope to maintain some control over their individual and professional lives behind a veneer of relative occupational accomplishment. The cost of participating in this performance, however, is that many officers feel a deep mistrust of government, colleagues and the public.

In many instances, those whom the police marked through their stops and raids, were people raised in communities much like their own. Many police returned home to relatively poor, violent neighbourhoods at night, so that their private lives were shaped by the violence they believed they were expected to prevent through their occupational lives.

⁵² An earlier version of this chapter appeared in the June 2013 edition of *South African Crime Quarterly* (No.44, pp.5-14) under the title 'Fighting for respect: violence, masculinity and legitimacy in the SAPS.'

Finally, most officers are people who turned to the SAPS for work after earlier held dreams and imagined futures had drifted out of reach. One might describe them as ‘accidental police officers’. Some recalled disliking the police before joining, while others recounted their adolescent experiments with criminality. Upon joining, however, many found themselves re-writing their self-narratives. They told themselves that they enjoyed the work and distanced themselves from their former views. Finding themselves earning more money than they might have imagined, and more than any family members before them, they were weighed down by the perceived expectation that their fortune must be shared with kin. But as they shared with those closest to them, their aspirations of upward mobility and material consumption were constrained. Some of those who could do so, supplemented their income by moonlighting or starting small businesses on the side. Ultimately though, it seemed officers invested most in their children. They didn’t want them to end up in the SAPS so they planned to educate them. In so doing they presented the SAPS as a repository for those determined enough to have finished high school, but unable to study further. Some officers resented the fact that they still lived in RDP homes or backyard shacks, but often did so to save for the future. They were excited about where their police salaries might lead them but sceptical about their chances of promotion. Theirs’ were often dreams perpetually just out of reach. This context (the overlap of spheres 2 and 3) shapes the lens through which officers view themselves and their jobs (sphere 1), and so how they go about doing work.

In this chapter I re-visit and unpack the theme of police and societal violence touched on in previous chapters. Building on the context provided thus far I discuss police violence in relation to violence in South Africa more broadly, socially and historically; the ways in which police officers talk about, experience and deploy violence in their work;

violence as it relates to South African masculinities; violence in relation to feelings of shame and respect; and violence as a tool of symbolic communication. In so doing, I discuss the place of violence in all three spheres of my conceptual framework – the personal, organisational, and national. Within the framework violence contributes to the precarity of life in South Africa (sphere 3) and is part of the experience of working for the SAPS (sphere 2) I suggest that the precarity of South African life (sphere 3) leads some officers to feel shamed and disrespected. Full of ambition to ‘succeed’ in life, some turn to violence as a means to earn respect. As such violence seeps into and spills out of both the SAPS as an organisation (in the overlap between spheres 1 and 3), and the private lives of its officers (where all three spheres overlap, and lives become entangled).

16th August 2012, Marikana

At this point it is helpful to revisit Marikana in more detail. Before almost all of what has been described thus far had taken place, a great tragedy occurred. As touched on earlier, it involved the SAPS’ response to an illegal strike by workers at a platinum mine in Marikana, 140 kilometres north-west of Johannesburg. On 16 August 2012, following two weeks of industrial action during which two police officers, two mine security staff and four miners had been killed (allegedly by miners), police opened fire on hundreds of striking miners with live ammunition, killing 34 and wounding 78 others.⁵³

Unsurprisingly, the incident, which was captured by television cameras, made international news for weeks and has remained a regular feature in domestic news in the years since. In the subsequent weeks, months and years the event has cemented itself in

⁵³ A commission of inquiry was rapidly established to investigate the incident and those surrounding it. In November 2014, after three hundred sittings, the commission adjourned. Its report is due in early 2015.

the consciousness of the nation. Perhaps even more than the daily discourse of crime in the country and related perceptions of police incompetence, more than SAPS leaders' infamous calls to 'shoot to kill' criminal offenders from 2008 to 2011⁵⁴, more than the corruption conviction of the SAPS' National Commissioner, Jackie Selebie, in 2010, more than the police's beating to death of Andries Tatane as he marched for access to water in 2011, and more than the many other recent injustices linked to the SAPS, what is often called the 'Marikana Massacre' has become *the* most visible scar on the face of this very public institution.

It was against this background that my fieldwork unexpectedly took place. As a result, the topic regularly came up in conversation with those I shadowed. Although some expressed sadness at the killing of the workers, almost without exception they tried to convince me that the police officers who had pulled their triggers that day had done so legitimately, lawfully, and correctly; that they had done nothing wrong.

Considering that peer solidarity is a long established characteristic of police organisational culture (Reiner, 2010:122-131), perhaps this should not be surprising. But I came to believe there was more to why SAPS officers so quickly defended the slaughter of 34 men at the hands of their colleagues that day, something closely tied to the culture of deceit described in Chapter Four. Put simply, it was the fact that officers abhorred the idea of being disrespected. On accepting their jobs in the SAPS they had agreed to re-write their self-narratives. They had bought into the state's narrative that hard work pays off. That day in Marikana, like every day on the streets of the country's cities and towns, their colleagues

⁵⁴ While there appears to have been an attempt by police management to avoid such rhetoric since Marikana, on 16 April 2014 it was once again reported that a senior politician had called on police to 'shoot to kill'. According to a major news channel the Premier of KwaZulu-Natal province, Senzo Mchunu, told a gathering of Richmond community members that 'Anyone who will turn their guns against the police we are saying police will be left with no alternative. They will have to shoot them; shoot at such criminals dead. That's how we need to fight crime in South Africa.' (eNCA, 2014)

had stood their ground in the face of workers and – so they told me, ‘criminals’ - who sought to enrich themselves by demanding hand outs, cutting corners or committing crime. They had done the work they believed they had been told to do, the work they believed the system required them to do. They were separating the dirty from the clean, and yet they were being punished for it, not just the officers in Marikana, but by association, the whole SAPS.

Policing, symbolic power, violence and respect

That most police in Mthonjeni felt the public did not respect them was evident from my very first days at the station. Station mythology abounded with stories of officers attending complaints and returning to their vehicles to find the tyres slashed or wheels stolen. As I describe below, on one occasion the police car I was travelling in was hit by a rock thrown from an angry crowd. I was repeatedly told foot patrol was not possible in the area because the community would stone patrollers. This despite the weekly ‘outreach’ walks in the precinct which, staffed primarily by unarmed administrators wearing police jackets, seemed to contradict this claim. In Chapter Five I mentioned Constable Yoyo’s fear of walking the 100 metres from home to work. Another constable who lived 500 meters away paid to take a taxi to work each day for the same reason, even though he didn’t wear a uniform. Many officers refused to walk the 50 meters to a shop that shared a wall with the station for fear of being attacked for their firearms, while others told me that when they were off duty they would not admit to strangers that they were police officers because this would put them in danger. They saw these (potential) violent attacks as signs of disrespect, of a public who did not see them as human.

How did these ideas about danger, respect and the lack thereof manifest itself in the officers' daily work? While many talked of the need to treat the public with respect in order to earn their trust, this sentiment was seldom extended to groups thought to be regular offenders, like the imagined '*skollie*'. The word was used to describe young men, usually African or coloured and poor, perceived to be criminals. But this demographic represents almost half the country's population. It also mirrors the communities from which most police officers are drawn. As hinted at thus far, many officers seemed to think that with this group the use of force was the best way to earn their respect.

Mthonjeni: violence in the township

Conversations I had with two Mthonjeni CPU officers, Constables Nzo and Mqhayi, while on patrol in the early hours of a Saturday morning, illustrate some of the undercurrents informing police-thinking on respect and force. It began when I asked the constables whether they thought the community respected them. Nzo was the chattier of the two and replied immediately, 'No, they don't respect us anywhere in South Africa. You try and arrest someone and they will throw stones at you.'

Nzo was from the Eastern Cape but had moved to Cape Town in the mid-nineties to finish school. He had lived in Khayelitsha's Site C, one of the poorer section of Cape Town's largest township. He said he enjoyed the area but lamented that many of his school peers had become '*skollies*' involved in crime. Some had been arrested for murder, or 'killed [by] each other', he said. Although he still lived in Khayelitsha, he said he avoided his old friends.

After finishing high school he had studied engineering for two years before 'the money ran out'. His first job in the SAPS had been as a civilian data typist before he was hired as a police officer. His plans for the future were to finish building his second house (his

first being at ‘home’ in the Eastern Cape) before enrolling in a correspondence course to complete his engineering diploma. With that in hand, he hoped to leave the SAPS. I asked him why he wanted to leave the organisation so urgently:

Because they have taken all the powers of the police. Even if they point a gun at you, you can’t shoot them. You must wait for them to shoot you first and then you can only shoot. The community just stand and insult you. It’s not right anymore. You explain to [a victim] the processes they will go through if you open a case for them, you try to help them and tell them you can take them to a certain point, but when the case doesn’t go any further they accuse you of corruption. If we are called to a domestic violence scene and we beat the man then the woman will complain. They call the police for everything, for a birth, for a death, for sickness, but when you get there they fight with you.

I asked Nzo what his ideal job in the SAPS would be were he to remain in the organisation:

It would be fine if I was a Captain. At least then I would be respected by the other members. I would like to work at a senior level at the forensics lab, but I also enjoy the action in police work. When I arrest people I have to struggle with them, but once I have them in the cells I give them advice, tell them to take short courses [to improve their chances of employment]. In the morning they thank me, or when they see me in the streets at a later stage they salute me.

It was a short tale of a police officer unappreciated by society, of force used to restrain, and of advice offered. Most importantly, it was about earning respect from men who had previously showed Nzo none.

Nzo started complaining about ‘the senior police’, how they were just out to punish their juniors:

If I receive information that there is something in a house, like a gun, I might not have time to get a warrant. But if I search that house and the occupants complain I will immediately be arrested.

He recounted a recent raid on a house which he had taken part in. The ‘elderly woman’ occupant had accused him of stealing R300 (£16.50) from under her bed. He claimed that station management had wanted him and his colleagues to be arrested immediately but

that they had gone back to the house and found the R300 under the woman's mattress, absolving them of the accusation – at least in his version of events. The story's theme was that both the public and police management were out to get junior officers; that everyone was against them.

He followed this story with another I would hear many times at the station. It alleged that Captain Thangana had been accused of stealing R15 000 (£823) after he and a group of other officers had searched a house. But the way the story was always told was that, following the allegation, all senior officers at the station, irrespective of whether they had been present or not, had submitted statements attesting to the integrity of the captain and asserting that the allegation could not be true. Nobody suggested the money had not been stolen by a police officer – this was believable. Rather, it was that such a clean cop had been accused and that this showed that the public were reckless in their accusations and management were instinctive in protecting their own. This was the story's purpose.

Having patrolled for an hour or so we were flagged down by a man and woman in their early twenties, lone figures on the deserted street. It was after 1AM and in my sleepiness I didn't immediately register the shock on their faces or the tears in the woman's eyes. The constables did. In a matter of seconds they had stopped and leapt from the car, drawn their firearms, and were running towards a cluster of shacks. 'They were robbed of a cell phone at gunpoint,' Nzo muttered to me as he disappeared out of sight. Alone with the victims, the woman repeated words of distress over and over. The man remained silent, shocked. Two minutes later the constables returned and holstered their firearms. Without even stopping to face them, Nzo said something to the two victims and they began walking away. As quickly as we had stopped we were back on patrol.

If the constables' initial response – the drawing of guns and hurrying into the darkness - was symbolically meaningful, its meaning was contradicted by what came after. Whereas the initial search and threat of deadly force by police appeared in service of the victims, the remainder communicated disinterest and resignation. There had been no request for a description of the attackers, no report made to radio control or other patrol vehicles in the area. The victims had not been asked for details of the attack or if they wanted to open a case, nor were they offered counselling, an escort home, an empathetic ear or any other information. The one thing the constables had done was draw their firearms, an extension of their occupational selves, and one which implies a willingness to use lethal force. It seemed they believed that by inferring a willingness to run towards danger and to shoot in defence of the victims, they were illustrating the fulfilment of their mandate. It was a powerful action, but where it should have been followed by compassion, even simple bureaucracy, there was only silence.

Minutes later the ordeal was repeated when we were waved down, this time by a number of women who complained that someone had been running over the roofs of their shacks. The SAPS' Tactical Response Team (TRT), also patrolling the area, rounded the corner as we alighted our vehicle, and joined the search. But nothing and no one was found. Soon we were on the road again, minimal communication having taken place between officers and complainants, and with no information shared on the radio.

The heavily armed TRT had been established two years earlier to tackle high-risk crimes like cash-in-transit heists, but were regularly deployed to the Mthonjeni policing area as a 'force multiplier' conducting 'crime prevention' along with the station's CPU. Pulling away from the TRT I asked the constables what they thought of the unit. At the time the media was painting it as violent and abusive. Nzo responded:

They are good but we don't have a backbone in the police. The [SAPS management] don't appreciate what the TRT are doing and so they are demotivated. Since they have been deployed here there has been a big decrease in crime. People respect them.

I asked why he thought people respected them, 'Because they beat people,' he replied. 'If they have suspects they torture them and the person gives up everything. It's good.' I asked whether he knew what kind of techniques they used, 'They use that one with a bag over the head of the old days,' he said.

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The sentiment expressed by Constable Nzo, and the tacit agreement of his mostly silent colleague, tie together a number of themes in this thesis. Nzo, like so many others, had come to the police after lack of money had meant earlier dreams had been postponed (the overlap between spheres 1 and 3). The injustice of South Africa's past had delivered him into adulthood without the means to fully engage in the consumption celebrated as a mark of success in the country. As a member of Mthonjeni's CPU, it seemed he sought acknowledgement that, despite his challenges, his turn to the SAPS should not be looked down upon. He was in search of this recognition, both from the community he served, and from his superiors. Perhaps he searched for it within himself, too. Maybe he had been unable to produce a self-narrative that sat comfortably within (where all three spheres overlap).

Where respect was lacking he sometimes sought it through force. He used literal force, such as his claim about beating an abusive husband, but also used symbolic force, such as the pulling of his firearm and his rhetorical celebrations of torture. At other times he sought respect by providing what guidance he could to those who found themselves in his custody and celebrated when this led to their acknowledging him as more than just a cop.

While Nzo might not have actually assaulted a wife-batterer or seen TRT members using torture, the fact that he suggested as much is notable. In Chapter Two I outlined the importance of storytelling in the police organisational context. Stories make meaning through their narratives of people and places, and populate officers' imaginations with these. The selection of some themes, like assault, torture, and disrespect, over others, lends them credence. It gives them power in informing organisational identity and culture (Holdaway, 1983:62). The chosen themes covered that night included: 1) many South Africans are poor, 2) lack of money means lack of education and opportunity, 3) the SAPS provides opportunity for those who lack, 4) the public do not respect police officers and often complain about, or falsely accuse them of abuse and criminality, 5) SAPS managers do not trust their subordinates and are quick to punish them, 6) force and torture reduce crime, and 7) the state has disempowered police officers by introducing strict limitations on their use of force, which adds to the public's disrespect for them.

What I have shown in the thesis thus far is that these themes pervade every aspect of the SAPS' daily rituals as their lives become entangled in the precarity of contemporary life, and so the lives of its officers. To the above list we might add 8) the general mistrust/lack of respect for colleagues, the organisation and the public. While these themes manifested in varying degrees of magnitude across stations and individuals, I found them everywhere. When stories and themes are repeated to this degree, they help police interpret and make sense of their world, and to justify their actions. Ultimately, both through their talk and actions police communicate symbolic meaning (Loader, 2006:210), serving as both 'minder' and 'reminder' of community' (Walker 2002:315), of the way the country is, and the way they (or their overseers) would like it to be.

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But police violence need not only be physical. An example from a CPU patrol with Warrant Jiyana and Constable Ndungwane illustrates this. It was a weekday afternoon, we were ambling down a crowded Mthonjeni street in our marked police car when a woman hurried out of her house and flagged us down. After a brief discussion with her, Jiyana reversed the car, stopping outside her house. As he did so he told me she was reporting the attempted rape of a young girl. What ensued was a performance reminiscent of those Steinberg (2008) describes when police respond to domestic violence complaints. Steinberg suggests that while on the streets of Johannesburg's townships, many residents fail to recognise the legitimacy of police. But, he writes, when they are invited into private homes by victims of domestic violence, authority is surrendered to officers.

Entering the sparsely furnished RDP home we found four women between the ages of 30 and 45, and a young girl who looked between 10 and 13 sitting in the entrance room. Everyone turned to Jiyana as he sat down. Ndungwana stood in the doorway and observed silently.

Speaking Xhosa, Jiyana first addressed the girl. With tears streaming down her face she began responding, but almost immediately he cut her off to address the woman next to her, her mother. He began this address with gentle tones but they didn't last. Within two minutes he was shouting at her. Then, as if to indelibly stamp his authority on the situation, and to further shame the mother, he turned to me and recounted the conversation in English:

Listen my friend, this is what happened: Earlier today somebody tried to rape this young girl but luckily she was strong enough to fight him off. She came back and told her mother about it but for some reason her mother was confused and didn't know what to do so she had a beer. It was only at three in the afternoon that her mother came to this auntie [gesturing to the women who had called us] and told her about it. Now I have told her that because she is the biological mother she has been

irresponsible because she was the one who was meant to bring the girl, who is under age, to the police station so that she could be interviewed by FCS⁵⁵. But now because she had something to drink she will have to come tomorrow.

As we exited the house, leaving the women and young victim alone, I asked if ours wasn't meant to be a victim-centric justice system? Had he not silenced the young victim with his performance? 'You have a point,' he replied, 'but I made a decision to leave the girl in the care of the more responsible women in the group, and instructed the mother to bring the girl to the station tomorrow.' He said he had told them not to discuss the matter with the girl because he didn't want her to 'relive the trauma'. It seemed to me he was silencing a victim so that he could punish her mother, leverage his authority and teach her a lesson. I wondered what long term effect this early engagement with police might have on the young victim.

When I followed up on the matter with Jiyana days later, he told me, 'The mother brought her to the police station two days later. I took her to the trauma room. I don't open rape cases.' So he had never intended to open a docket. Rather, he had spotted an opportunity to be the archetypal, powerful and coercive police officer, and he had taken it. The memory of the power he wielded in that small Mthonjeni house would sustain him in times of doubt.

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A growing body of work suggests that procedurally fair, generally non-violent, treatment of civilians by police officers promotes compliance with police and the law (eg: Sunshine & Tylor 2003; Tyler 2004; Tyler 2006, Hough *et al.* 2010; Jackson & Bradford 2010, Bottoms & Tankebe 2012, Stanko *et. Al*, 2012) Even without knowledge of such research, a reasonable person might surmise that police officers who seek respect should refrain from

⁵⁵ Family, Child and Sexual Offences Unit

regular use of force. This logic is accepted by many in the SAPS, but it is accompanied by the strongly held view that violence earns respect, as illustrated in the following story:

I have elsewhere described an experience of closing down a tavern with Warrant Jiyana (Faull, 2013). It was a weekend night and the street outside the tavern was crowded with patrons illegally drinking in public space. Stopping our patrol van in the middle of the crowd, Jiyana used his loudspeaker to gently and respectfully ask people to stop drinking. But our presence and his words were ignored. He called the tavern owner outside and asked her to shut down the premises. It seemed he wanted to punish the crowd for ignoring him.

We drove a loop of the block and returned. This time Jiyana directed his loudspeaker address at an individual, telling him to empty his drink on the ground. This the man did, and walked away, but everyone else ignored us. As we pulled away, a deep thud echoed through the car - someone had hit it with a large rock. 'They think I will run,' he said, 'but I won't. I will close it down.'

Jiyana's anger was quiet. He parked the van around the corner and called for backup. In the wing mirror I noticed a violent assault taking place a hundred meters behind us, but when I alerted Jiyana to it he said, 'The people deserve to be assaulted. If you spend time attending to these petty beatings then you can lose time' (Faull, 2013:44). Because the young people were drinking in public, because they were out late at night, and because they had ignored his requests to disperse, they deserved to be punished. They had offended him.

Setting the car in motion we rounded another corner, continuing a circuit of the block. Jiyana shouted through the window at two teenage girls, telling them they would be raped if they walked and drank in public. Like the other drinkers had done before, they ignored him.

Rounding the last corner on the block we returned to the tavern where we were joined by two backup vehicles. By then tavern staff had closed their gate and were sweeping the street outside. Patrons ambled into the darkness. I commented to Warrant Jiyana that he had succeeded in closing the tavern. His response was one of pride:

I was successful because I was gentle with them. Because of this when I come to close them down in December I will be safe. If you assault them they will throw stones at your vehicle.

His statement was ironic. Firstly, we had had a large rock thrown at our vehicle despite his gentle approach. Secondly, he had purposefully not intervened in what appeared to be a violent assault, precisely because he wanted the victims to suffer, apparently because they had ignored him. And thirdly, while the tavern complied with Jiyana's request that it close its doors, its patrons had almost entirely ignored our presence, choosing instead to go home and disperse because the tavern had closed, rather than because SAPS officers had instructed them to do so. It seemed that authority lay with the tavern more than with the police.

Of course the fact that the tavern owner had closed the premises at the request of police officers showed that Jiyana and his colleagues held some sway. It was just that the intended symbolic power of the police had been neutralised by the patrons and was instead only recognised by the tavern owner who risked losing her license to trade.

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Warrant Jiyana often lamented that the community expected police to do the work of parents. By this he seemed to imply the disciplining of children. Officers in Mthonjeni often talked about 'gangs' and 'boys' or '*skollies*' as being at the root of much of the violence in the precinct. By this they meant groups of young teens who, for reasons related to the streets they happened to live on, attacked, robbed and killed one another.

On another night patrol with Jiyana, we were again flagged down. A distressed taxi driver pointed us in the direction of what he said were ‘boys fighting’. After a short drive we discovered a group of women and men in their sleepwear, standing in the street. One of the men carried a *knobkerrie*.⁵⁶ They complained of fighting boys. Jiyana berated them, telling them they needed to form street committees to ‘discipline’ the community and ensure that taverns in the area were closed on time. He was laying the blame at their feet while becoming unsettled himself.

We began to pull away. As we did, two things occurred. First, we noticed the silhouettes of darting figures between the houses lining the street. Second, we received a call on the radio that gunshots had been heard at a school nearby. Jiyana decided to ignore the running boys and attend to the shooting first. But on finding nobody at the school, Jiyana returned his attention to the shadowy figures between the houses. It was becoming clear that they moved and ran in response to our presence. Jiyana began stalking them, tracing their movements as closely as he could within the confines of the street and our police van.

At some point a group of about fifteen of the teens began to run. Jiyana gave chase in the van, but was limited by the street plan. The boys retreated to the far corner of a dark park, the furthest they could get from the street to which our van was restricted. Jiyana stopped the car and stared at them. In a quiet voice that barely hid his anger he said, ‘Now I am going to monitor them. This is where I start to *moer* kids. They are taking me for a fool.’ He ignored a radio call for police support in Mountain View, the precinct’s most dangerous area. He had his eyes set on the teens.

⁵⁶ A short club, a stick with a ball of wood at one end, a traditional weapon.

At some point the teens decided to run, leaving the sanctuary of the park. Like a predator attacking a herd, Jiyana steered the car in pursuit of two boys who had split from the main group, but we soon lost them. Returning to his search Jiyana muttered, ‘There were two girls with them. They went this way, let’s get them.’ Jiyana’s observations were sharper than mine. I hadn’t noticed anybody.

He parked the car next to an RDP house and told me to go around one side of it while he went around the other. Before I could protest he was out of sight, then called me to join him behind the house. He had found a young girl of about 13. She was crouched behind a sheet of corrugated iron and looked terrified. Holding her arms against her body as if in anticipation of an assault she repeated over and over ‘*Uxolo tata! Uxolo tata!*’⁵⁷ Jiyana grabbed her by the wrist and dragged her into the street, asking her questions which I couldn’t follow, but which included a demand that she direct us to her friends. The terrified teen led us across the road to another house. Jiyana pushed the front door open, took my torch from me (he didn’t have his own) and shone it around the living room. Another teen girl lay under a blanket on the couch, I thought she was sleeping. But as soon as the torch light crossed her she began to cry. Jiyana would later explain that she was pretending to be asleep, his instincts again far more attuned, distrusting and suspicious than my own.

Holding both girls by their wrists he pulled them across the street to the car. He left the first girl with me, and told me to ‘watch her’ while he walked towards the houses with the other. The first girl’s pleading continued, ‘*Uxolo tata! Uxolo!*’ She thought I was a cop about to punish her.

⁵⁷ ‘Sorry, father!’

Jiyana soon returned with a third girl. He locked two in the back of the police van and kept the third in the front, wedging her between him and me on the van's bench-like single front seat.

The next thirty to forty minutes were spent driving and interrogating the three girls. Jiyana began in English, asking the first girl, 'Have you seen these dogs that I am chasing?' When she hesitated he hit her twice in the thigh with his fist. From there the conversations were primarily in Xhosa, the girls listing the names and addresses of all the boys in the group, while Jiyana recorded the information. When the second girl was brought to the front her first words were, 'My parents are going to beat me [for this].' Apart from the first fist strike there was no more physical violence from Jiyana, though the girls were clearly all scared by the experience. Each time a girl was rotated with one in the back of the van, she was warned not to 'share information' with the others.

Once he had all the information they could offer, Jiyana returned the girls to their homes. At the last house the girl let herself in with a key retrieved from under the front door mat. Jiyana turned to me and said, 'You see what she is doing? Apparently the key is here because the parents don't care when she is coming home.' He leapt from the car and marched towards the house, pushing his way inside and waking up its occupants in their beds. When he discovered a man in his fifties whom he assumed to be the household head he shouted at him, 'You [must] monitor her before she goes out!'

As we climbed back into the car he said to me, 'You see what I am doing? Those parents are leaving their job to the police. I am doing what parents should be doing.' It was as if by making him feel responsible for their children, the parents, too, had disrespected who he was.

Jiyana's thoughts on the intersections between crime, parenting, coercion and violence were expressed once more in the hour that followed. Again we were flagged down by a young woman in the street. As we stopped she hurriedly ushered us into a dark three-roomed house. Grabbing my torch once more, Jiyana started shouting, 'Turn on the light! Turn on the light!' What followed was chaotic. There was screaming, two naked women, an elderly man wielding a *knobkerrie*, a number of other young women, an elderly woman hiding under a bed, a crying three-year-old, and a man of about 25 hiding under a another bed. The latter emerged with his hands raised saying, 'I'm not a *skollie*! I'm not a *skollie*!' anticipating a blow from Jiyana. Another young man emerged soon after, and the group gathered in the living room. Standing in the middle of the room Jiyana demanded silence. In response to his questions it emerged that the two young men were the boyfriends of two of the young women of the house. While we stood around listening to Jiyana, another young woman stumbled into the house. She was pale with fright and clutched her stomach as if she had been stabbed. Crying began anew. One of the young men called her name over and over, asking what was wrong. In time it became clear that she was in severe shock but physically unharmed.

Constables Deyi and Mda emerged at the door, having seen our car in the road outside while passing by. They stood in silence as Jiyana lectured the gathering, relishing another chance to shape a household with his rage. Soon we were leaving, together with the two young men and one of the women. As we gathered around the police vehicles outside Jiyana pointed to a silhouette behind the curtains in the house's front windows and asked, 'What is going on there? Who is being assaulted?' As we all turned I saw the shadow of the elderly man as he lifted and dropped his arm in a striking motion, accompanied by the sound of glass breaking and a woman's scream. He was beating someone. The young

woman who had previously been in shock, stumbled from the door of the house and collapsed on a pile of builder's sand, which had been left on the pavement. The officers didn't react. Instead one of the young men helped her up and looked to Jiyana for support. The man did not ask Jiyana for action to be taken against the woman's attacker, but instead for an escort home. Refusing to allow them access to the police car, Jiyana reluctantly followed the small group as they walked a kilometre home, sometimes crying, sometimes shouting aggressively at one another. It was a chaotic gathering of apparent anger, confusion, shock and trauma.

In the car, Jiyana told me that the four had been robbed at gunpoint outside the house and had run inside in search of help. In the darkness the elderly man had thought 'the *skollies*' had also entered the house. In the aftermath 'he beat his daughter because she brought the *skollies* to the house,' said Jiyana. He thought the beating to be the correct response for a father in those circumstances. He was showing his daughter that she should not have been on the street late at night, he said, and that she would have to face the repercussions of her actions. He was teaching her the same lessons many Mthonjeni police try to teach the area's late night strollers: If you play in the dark you will be beaten.

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Days later I accompanied Jiyana as he followed up on the addresses he had solicited from the terrified teen girls. Together with their parents, young teens were called to sit with Jiyana where he told them 'If I catch you again I am going to *moer* you.' Parents nodded in agreement. They seemed to share Jiyana's view that teenage boys who didn't listen to parents or police deserved to be assaulted, that violence remained a legitimate child-rearing and society shaping tool. It is a view which, as I describe below, is widespread in South Africa. It lies at the heart of the country's daily violence (sphere 3), and is central to much of

the police work carried out by officers in the belief that their actions will shape a better tomorrow (overlap between spheres 1 and 3, and resultant entanglement).

Yorkton: violence in the affluent city

When I described Yorkton's policing area in Chapter Three, I emphasised the difference between its demographics and those of the other stations. I also noted that many Yorkton residents had more social and economic capital than the police officers working there. I hinted that the wealthy and white of the area were treated with more deference than the poor and black. While I inferred that patrol police were less likely than Mthnojeni's to use violence in the policing area's public space, I also offered examples illustrating that violence was still used by them. I described Constable Hendricks's choking various people, predominantly because they questioned his actions, Constable Moshoeshoe's hesitation in attending complaints for fear of being exposed to his colleagues' perceived violence, and the violence and contempt displayed by detectives tracing suspects on the Cape Flats. Despite all of this, Yorkton's police appeared more tolerant of people being out late at night, less suspicious of young men in general, and believed the precinct community respected them, far more than did their Mthonjeni counterparts.

Despite this, it was at Yorkton that it became most clear that one should not question a SAPS officer unless one wants to be arrested or assaulted. This was apparent because 1) officers at the station used the charge of 'riotous behaviour' to detain anyone they wanted to punish, including anyone who questioned their actions; and 2) detainees who challenged officers in the holding cells had a good chance of being slapped into silence, despite the area being monitored by CCTV cameras. Constable Bhele once told me, 'I am facing charges for assault. I assaulted a man in front of the CCTV camera. He punched me,

what else was I supposed to do?’ In this view, when confronted with force an officer’s only response can be to respond with greater force. It is a simple but dangerous logic.

Contempt for a disrespecting public is not unique to the SAPS. Loftus, for example, reports watching English police put people through an ‘attitude test’. People stopped for casual questioning passed the attitude test by ‘being polite, apologising or admitting guilt, essentially by feigning respect for the police’ (Loftus, 2010:10). The act served as a reminder of police authority, and officers’ thirst for respect.

In Mthonjeni and Patterson a version of the attitude test played itself out in the frenzy of stop and searches carried out by officers. But it was in the holding cells of Yorkton, where detainees are ‘processed’ before being allocated a cell, that I witnessed a more violent version of the test. People were slapped and punched, sworn at, laughed at and ignored, often only because they dared to ask a man in uniform why they were in police custody. Despite it being a legal requirement, I have never known any officer to formally state the reason for arrest when forcing someone into the back of a van, and this remained true throughout my fieldwork. In addition to the CCTV camera recording the scenes of the room, these abuses took place in front of other police, including commissioned officers, none of whom ever intervened in the business of their violent colleagues. Indeed, removed from the public gaze, it might be said that this violence was for the most part a performance *by (male) police officers for (male) police officers*, an intra-group enactment of how violence earns respect. The performance of, and silence around violence in this private space served to remind police of their occupation’s recourse to force. And while this informal and violent approach to problem solving went against all SAPS policy, the silence around it made it organisationally acceptable. It is this silence, part of the deception described in Chapter Three, which allows abuse of force and other violations to remain routine in the SAPS.

Considered within von Holdt's framework of understanding contemporary South African bureaucracies (von Holdt, 2010), this silence can be seen as a form of organisational and state 'face' saving. Police officers from the lowest to the most senior ranks know that abuse of force scandals taint the image of the SAPS and so are unlikely to report their colleagues' abuses. The less popular the SAPS is, the more difficult it will be for its officers to secure their ontological selves (because their identities are entangled in the police role and image). It was simpler for those who didn't approve of the violence to distance themselves from it, rather than complicate their lives by getting involved.

On a number of occasions while in conversation with officers they celebrated the silencing effect of a slap to the face when dealing with a troublesome public. The 'slaps' were referred to as if they were a trick of the trade, a motion of the hand that brings compliance and respect.

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One Friday night I was in the processing room of the Yorkton cells with Constable Hendricks. He was writing up the paper work for a drunken naval cadet who had driven his car into a row of stationary vehicles. Already in the holding area were a man in his late twenties and his dreadlocked partner. The man was shouting over and over, 'Beat me! Beat me! Tomorrow I will come with my lawyer and we will win! Why have you arrested me? What did I do?' The officers were more interested in his partner, a dreadlocked man who sat in silence. He was refusing to give up his belt and personal items, which must be handed to officers before detainees are locked in their cells. Officers grabbed the man by his hair and violently pulled him to the ground, his head struck it hard. Colonel Cruz, the shift commander, stood at the cell gate, watching. In a tone of subdued concern his eyes followed his officers as they dragged the man into a cell, out of sight of the processing

room's CCTV cameras. In an unconvincing tone he called after them, 'Don't beat him. Don't beat him.'

A minute later another detainee was brought in. There was a hint of alcohol on his breath but he appeared relatively sober. He too was shouting questions, asking why he had been arrested, pleading. He seemed genuinely desperate, ignorant about why he was there. The arresting constable was completing the form that informed him of his rights. He needed the man's name but it was refused. Constable Hendricks looked up from his work and, with a grin said, 'Take him to the back'. The arresting constable took the cue, 'Do you want me to take you to the back where we can talk man to man?' Again, the detainee remained silent. The constable led him to the back cells from where a loud slapping sound came. The cell sergeant, a woman, looked up at me for the first time and said, 'I always get afraid when they go back there.' She didn't like what had happened but she wasn't going to intervene.

The constable returned immediately, his victim following a short while later. The latter appeared stunned, silent and on the verge of tears. His hands, shoulders and brow were frozen in a raised, questioning posture, as if pleading to know why he had been assaulted. Over the next hour the man's mouth bled and swelled. 'I have a wife and child at home,' he said to the officers, 'What am I supposed to tell them when they ask what happened here?' gesturing to his mouth. 'And you are the South African Police Service?' in a tone that inferred: *'We're supposed to trust you and this is how you treat us!'*

He turned to Colonel Cruz in the doorway, perhaps recognising his authority. With wide, shocked eyes he stuttered, 'They beat me! Why did they beat me? Why must I go to prison? You kill people! You kill people!' It was an accusation that stung all the more in the aftermath of Marikana. The Colonel ignored him. Eventually Constable Hendricks looked up

and, altering his accent and language as if to signal to the man that he came from the same, hard, Cape Flats, silenced him with a vicious expletive '*Hou jou bek, jou poes!*'⁵⁸

Eventually Hendricks and I headed back to the streets. We spent the rest of the night driving up and down Yorkton's main strip, often lingering on the side of the road ostensibly looking for pickpockets, but really just looking at women. At one point a transvestite lingered in front of our idling car. Hendricks accelerated towards her so that she jumped with fright and moved off. Moments later a man who Hendricks called 'a friend of a friend who worked in a club' walked up to his window and dropped a bundle of notes into his lap. The man smiled at Hendricks, 'Money talks, eh?' as if expecting gratitude. But Hendricks responded unhappily, 'No man, you're disrespecting me. That's a slap in the face. Don't think that you can do with me what you do with those other police that you meet here.' He handed the money back to the man who walked away, embarrassed.

There was an irony in Hendricks's 'slap to the face' analogy, considering my experiences of slaps in the Yorkton cells. Importantly though, he compared the metaphorical slap to 'disrespect', just after using his police car to convey what seemed to be his own metaphorical slap of disrespect to the transvestite. While he didn't infer any disrespect for his colleagues who slapped detainees, he inferred disrespecting colleagues who accepted bribes. It was evidence of both his own disrespect for the people with whom he worked, and an acknowledgement that a 'slap', whether physical or symbolic, was an act rich with disrespect.

⁵⁸ 'Shut your mouth, you cunt!'

Gompo: violence in the village

At Gompo and Patterson in the rural Eastern Cape the use of violence took on different forms. In Chapter Three I recounted the beating of a young knife-carrying Patterson teen and how police officers had laughed and released him once they realised his flight from them had ‘only’ been motivated by his possession of the weapon. For their part, the beating had nothing to do with the knife but rather with the fact that the teen had run from them.

More interestingly, particularly in the Gompo area, was the use of non-physical violence. The station precinct and the tasks carried out there were very different to those of the city stations. Due to the size of the precinct and the number of villages within it, urban-like patrol was not feasible and police-public interaction was rare. It was also apparent that police working in the area felt, far more than their city counterparts that the communities in which they worked respected them. There might be a number of explanations for this, including that within the rural precinct police work was one of the only professional occupations available. It may also relate to the comparably light criminal case burden which the rural police faced (ten or twenty cases per month rather than 3000 in the city). And yet, as I describe below, these officers still, in part, saw themselves as disciplinarians.

It was the middle of the day. A woman in a village twenty minutes away called to report her suspicion that her son had stolen money from her bedside drawer. She wanted the police to come over and ‘teach him a lesson’. I accompanied Constable Kani and Student Constable Cethe on their response.

Arriving at the house, Kani entered alone, an improvised wooden baton in hand; not police issue. Cethe remained with me in the car, joking that the baton was to keep dogs at bay. Within minutes Kani emerged from the house holding a teen boy by the scruff of his

neck. Cethe and I climbed out the car and the student helped Kani bungle the teen into the back of the van. Then, without any communication from Kani so that he must have known what was coming, Cethe warned me to stand up wind. And it is a good thing he did. Within seconds Kani had removed his pepper spray and sprayed a jet into the boy's face. Kani then swung at him with the wooden baton, most of the blows missing the teen, before locking the van.

Cethe laughed uncomfortably at my witnessing this performance. 'Andrew,' he said, 'You know there are things that happen on the shift which stay on the shift, you know this. You were not supposed to see that!'⁵⁹ It was a reference to a conversation we had had in previous weeks, and an acknowledgement that this backstage performance was not intended for anyone but police. Within his first year of SAPS training, Cethe had already learned this. He seemed comfortable with it. The violence posed no threat to his sense of self.

With the boy locked in the van, we returned to the house where the mother, in angry exasperation, said she believed her son had stolen R1500 (£82) from her bedside drawer. The boy had been seen out drinking over the weekend and she believed it was her money he had spent. In between gasps about how much money this was, Cethe whispered to me, 'She just wants her change back, then it will be fine. We need to make him talk.'

We returned to the car and drove around the village looking for the boy's drinking companion to ask whether he might have paid for the drinks. This would exonerate the boy. But the officers had already assaulted the boy. If nothing else they had communicated to him and to his mother, that the SAPS was there to unleash its violence upon teen men who disobeyed their parents, that violence is legitimate.

⁵⁹ A little later when Constable Kani stopped the car to flirt with an unwilling woman walking in the street Cethe again joked, 'Andrew, you must not see these things'.

There were a number of other occasions on which parents asked Gompo's police to discipline their children. On two separate occasions teenage girls were accused of having slept at their boyfriend's houses without parental consent. In response, Gompo officers collected them from their boyfriends' homes and brought them to the station. There the station commander, Captain Dlamini, shouted at them in a booming voice, and commanded them to sweep and mop the station floor. This they did with tears in their eyes while police officers and civilian staff taunted them for not respecting their parents. Although no force was deployed, it was a violent form of state punishment nonetheless, and one for which the SAPS has no mandate. The girls were reminded that elders were to be respected and that if they weren't, that police would force respect upon them, coerced with violence and punishment. That the community called on police to carry out such disciplinary tasks, I believe, helped officers feel valued and respected.

The liberty with which Gompo's officers felt entitled to deploy force was most clearly illustrated in a claim by the station's Constable Bungu. Bungu had put a significant effort into arranging a sports day for youth living in the policing area during my time there. This included arranging accommodation for the hundred-odd teens due to take part. On the day they were due to arrive, Bungu told me Captain Dlamini was going to address them all on arrival, and that this made her happy. 'They are very scared of Dlamini,' she said, 'So it's good that he will speak to them. When he catches them doing something wrong he doesn't like to lock them up so he hurts them and takes them home.' I asked if he beat them, to which she replied with loud laughter, 'Yes, he beats them! He beats them!' I asked her what parents thought of the beatings, '*Hayi*⁶⁰, they like it! They like it a lot. And it works, it really

⁶⁰ 'No'

works.’ It sounded just like the ‘charge office slap’, force and violence delivering submission.

She told me that before Captain Dlamini had started working at the station, crime had been much worse, ‘There has been a big improvement,’ she said. It was clear that she believed Dlamini’s informal beatings were the reason things had improved. While on the surface (and in reports to seniors) it appeared that Gompo was carrying out impressive community outreach initiatives, in the backstage a darker form of police-community relations played out, revealing that South Africans accept violence as a legitimate part of daily life.

Violence and respect in South Africa

In the remainder of this chapter I discuss the intersections between the life trajectories and personal narratives (identities) of SAPS officers (sphere 1), constructions of masculinity in South Africa and related feelings of shame, and the country’s general acceptance of violence (sphere 3). I suggest that it is within the confluence of these threads that many SAPS officers come to believe violence earns respect in the SAPS organisational context (sphere 2).

As suggested in Chapter Two, police officers enforce both the occupational culture’s take on the law, as well as their personal conceptions of order (Manning, 1978). These conceptions often form during an officer’s upbringing, shaped through early socialisation at home, school and in society more broadly. Drawing on a breadth of data, Collins suggests that many forms of violence in South Africa have been normalised, that ‘[violence is] socially accepted [...] commonly understood as benign, necessary, justifiable’ (Collins, 2013:30).

In 2006 the then Department of Safety and Security (renamed ‘Department of Police’ in 2010 as part of the project to re-articulate the SAPS’ image) commissioned the Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation (CSVSR) to explore the drivers behind the country’s violence. One of the findings of the three-year project was that citizens’ ‘perceptions and values related to violence and crime’ were central to the high levels of violence. The summary stated that:

[The widespread tolerance of violence] reflects widely held norms and beliefs which see violence as a necessary and justified means of resolving conflict or other difficulties...[including] the perception by young men that they need to be able to use violence to protect themselves and to obtain the respect of others. (CSVSR, 2010: 4)

That violence in South Africa is most commonly accepted and practiced by young men is important. It has been convincingly argued that the manner in which masculinity has historically been constructed in South Africa contributes to young men suffering grossly disproportionate levels of violence and victimisation (Seedat *et. al*, 2009). This is in part a result of their inability to live up to societal expectations that men should earn good money, be virile, show leadership and be physically and mentally tough (Ratele, 2008:35). Through mortuary analysis, Ratele and Letsela suggest that twelve per cent of premature male deaths in South Africa are the result of ‘masculine beliefs’ characterised by sexual dominance and risk taking, and that such traits are amplified in male-centric environments (Letsela & Ratele, 2009). Police agencies have historically been populated by men and saturated by cultures of machismo (Reiner, 2010: 127-128). Although the SAPS has made great strides in gender parity, with 34 per cent of its workforce made up of women in 2013, a disproportionate number of police working on the streets are still male (SAPS, 2013: 175). This may in part be because in some policing areas women are considered a risk to

themselves and their partners when working on the streets, while men are expected to bravely face danger.

Against these suggestions, and officers' exposure to violence at work and home described throughout this thesis, I think it important to think of SAPS officers, particularly men, as members of communities and families where violence, particularly that perpetrated by men, against men, has been normalised as a tool for solving problems, teaching discipline and earning respect. As such it is unsurprising that many members of the SAPS embrace the view that violence teaches lessons and solves problems, or that it builds respect, in the workplace.

I was made aware of the pervasiveness of such views, and of their reach into the private lives of many officers, on a number of occasions. Some of these have already been described. Below I provide three more related examples through which I explore officers' experience of, and attitudes towards violence.

A violence brought from home

One morning at Mthonjeni Sergeant Tambo, Skrikker's partner, arrived at work with a swollen lip. When I asked him what had caused it he told me he had intervened in a fight outside his house between a friend and a stranger, and had been punched in the face.

When I asked whether he had opened an assault case against the man who had punched him he laughed, 'No, five other neighbours joined in and we put that guy in hospital.'

Despite being a representative of the criminal justice system, Tambo had chosen immediate and violent retribution in response to being punched. Beyond this he had chosen to assault a man in front of his neighbours who knew him to be a police officer, and was happy to recount the story to me, a researcher, as if it were funny.

The same was true of Constable November, another Mthonjeni detective. He arrived at work one day wearing sunglasses, and continued to wear them indoors throughout the day. When I asked him about the glasses he removed them to reveal a black eye. He told me he had been drinking with extended family the previous afternoon – a Sunday - when one of his relatives had grabbed a child by the hair. November had reprimanded the relative, following which he punched November in the face. When I asked whether he had opened a case against his attacker he smiled and said, ‘No, I’m going to wait until he’s forgotten about it all and then I’m going to get him.’ The inference was that the revenge would be violent.

The last account is another involving Warrant Officer Jiyana. While on patrol with him one morning he broke the silence with, ‘I executed somebody last night.’ His words took me by surprise but he quickly corrected himself, ‘I executed my duty last night.’ He told me his teen daughter had been robbed of her cell phone in Khayelitsha a few days before:

I worked like I always work. I talked to people in the community. I got information where I could until I found who the boy was and where he lived. Then last night at 3:30 AM – because I knew if he was out robbing people he would have to listen to the call of his ancestors and go to sleep around then, because everyone must listen to the ancestors’ call – I went to the house where the boy lived with his parents.

It occurred to me that this was also right after Jiyana would have finished his shift, so he would still have been in his police uniform and driving a police car. He continued:

I did not wake up his parents but went straight to the boy’s room and stood over him. As soon as he woke up he said, ‘I didn’t do anything! I didn’t do anything!’ This was a sign of his guilt because why else would he have said these things without talking to me? I gave him a few *klaps*⁶¹, then took him with me to fetch my daughter to identify him. The boy told me he had sold the phone to a Somali so I made him

⁶¹ Hits, slaps, punches

take me to him. We went inside the Somali's house and I searched it because he didn't want to give us the phone, he tried to hide it. But we found it.

Jiyana was very happy with himself. I asked if he had laid any complaints against the boy or the buyer but he said he hadn't. In his mind that was not the point of the story. The point was that he had been dedicated, clever, cunning and a little violent, and had recovered a stolen phone. The fact that he was acting in his private capacity while wearing a police uniform, that he unlawfully entered two private residences, that he assaulted at least one minor, was immaterial to the tale. To him, his actions were not just common sense, they were to be praised.

I've chosen these examples because they illustrate once more that violence is a common feature in the private lives of many police officers, who are both the victims and practitioners of violence. Such accounts of extra-legal violence were openly shared with colleagues and me alike, as though they were normal. They help explain how it is that violence is normalised within the SAPS. For many it had shaped their lives long before they became police officers (through the overlap between spheres 1 and 3).

That SAPS officers often come from communities where violence has shaped their nature, helps explain why some believe communities want them to be violent.

The normalisation of violence in South Africa is at times bolstered by public figures and political leaders who believe that the threat of state violence will reduce crime and build respect. This view is supported by a litany of aggressive rhetoric spanning the past ten years (*cf.* Faull & Rose, 2012: 8-11).

In March 2013 South African president, Jacob Zuma, stated against all other evidence, that South Africa was not a violent country (Sapa, 2013c). His comments were made in the weeks after para-Olympian Oscar Pistorius shot dead his girlfriend, Reeva

Steenkamp. They were uttered in response to a litany of international media coverage of the country's relationship with violence. The president's statements contradict a significant body of evidence, which not only suggests that South Africa suffers *the highest* levels of intimate partner violence in the world (Mathews *et al.*, 2004; Abrahams *et al.* 2012), but that it has among the highest reported murder rates globally (UNODC, 2014).

President Zuma's claims are particularly ironic when considered against a statement made in 2006 in which he publically claimed that as a young man he would 'knock out' a gay man if one had stood in front of him (Sapa, 2006). Zuma's homophobia aside, the inference was that the president supported the use of violence in everyday life as a means to communicate disapproval.

In 2011 it was reported that Zuma had appointed Bheki Cele as national police commissioner to build a 'mature, visible police force that brought back its fear factor...[and portrayed an image] that says the police must be feared and respected.' (Staff Reporter, 2011).

Other political leaders, too, have publically romanticised violence in South Africa. In 2013 the MEC for Education in the Eastern Cape, Mandla Makupula, told a gathering of school learners that they didn't have any rights. Referring to a learner who had taken his father to court because he didn't want to go to initiation school (preparation for circumcision and 'manhood'), he told learners, 'I wish he could have been my child, I would have hit him on the head with a *knobkerrie* and he would have gone to that initiation school crying' (Nini, 2013). The department defended his comments, saying:

The MEC recognised that this was an engagement with young people with a limited attention span, it was important that his remarks were interspersed with a high level of humour and reference to day-to-day experiences (Carlisle, 2013).

But this defence is equally emblematic of the problem. It confirms that violence is a daily experience in the lives of youth, but presents it as humorous. A 2012 victim survey of almost 6000 school learners found that 49,8 per cent had been ‘caned or spanked’ at school by an educator as a form of punishment in the previous year, and 12.2 per cent had been threatened with violence by someone at school (Burton & Leoschut, 2013:37). While the SAPS and broader government regularly emphasise their efforts to protect ‘women and children’, these quotes and data seem to contradict their claims.

Similar contradictions in rhetoric and practice are found in changes to criminal justice policy since 1994. While the death penalty was abolished with the dismantling of apartheid, it was replaced with a slew of harsh minimum sentences and steep increases in the numbers of people incarcerated (Muntingh, 2009:180-195; Super, 2013). The country’s criminal justice system is now a mix of progressive child and restorative justice legislation together with very punitive sentencing policies and rhetoric (Super, 2013:140).

In 2010 one in three South Africans reported fear of victimisation in their home (Afrobarometer, 2010:2) while in 2012 only 64 per cent of male-headed households and 35,9 per cent of female-headed households felt safe walking in their area of residence after dark (Statistics South Africa, 2013:2). In 2011 opinion polls showed that ‘crime’ was deemed the second most important problem government ought to address, after unemployment (Afrobarometer, 2012:2).

In this context of fear, coupled with a tolerance of violence, it is not surprising that some centres of power, particularly those male-dominated like the SAPS, would tolerate or encourage the use of violence to beat respect for the state into the population. But I want to propose that this desire for respect is about more than the state. It is about the individual officers and the organisation as a whole. In this regard, Hornberger offers a compelling

explanation for the prevalence of police violence. Exploring attempts to introduce human rights policing into the SAPS at the turn of the century, and having observed the normalisation of violence in daily policing, she suggests SAPS officers resort to violence because they lack the personal reference point required to position themselves in the middle-class, human rights-oriented frontstage of policing that policy makers have tried to create (Hornberger, 2011). Instead, she writes:

[M]ost police officers [invest] in the backstage [which allows] them to get respect from colleagues... The image of potency allowed by the backstage has helped police officers to remain motivated and avoid feelings of humiliation and inadequacy... [which arise] where formal education standards are missing, where promotions have come to a halt, where challenges to masculine identity are seen as threatening, where the difference between middle-class values and police officers' bias towards lower and working-class values becomes insurmountable (Hornberger, 2011: 126)

As suggested earlier, many officers did not agree with their colleagues' abuse of force. Many told themselves that respect was earned by treating the public respectfully. Focus groups and social attitude surveys suggest this procedural justice-like approach is what most South Africans want (Bradford *et. al.* 2014; Faull 2012). But the organisational script which says *violence earns respect* appears stronger than that of mutual respect, and it seems to be growing. Many officers seemed to believe it their role to punish. In the last part of this chapter I describe three narratives through which SAPS officers justify the violence they deploy. I suggest that amidst the precarity of life in contemporary South Africa, violence is a tool through which officers inflate their self-worth, and so seek to secure their ontological security.

Explaining violence: masculinity, the ‘good old days’ and ‘peanuts’

The gazes of most SAPS officers are trained to the bodies of young, poor, black men. They stop them, they search them, and they mark them incessantly. In such contexts, a playing out of archetypal roles emerges: hero and villain, cop and crook, but almost always ‘man’ and ‘man’. Whitehead suggests that in contexts where a man’s sense of being a man comes into conflict with another man *as a man*:

[v]iolence by [either man] may be regarded as functional in maintaining an idealised and internalised sense of manhood in the face of external realities that point to his inability to do so. (Whitehead, 2005: 415)

I am not suggesting that all male officers are inherently violent, nor that those who are violent represent a ‘hegemonic masculinity’ (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005: 832) against which all other male officers measure themselves - although they might. Morrell et al. note that violence in South Africa is commonly practised by many men, but that this does not mean it is part of a national hegemonic masculinity (Morrell *et al.*, 2013:5). Rather, it is the context in which violence is practised – in this case the police organisational context – that can establish violence as a legitimate part of hegemonic masculinity, while outside of the organisational realm the violence might remain viewed as illegitimate, even criminal.

Another explanation for the acceptance of violence in the SAPS is the mythology that exists around apartheid policing. This often suggests that because apartheid’s police could fire their weapons at will, and at times used whips and batons in their work, crime levels were low and police were respected. While it isn’t certain that crime was less prevalent then (Super, 2013: 1-40), the belief that it was and that police were obeyed out of fear, is common. These sentiments, shared by many of the officers I shadowed, are captured in the

following excerpt from a 2009 interview, which I conducted with a Warrant Officer in Pretoria:

Crime is out of control. If they manage to change Section 49 [so that police can shoot more easily], we will be back where we were before. The reason we are where we are is that the criminals have no respect for us. They have far too much leeway; they have far too many rights in this country. Our hands are literally tied behind our backs. I'm not saying we should go out and shoot and kill everyone running around, but they need to give us back our respect. When they give us back our respect, the crime rate will come down (Faull, 2010b: 117-118).

It is easy to idealise the past. Despite most officers acknowledging the abuses of apartheid's police, both black and white, officers still imagine the old South African Police *force* as one characterised by meritocracy, justice and respect. In contrast, as hinted at throughout this thesis, many officers have only negative things to say about the contemporary SAPS, its managers and their colleagues. Many disrespect and distrust the people they share offices with, as well as the public they serve.

In Chapter Five I highlighted the practice of revising self-narratives undertaken by young recruits. Before starting the job they had disliked the SAPS. Once inside they found themselves re-writing their self-narratives to make sense of their new positions. 'Once you're inside you find you like it,' they told me, and I believed them. But this didn't mean that life was automatically comfortable. They might have changed their view of the SAPS, but it was unlikely that their friends and family had.

Consider once more that none of the officers I asked wanted their children to become police officers.⁶² Instead they stressed the importance of education as keys to 'better' occupations. Steinberg found the same emphasis on education in his Johannesburg police (Steinberg, 2008). In that and subsequent work (2012) he suggests that some South

⁶² Only one said the choice was their child's to make.

Africans, in some contexts, do not consent to being policed by the SAPS. We know identity is constituted through interaction with others (Jenkins, 2008). For SAPS officers to have their claim to a particular identity challenged (i.e. that they represent the state and should be respected), is to weaken their sense of self, requiring that they revise their self-narrative, as well as the narrative they tell themselves about the world. Steinberg's suggestion that some South Africans do not recognise some SAPS officers claim to authority, suggests they do not recognise officers' claimed identity. Put another way, they don't respect SAPS officers.

I have already mentioned that some officers told me that when they were not working they would not tell strangers that they were police officers. They suggested the revelation would put them in danger. The same justification was given by officers who chose not to travel to work wearing their police uniforms, despite it allowing them free travel on buses and trains, and despite their often complaining of not having enough money to live the lives they wanted to live. While there is surely some substance to their fears, I wondered if there might have been another reason for their not wanting to associate themselves with the SAPS when alone in public space: Did they feel ashamed? These conversations reminded me of an interview I conducted with a colonel in 2009:

It's becoming embarrassing for me when I am at a private place, for instance at church, and they ask me, 'What do you do?' and I say, 'I am a police officer.' You can immediately see for yourself – these people, if you don't know them well, they will immediately withdraw a bit and think you are corrupt, or illiterate, or a poor performer. It's sad that that's the association with the police (Faull, 2010: 177-178).

Throughout this thesis I have emphasised the precarious terrain from which many officers are recruited, and the dreams they deferred to their children once inside the SAPS. And yet, despite their apparent sacrifices, securing a job in the SAPS was more than would likely have been possible for most under apartheid. But, it seemed, this often meant little. In

the ‘new’ South Africa, the state promotes the idea that young people are the authors of their own self-narratives and can accomplish whatever they set their minds to. Beginning basic training in the SAPS, however, signalled to many that this was a lie. They took the job because it offered the best security and income they could find.

In this context, it is very common for police to complain that they earn ‘peanuts’. In 2009 I interviewed a young constable who, in justifying his corruption said:

The SAPS must give members decent salaries to survive. More importantly, though, we need a shelter. I can’t provide for my family; that is a problem. I live with my wife and my child. My wife does not work. I have three children. The sad part of it all is that I live in a shack. It is hard for me. I’ve lived in the shack for three years – my whole police career. I spend my money just paying the rent (Faull, 2010b:208).

At the time I did not think the constable was being entirely honest with me. I knew how much money constables earned and I knew it was far more than most South Africans. And yet, I was very familiar with both the organisational and public discourse that said ‘*We can only expect so much from police because they are paid so little.*’ In 2006 I compared the salaries of teachers, nurses, fire fighters and police officers to test the assertion. I found that police consistently earned more money than these allied professions (Faull, 2007: 8), and yet there was little comparable sympathetic discourse for the others, with the possible exception of teachers. Since then SAPS salaries have continued to increase at a rate above that of inflation, yet officers continue to complain that they earn ‘peanuts’. I heard this many times during my recent fieldwork. It was something many were unhappy about.

What frustrated me when officers lectured me about how little they were paid, was that compared to South Africa as a whole, they earn good money. This does not mean they do not deserve better remuneration or conditions of employment; millions of South Africans are exploited and denied decent wages. But it does mean that compared to the

average household, police are well off. Their incomes are particularly good if one considers that recruits are only required to have a matric certificate to be eligible for the job.

One attempt to define the ‘middle-class’, though perhaps a more accurate term would be ‘middle-income’ in South Africa, points to an ‘actual [household] median’ of R3,036 (£167) per month and an ‘actual middle’, accounting for 31 per cent of the population, as R1,520-R4,560 (£83,4 - £250) per month based on 2008 data (Visagie, 2013). Visagie describes the ‘relatively affluent middle’, accounting for another 31 per cent of the population, as those earning between R5600-R40,000 (£307-£2195) a month.

By comparison, in 2006 SAPS constables started work on a salary of R5,916 (£325) per month (Faull, 2007: 8), with additional housing, clothing, medical and thirteenth cheque benefits and annual increases. By June 2010 this figure stood at R8,461 (£464) per month with the same benefits (Safety and Security Bargaining Council, 2011: 4) and by 2013 officers told me it was approximately R12 000 (£659). These incomes place officers firmly in the ‘relatively affluent middle’ income group.

In contrast to these salaries but in line with Visagie’s analysis, the 2011 national census showed that the average annual income for a female-headed household was R67 330 (£3695), and R128 329 (£7043) for male-headed households. Combined, the average household earned R103 204 (£5664) per year (Statistics South Africa 2012: 41). However, these figures are misleading. In South Africa wealth is not evenly distributed. In 2013, 50 per cent of SAPS employees were classified as ‘Male, African’ and 29.4 per cent as ‘Female, African’ (SAPS, 2013: 175). Census data shows that amongst these groups, average income was significantly lower at R60 000 (£3293) per year (Statistics South Africa, 2012: 42). Similarly, 10.6 per cent of the SAPS workforce is classified ‘coloured’ (SAPS, 2013:175). The census shows that in 2011 coloured-female headed households earned an average of R51

440 (£2823) and coloured male headed households R112 172 (£6157). This data show that 90 per cent of the SAPS workforce, on average, earns significantly more than the national medians, based only on starting salaries.

A constable's starting salary is twice the average income of an African male-headed *household*. And yet as Visagie points out, 'the middle group in South Africa, comprising 4.2 million households, is quite poor,' and '[t]he relatively affluent middle class still includes, in its lower ranges, households with a very moderate level of income, i.e. R5600 total income per household per month' (Visagie, 2013: 8). While even the lowest ranking SAPS officers sit above this 'very moderate' pay range, it may be fair to describe theirs as a 'moderate' income.

Despite having engaged with SAPS salaries in previous work, it was only during my recent fieldwork that I fully appreciated what is asked of officers' salaries. As I travelled with SAPS officers to collect from, and return colleagues to their homes before and after shifts, I became more aware of the relative poverty in which many still live. While salaries are good compared with national averages, they are hardly sufficient in contexts where an officer is the sole breadwinner responsible for the support of unemployed parents, siblings, and children, often split between two provinces. This is particularly true if a constable is city-based and aspires, like Young's vulnerable late-modern subjects (Young, 2007), to consume his or her way out of the humiliation of poverty and precarity.

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SAPS officers walk precarious paths marked by financial aspiration and struggle, together with frequent misrecognition from the public. What does this have to do with violence?

David Bruce has suggested that many South Africans suffer low self-esteem and insecurity about their status among peers, and that this feeds the country's high levels of inter-personal violence, particularly violence perpetrated by men. Citing research that correlates low self-esteem and an inflated concept of self-worth as drivers of aggression, he suggests that the most disadvantaged citizens would not necessarily be the most violent (Bruce, 2006). Similarly, Gilligan has convincingly suggested that *any* form of violence is motivated by a feeling of shame and a desire to replace it with pride (Gilligan 1996, 2001). Echoing Young (1999, 2007), Gilligan notes that violence is almost always enacted by those who have been socially shamed by the structure and condition of the society in which they live. In other words, where a group is socially marginalised within a stratified society, the recipients of that downward gaze are most likely to resort to violence to regain their self-esteem. Gilligan notes that this is particularly true amongst men in social systems that prescribe clear gender roles, and in unequal societies. In such societies, of which South Africa is a quintessential example, men are celebrated for being brave, aggressive, virile providers. When these men find themselves in social circumstances frowned on by society, such as when they are unemployed, and if they have not been taught alternative coping mechanisms, they are likely to resort to violence as a means to reclaim their self-esteem.

Giddens writes that shame is the manifestation of anxiety regarding the narrative one seeks to sustain to maintain a cohesive sense of self. As such, shame bears directly on self-identity (Giddens, 1991: 65). He contrasts shame with guilt, suggesting that the former should be understood in relation to the integrity of the self while guilt is only derived of feelings of wrong doing. While SAPS officers might know their abuse of force to be 'wrong', possibilities of manifest guilt may pose less of a threat than the threat of manifest shame, which could be brought about in the absence of violence as a tool to teach respect.

Giddens cites Lewis who suggests that ‘bypassed shame’ is born of unconscious anxieties of self and feelings of ontological insecurity, consisting of repressed fears that one’s self-narrative cannot withstand the pressures on its coherence or social acceptability (in the overlap between the three spheres of the conceptual framework). In short, he argues, pride comes from a self-narrative that can be sustained, while shame manifests where that narrative of self begins to crumble under societal interrogation. The latter includes lack of coherence in ideals, the inability to find ideals worthy of pursuit, as well as instances in which goals are too demanding to be attained (Giddens, 1991: 69). One might imagine all of these to regularly manifest in the lives of young South Africans who find themselves working in the SAPS, having never before imagined themselves part of the organisation.

Summary and Conclusion

Taking into account the trends and practices described in this thesis thus far, I have suggested in this chapter that that some members of the SAPS experience emasculation and shame amidst the tensions that arise in their personal and occupational lives (the overlaps and entanglements of the three spheres in the conceptual framework). If true, this is likely most pronounced among African officers, many of whom are drawn from the margins of the working class and are most likely to be the sole breadwinners responsible for the upkeep of extended social networks. African men and women make up the majority of the SAPS. Of course constructions of masculinity in South Africa are not neatly delineated by race. In 2013, 65.9 per cent of the SAPS workforce was male (SAPS, 2013: 175). Reflecting on, and generalising, the violence of white male officers, Schiff suggests that:

[T]he need to conform to strong cultural standards of masculinity within the context of the police can lead to a severely restricted coping repertoire that is unable to conceive of solutions to problems other than within a narrow range of behaviours that are mostly rooted in violence (Schiff, 2010: 370)

These officers, who as South African men tend to be raised and live in environments that expect them to provide for their families (and extended families – sphere 3) find they are unable to. They have failed in the *most intimate* of spheres, because they cannot attain the life that they imagine is indicative of ‘success’, for themselves or their family. And they feel disrespected in the *most public* of spheres, because they wear the blue of the SAPS. This compounded emasculation echoes that experienced by African men in the colonial and apartheid eras. Separated from home and family, and emasculated by slave-like socio-economic inequities, many asserted their masculinity through violence, and so sought to reclaim their self-esteem (Morell, 1998; Breckenridge, 1998). It seems that some of these patterns repeat in the SAPS today, that some officers seek respect and self-esteem through violence at work against a backdrop of continued inequality, unmet expectations and emasculation in their lives more broadly.

This is not to say that many police officers are not proud of their positions in the SAPS, proud of the organisation, or that it is only feelings of shame that motivate police violence. Violence in South Africa is endemic. It has been normalised by the state and family, the home and the school. What I have suggested here, however, is that there is a link between the tens of thousands of officers whose middle-class aspirations have been left unmet, and the violence they deploy in the course of their duties. Despite access to a comparatively good income, the weight of the country’s history holds them back, most obviously manifesting in the disempowered social networks for which many feel responsible. Within an organisational culture with a long history of violence and secrecy, the

SAPS workplace provides these officers a stage for the acting out of performances that remind them that there is little in the world more manly than beating another man into submission.

There can be little doubt that the high levels of crime and violence in South Africa are closely linked to the country's failure to provide the majority of the population, particularly its young men, with respectable livelihoods (sphere 3). It is a society that shames people for that over which they have little control, and their shame feeds a culture of violence. Police recruits are often the victims and perpetrators of violence before they join the SAPS, and some continue to deploy violence in their private lives when they are police officers. Being recruited into the SAPS does not mean the shame society prescribes to its poor, disappears. In the SAPS shame changes shape, but it remains. Officers must carry out work they once despised. The occupation dirties them, requiring them to reassemble their self-narrative to make themselves clean. In this new narrative, shame at times manifests in a violence that closely resembles that of the young men on the streets against whom officers believe they have been pitted, young men whose lives are often not dissimilar from their own.

If extra-legal force is normalised in SAPS culture (sphere 2), if violence is a tool for its shamed (sphere 1) to build self-esteem against those similarly shamed, then the SAPS is in danger of reclaiming its apartheid-era image as the state's violent fist, while its officers navigate the entanglements of often violent police work in a precarious context, in pursuit of ontological security. Understood as such, we gain insight into how 'who SAPS officers think they are' (ambitious men and women, striving upward, seeking respect but sometimes feeling shamed), shapes the violence of their work.

Chapter Seven: Individualism, transgression, coercion and hope

The South African state encourages citizens to view SAPS officers as law enforcers, crime fighters, and people who lead by example. But police officers are first and foremost private individuals in pursuit of ontological security. Officers navigate the laws of the land, and adapt their habits to fit them in ways that make their lives most comfortable and enjoyable, with the least threat of sanction (Manning, 1997:138-43). This, in part, is why they manipulate the public image of the SAPS and the work that it does. It makes life easier, particularly amidst the precarity of life in contemporary South Africa.

In this chapter I describe select behaviour by SAPS officers, on and off duty, with a focus on their misdemeanours. I suggest that officers are more respectful of rules and order where these are already established in the affluent city, and actively negate rules and order where they are weak, in the township and rural town. As such they show respect to those ahead of them in the class hierarchy, and neglect of those below them. Put another way, they lack self-control, only tempering certain behaviours when coerced to do so by the environment of the affluent city. As such, the ways in which the three spheres of the conceptual framework overlap in different contexts (as sphere 3 changes from city to township to countryside), shifts the way officers work, altering the manner in which their personal identities (sphere 1) and SAPS culture (sphere 2) are entangled. In this way I illustrate how officers' personal identities (the stories they tell themselves about themselves) are in part shaped by the local context in which they work, and how this context-shaped personal identity in turn shapes their work and behaviour in different contexts.

Within this framework I link my discussion of coercion to the way South Africa was governed and policed under apartheid. I suggest that by inserting itself into the intimacies of daily life for most South Africans (their right to work, movement, education, sex and marriage) the apartheid state shaped a society accustomed to coercive governance. Drawing on the work of others (Steinberg 2008, 2012; Shaw, 2002; Super, 2013) I suggest that the informal providers of security and the general anti-state rebellion that emerged in the late seventies and eighties, combined with the many unmet expectations promised by democracy, have left South Africans, including police officers, open to rule-breaking where personal gain is more likely than sanction.

I follow this discussion by exploring the informal ways some off-duty officers strive to contribute to their communities, through activities such as coaching youth sports teams. I suggest these acts – the positive and negative - prefigure officers' desire for upward mobility in a precarious society (how entanglement shapes their work). They also reveal a cognitive dissonance. Officers long for stability and security for themselves, their children and their communities – people in whom they see themselves - but lack the tools through which to bring this about through their work, which they are told should reduce crime. As such, where they can they retreat to the backstage actions with which they are more comfortable (Hornberger, 2011), such as speeding, littering, eating fast food and violence, but also proactively working to build hopeful communities. In all the examples, individuals and small groups of officers transgress rules and invest positive energy in ways they hope will coerce a better future.

A central theme in this thesis has been the instrumentality of a job in the SAPS for its officers. For most the job is first about survival and upward mobility in a historically

opportunity- and wealth-skewed society. Against these aspirations the ‘doing’ of police work in crime-saturated contexts is often secondary. Perhaps this is not all that different from many state bureaucracies in which employees balance their obligations to the employer with their own desires and needs (Lipsky, 2010). This can lead to cut corners or time stolen on the job (eg. Hornberger & Vigneswaran, 2009), but also contributes to fulfilment and hope for the people employed. Such practices take on a special irony in the police environment where they contradict the state-promoted image of police professionalism. This is especially true where transgressions by police officers include acts that break the law.

Another common theme running through this thesis is the role of coercion in contemporary South Africa. There is a strong sense within the SAPS that without its presence, South African society would descend into violent anarchy. There is also the sense that without coercive deterrence, young, usually poor men will naturally commit crime. SAPS officers see themselves as the providers of a deterrent threat in the lives of such men, often through frequent surveillance, engagement (or harassment) and assault, but also through the provision of ‘advice’.

Since 2004 when I first began researching the SAPS and working as a police reservist, the frequency of minor abuses of power, action for personal gain, and open contravention of basic codes and laws by officers, has astounded me. The same was true of my recent fieldwork. But perhaps my surprise has been naïve. Notwithstanding the emerging drive for more procedurally fair policing, both in South Africa (Bradford *et. Al.*, 2014; Faull, 2011a; Faull & Rose, 2012) and abroad (eg: Stanko *et. Al.*, 2012; Independent Police Commission, 2013:32), it is common that police officers replicate the norms and practices of the public from which they are drawn (Reiner, 2010).

To reduce to their most salient categories the common infringements I observed, I believe SAPS officers feel free to take the liberties they do: 1) because they are practiced by many citizens in an era where the nation building project celebrates the idea of personal rights and freedoms, and the ability to strive and consume; 2) because there is little to coerce them not to; and because 3) a weakness of organisational accountability has created work environments in which minor transgressions are regularly ignored. Finally, 4) officers feel that if there is no immediate or likely future penalty for a particular action, they are free to carry it out.

Minor Transgressions

Throughout this thesis I have referred to incidences of relatively mundane but unlawful behaviour practiced by officers, either in my presence or recounted to me. Police officers almost never acknowledged the unlawful nature of these acts. Some of the examples presented include:

- 1) Constable Hendricks intentionally choosing to drive a police car that had no headlights and ignoring most traffic laws while driving it; the Yorkton detectives' Snake of Power, which sped across the Cape Flats ignoring road rules. Both examples are contraventions of the Road Traffic Act;

- 2) Constable Bhele's story about being robbed by police. In it he claimed to be so drunk that he failed to notice the police cars trying to pull him over – contravening the Road Traffic Act and punishable by up to six years in jail or a fine of up to R120 000 (£6586). It is also an offense the SAPS is tasked with addressing;

3) The litter discarded by community outreach patrollers in Mthonjeni when they dropped wads of papers onto the road and into private yards, contravening the City of Cape Town's Dumping and Littering By-Law and punishable by a fine or up to sixty days in prison.

Each of these examples represent behaviours which I regularly observed among officers. While the infringements are minor, they shape the spaces and communities in which police work, both symbolically and physically.

Police making (dis)order: driving and traffic infractions

South African cities spread out across vast distances. The apartheid state designed them to promote the separation of 'population groups'. As a result, police foot patrols are rare. It is far more common to see a police car than a walking police officer. Almost all SAPS patrols involve the use of state vehicles, usually marked for uniformed officers, and unmarked for detectives. In my experience, the moment an officer enters a state vehicle, road rules become largely irrelevant. Stop signs and traffic lights are overlooked (particularly in townships), speed limits are almost always exceeded, lane changes take place without indicating, cars are overtaken on the left⁶³, safe following distances are ignored, cell phones are answered and text messages typed, and never, ever is a seatbelt worn. I have found this to be true across all ranks and roles, whether responding to a call for assistance, heading to a meeting or driving to a shop to buy lunch.

If SAPS officers are at their most visible when driving, and if they are seen to be in regular contravention of road rules, one can expect that their presence may encourage

⁶³ Like the UK, South African roads are left-lane drive roads. As such, drivers are encouraged to 'keep left, pass right' to avoid accidents.

similar contravention by others. More importantly, however, officers who speed, don't wear safety belts and disregard road rules, place themselves and others in danger. When I asked officers why they did not wear safety belts they told me they needed to be able to leap from vehicles if they were in danger. They leveraged that dramatic slice of the police occupation that is privileged over almost all others, but which skews the expectations placed on police, and the mundane reality of their work (Bayley, 1994:159; Ericson, 1982:220; Manning, 1978:196; Brodeur, 2010).

There were 16 259 murders in South Africa in the year of my fieldwork in 2012/13, or 31.3 per 100 000. Officers often reference such extremes as part of the discourse that says: *'This country has a great crime problem. As such, it must invest in and support its police service.'* But where one category is named and given life by police, others are silenced. The absence of police-talk acknowledging the dangers of South Africa's roads is a clear example. As many people die on the country's roads every year as are murdered. In fact, South Africa has amongst the highest rates of both murder and road deaths, globally (eg. WHO, 2013:204; World Bank, 2013; UNODC, 2013). In 2011, 31.9 per 100 000 South Africans died on the country's roads (WHO, 2013). Like murder, one can assume that a greater number of non-fatal injuries lie behind this figure. Despite this, outside of peak holiday periods road safety accounts for only a small fraction of public discourse compared to crime. This is important to note. SAPS officers disregard for traffic laws is not necessarily, though may in some instances be linked to their views of their occupation as crime- rather than safety-focused. What is equally likely, however, is that their behaviour is indicative of the norms and values of the population at large (as suggested by the road death toll). This was illustrated by the inaction of SAPS and Provincial Traffic officers in the face of dozens of unworn safety belts encountered at the road block and Vehicle Check Points (VCPs)

described in Chapter Four. In that example, ritual behaviour and target chasing replaced action that could have saved lives.

Publically available data on the causes of death among SAPS officers is scarce. Some data is available from a 1999/2000 investigation into the killing of police on duty, but this only covers the murder of police officers.⁶⁴ A 2003 review of medical records of police officers brought to a single trauma centre between 1993 and 2002 is more revealing (Plani, Bowley & Goosen, 2003). It found that while the majority of officers (69%) were killed or injured by gunshot wounds (including attempted suicide and accidental discharge), vehicle accidents were the second most common cause of harm to officers (24.6%). In only six of these did the hospital record whether officers wore safety belts or not, each time noting that none were worn.

As limited as this data is, the possibility that at least 25 per cent of officer injuries and deaths are caused by road accidents should not be surprising to anyone who has spent time in SAPS vehicles. Anecdotally, a detective assigned to investigate ‘Reckless and Negligent driving’ offences in Yorkton, told me that 30 per cent of the accidents he investigated involved police. At both Mthonjeni and Gompo, brand new vehicles were severely damaged in accidents during my time at the stations. And yet any discourse about the dangers of reckless driving carried little weight within the organisation itself, while the idea that officers were in grave danger of attack by outsiders loomed large.

Finally, the stickers that held license discs in place in some SAPS cars read, ‘Integrated crime policing road safety strategy. Always wear seat-belts and child restrains!’ While the text was intended for those inside the car, its message appeared lost to officers. It

⁶⁴ The report itself is not public but its findings were presented by Prof. A Minnaar at a public seminar on 30 June 2011 in Pretoria. The slides for this presentation can be found at: http://www.issafrica.org/crimehub/uploads/Minnaar_ISS_Murder_of_police_overview_v2.pdf (accessed 3 December 2014)

was an *Internal Lie*, an institutional performance which was ignored by its intended audience. The same was true of ‘road safety’ posters on the walls of police stations. They espoused good practice, including the wearing of safety belts and abiding by speed limits, most of which seemed to be ignored.

Aspiration and police work across space and place

Upward mobility in a stratified society requires the presentation of social performances that highlight the aspirant actor’s familiarity with the values of the strata to which they aspire, and downplay their familiarity with that from which they hope to move (Goffman, 1959:45). The stickers in the SAPS vehicles were such a performance. They were an institutional appeal to middle-class values, making a claim about what the SAPS and its officers stood for. But if SAPS officers aspired to be middle class, why was their behaviour at times so incongruent with this desire? Insight can be gleaned by comparing how officers behaved in different types of space.

There was a clear disparity between adherence to road rules by Mthonjeni and Yorkton’s police. In the Mthonjeni policing area almost no police respected traffic lights (at least certain lights) or stop streets. Sometimes other cars on the road ignored rules when the police car I was in was stopped at an intersection, breaking the law in front of a very visible police car.

When I asked Mthonjeni police why they ignored traffic rules in the area, I was always given the same answer, ‘It’s the Republic of Mthonjeni; there are no rules.’ The officers didn’t seem to consider their own agency, let alone their mandate, in challenging these practices and shaping them otherwise. Instead they settled into the routines of replicating and promoting the disorder already established in the area, their social

performances being shaped by the context in which they found themselves (spheres 2 and 3). In this way, context shaped personal identity and social performances while on duty.

Another way to view officers' attitudes to driving is to consider them as a show of power. Speed and aggressive driving were at times intended to amplify the power of their presence. An example of this was the 'Snake of Power' described in Chapter Three - the convoy of unmarked detective vehicles sweeping through the Cape Flats at a terrifying pace. In the absence of formal identifiers, the speed and recklessness of this convoy sent a clear message to those nearby that whoever was driving was angry and ready for a fight. When the convoy came to a standstill and armed detectives leapt from vehicles to push young men up against walls, the ambiguity of the convoy dissipated, replaced by actions that to me shouted: *'We know these neighbourhoods and their violence, we live in them, too. But tonight we are here as The Police. We have risen above our personal histories. Now we drive nice cars, and drive them as we deem fit. We deploy violence with the backing of the state. We are here to shape your young men into something better.'*

It should be remembered that the recklessness of officers and detectives did not only endanger them, but other road users and detained suspects, too. During detective tracing operations those arrested would be made to sit on the back seats of detective cars. In Yorkton, male suspects almost always had their hands cuffed behind them. Some sat for hours in the cars, hands trapped, struggling to maintain their balance as the detectives sped through the streets.

The backs of marked police vans are also precarious spaces. With only smooth metal benches on which to sit, and without safety belts or hand rails, they are spaces in which bodies slide with the will of the driver. At times officers purposefully drove recklessly so that

the arrested person would be tossed around (and so hurt) by the combination of speed, corners, inertia and metal.

In contrast to their detectives, Yorkton's patrol officers were significantly more law-abiding on the roads. This isn't to say that stop streets, red lights and speed limits were not at times ignored, they were, but not nearly as often as in Mthonjeni. Perhaps this was in part because of the general order and affluence of the area, and the high proportion of middle-class residents in public space, many of whom were more economically and socially empowered than the officers. As such, police were themselves being surveilled by a public with the means and propensity to act against them, and a public whose quality of life many officers aspired to attain.

In the predominantly rural Patterson and Gompo policing areas, road use was understandably very different. The majority of roads were unpaved with few intersections or traffic lights. Where these existed in Patterson, they were largely ignored. Outside of the town and villages police officers almost always sped when they could. Notably, when they came across cattle or animals standing in the middle of the two busiest paved roads in the area, they never stopped to move them. Instead, they drove around them. The same was true when the bodies of dead animals, already hit by other cars, were found lying in the road. They were ignored. It seemed officers didn't consider it their responsibility to promote the safety of road users. In the face of such attitudes the irony that as many people are killed on the country's roads as are murdered, is glaring. The former is almost ignored while the latter becomes the symbolic buffet from which the SAPS feeds the nations appetite for security.

Across the four policing areas officers navigated public space in different but consistent ways. When travelling from one space to another they sped. When navigating

urban townships or the rural town, with which many were intimately familiar, they ignored the rules of the road. It was only in the affluent city that the officers' recklessness was partially contained. There they adapted to the city's order, only to cast it off as they navigated back to the Cape Flats and rural villages. Their performances were intended for different audiences, the rich and poor. To the rich their actions seemed to me to say *'Look, we can adapt and be like you. Accept us, please.'* To the poorer they seemed to me to say, *'We acknowledge the disorder from which we all come. We are part of you, including your struggle. Because we understand you we will ignore some transgressions, as you will ignore some of ours. But because we understand you, when we need to be hard, we will be very hard.'*

Language and (dis)order

By speeding, littering and driving while intoxicated, police foster disorder. The symbolic implications of such acts are pronounced when the disorder is shaped by officers in uniform or marked police cars. Their actions pollute the police image and the order which policy intends them to shape. But in addition to shaping order through action, officers shape the social world through the language with which they describe it. Through words, police generate and reinforce social meaning (Loader, 2006) and define normality (Loader & Mulcahy, 2003:227). Through their constructions of the criminal 'other' and 'harmless' citizen, officers reveal their understanding of their world and their job (van Maanen, 1978:292). Police talk creates conceptual maps that order populations into manageable units (van Maanen, 1978:280-282; Holdaway, 1983:63). Once a person is labelled on a continuum from good to bad, appropriate rules can be drawn on to deal with them. For those deemed unfavourable, these actions include expressions of control and authority, but

often also violence or the threat thereof. Harsh treatment of ‘*skollies*’ is deemed deserved, allowing officers to avoid the moral dilemmas of their dirty work (Waddington, 1999:378, Young 1991:150). These actions reinforce the status quo and structure communities in the process. In the bureaucratic cogs of the police service actions are recorded and recounted in words, so that in time words become a form of police action.

In Mthonjeni, more than at others stations, officers referred to gay men as ‘moffies’, to ‘white’ people as ‘umlungus’, and to men from other African countries (foreign women were far less visible) as ‘foreigners’, ‘makwere’⁶⁵, ‘Mogadishu’ or ‘Somali’.

The majority of spaza shops⁶⁶ in Mthonjeni were owned and staffed by Somali or Eritrean men and Mthonjeni’s CPU patrollers would call out to them from their patrol cars, ‘Hey Mogadishu! Hey Somali!’, when they wanted to get their attention. When I challenged them on the appropriateness of their language they acknowledged that ‘makwere’ was not a kind word but found no fault in the others. While ostensibly on good terms with shop owners, officers blamed them for their own routine victimisation. The shops, which often remained open late at night, were regularly targeted by armed robbers (eg. Gastrow, 2013). To Mthonjeni’s officers’ shops that stayed open late at night threatened to disrupt their ‘perfect night’ by tempting attack.

Steinberg (2011a) has suggested that when in 2008 township residents across the country took to the streets to attack their foreign neighbours, killing 62, they were ‘finishing a piece of business that the police had begun’ (2011a:346). He notes that ‘the language used by those who started the violence was one of security and was borrowed from state institutions’ (2011:347). By this he refers to how the SAPS has been deployed as part of the

⁶⁵ Short for ‘Makwere-kwere’, a derogatory term for non-South African Africans.

⁶⁶ Tuck-shops

state's deportation machinery through which 'foreigners' (usually Africans) are framed as a threat to the livelihoods (jobs, housing, health) of poor South Africans. Thus framed, their removal (or attack) becomes justified.⁶⁷ South Africa deports vast numbers of 'illegal foreigners' each year; 312 733 in 2007/08; 75 336 in 2011/12; and 131 907 in 2013/14 (DHA, 2008:63, 20012:59, 2014:72). 'Taking [such large numbers of] people off the streets in front of an audience of the urban poor,' writes Steinberg, 'begins to carry meanings' (Steinberg, 2011:355). The meaning is a 'misrecognition' (Loader, 2006:211) of foreign nationals as legitimate members of the South African community. Every time the officers I was with smiled and shouted 'Hey Mogadishu!' they reminded all within ear shot that the person they were addressing was different.

As with many things in the Yorkton area, officers' public performances involving African foreign nationals were more tempered. The area bustles with a diversity of African nationalities. At times the station's cells would swell with people arrested for being in the country illegally. While many arrestees were poorly treated in the cells, foreign nationals were at times spoken to in ways that signalled to them that they were being poorly treated *because* they were not South Africans. Officials from the Department of Home Affairs (DHA) would visit the station to collect residency violators or, as one DHA official put it to the cell Captain, 'We are here to clean your cells.' When the arrestees complained that their cell phones were missing from their confiscated property they were told to check the police stores – something they couldn't do in the custody of Home Affairs officials who shouted and swore at them. Police officers joked: 'They are sending you home, you won't need [your missing cell phone] anyway'; 'Come, come, Home Affairs want to send you back to your home countries, they have transport for you.'; 'Going, going, like a Boeing, don't come

⁶⁷ A similar, though much smaller attack of foreign-African run spaza shops in Soweto took place over a number of days in January 2015.

back to Cape Town!'; while a Home Affairs officer joked with a police officer, 'You must keep this one in the cells, you must kick him, he talks too much,' and to the arrestee 'Fuck you! Shut up! You can stay here.' In these performances officers from one state agency performed for another, and for the men whose personal-narratives spanned much of the continent. In communicating their shared disdain for foreign nationals, police and DHA officers reinforced their bond as one community against another, as South Africans against 'Africa'.

I don't believe that when Mthonjeni's officers called to shop owners from their patrol cars they were consciously trying to ostracise them, but they did. Their words shaped by smiles became the curses spat out in Yorkton's police cells. Similarly, 'umlungu' and 'moffie' were used in ways that exposed an ignorance of words as shapers of the social world, especially when uttered in public by representatives of the state. They are words that remind listeners of what is new – openly gay men in township streets - and what is old – the relative absence of white people in township space, and their association with authority. By so doing the words flag the categories as outside of local communities.

Identity, the individual and occupational worlds

While officers spoke and acted in ways that marked certain people as unfit for inclusion in the South African community, they also participated in ritual events that sought to draw officers together with their colleagues in ways that challenged old divisions of a once racially stratified police force. The police *braai* was such a ritual.

On a hot summer's day I joined officers from one of the stations for a *braai* in an access controlled public area at Monwabisi beach on the outskirts of Cape Town. It was

school holidays and the beach was bustling. Because of the busyness, the only road into the area was lined with a heavy Metro Police and Law Enforcement presence. All cars entering the area were searched for alcohol, while drivers exiting were checked for sobriety. The message from the City was clear: there would be no drinking at the beach. But of course there was and it was carried out by the police officers I was meeting.

In contrast to the busy public beach, the access controlled area chosen by the officers was secluded and empty. Entrance required the payment of a small fee, while the beach was free to all. As a result, two picnickers and a Law Enforcement car were the only signs of life in the area, other than the off-duty SAPS officers and me.

While the officers and I *braaied* our meat and drank the alcohol they had smuggled in, the Law Enforcement car circled the picnic area's ring road, passing us every twenty minutes. Each time they passed us we hurriedly hid our bottles and glasses.

Two hours into our festivities the Law Enforcement car, together with a Metro Police car which had entered the enclosed space, stopped near our group. Five uniformed officers casually disembarked and approached us. While hurried attempts were made to hide our drinks it was clear that they knew what we were up to, so a new tactic was adopted. Most senior among the City officers was a sergeant. Recognising him as a former SAPS officer, two of our group greeted him jovially. At the same time, others in our group immediately began piling meat and salad onto paper plates. These were handed over to the City officers together with a large bottle of Coke. With food in hand and a few stories exchanged the City officers returned to their vehicles. As he walked away the City's Sergeant said that if we had any trouble passing through the police check point (as drunk drivers), we should call him and he would get us through.

While the City officers set about eating on the opposite end of the picnic area, the SAPS officers turned their discussion to their brush with the law. I would summarise their discussion thus: *‘All that is required is for one to show them respect. If one respects them they will not take action against you.’* I thought the comments revealing of the thirst for respect I had noticed in my fieldwork up to then, particularly among Mthonjeni’s police. It was respect which they longed for and so respect which they so explicitly tried to show when confronted with *The Law* themselves. Of course it was problematic that ‘respect’ was conveyed through gifts. It was the adage ‘Buy me a cool drink’ in practice.⁶⁸

As I chewed on my sausage I noticed the Law Enforcement officers – the agency specifically tasked with enforcing by-laws relating to litter - throw their trash out the car window, over the fence surrounding the picnic area and into the protected nature reserve surrounding the beach. How easily they, like the SAPS officers, seemed to traverse the boundaries between their personal and occupational lives, the absence of coercion leaving them free to embrace the agency acquired through state employment in a starkly unequal democracy.

Coercion, democracy and an overflow of power

In Chapter Six I recounted a number of incidents in which police officers claimed to have employed violence in their private lives. On occasion they also shared stories about other criminal activity which they had been involved in, some of which I have already mentioned.

⁶⁸ It was not uncommon for the police I was with to be offered free 1.5litre bottles of cool drink by spaza shop owners in Mthonjeni or Patterson, while in Yorkton’s inner city it was the petrol stations, clubs and bars that offered police free beverages. In spaza shops the marked and vulnerable foreign workers used the gifts to build bonds with those who labelled them ‘Mogadishu’ and ‘Somali’, in order to diminish their vulnerability. In contrast some Yorkton officers pandered to the managers of restaurants and clubs as if to say, ‘You see, we can operate in this middle-class space, and we can help you when you need us, too.’

These were shared without a sense of guilt, suggesting that they fitted comfortably into the officers' sense of self, their personal identity.

One such tale was shared by Constable Ndungwane while on patrol with two other CPU officers and me. He first told the story in Xhosa, so the performance was primarily for his colleagues, but he retold it in English once he was done. He said he had spent the previous rest day with his brother who drove a tow-truck. A Somali man had crashed his *bakkie* into a church wall and died in Khayelitsha, and Ndungwane and his brother had attended the accident scene in the tow truck. In Ndungwane's words:

I said to my brother, 'These Somalis never travel without cash, let's search the car.' We found R3500 (£192) under the mat. We decided that we couldn't keep it because the ancestors would be angry with us, so we had to eat it straight away.

He said they had gone to a tavern and spent the money on expensive alcohol. The moral of the story was only that he was very hung over. Everyone laughed. Nobody commented on the theft.

On another occasion Ndungwane was lingering outside the station's administration block and ambled over to where I was sitting with Constable Deyi in a patrol car. Leaning through the window he told us he was waiting to see the station's firearms control officer. He said his father-in-law, a taxi driver who owned a firearm, had recently died. Ndungwane wanted to check whether the firearm was registered (legal) so that he could know what to do with it. I asked him if it wasn't a bit late, as a police officer, to be wondering whether his father-in-law's firearm was legal or not. He laughed my question off and headed inside.

A few minutes later he returned to report that the firearm was registered to the government of the former Transkei:

Only Head Office in Pretoria can deal with it now. I'm not going to worry about that Pretoria stuff though. I'm going to take it to my kraal in the Eastern Cape where I will use it to protect my sheep.

I asked him what would happen if he killed someone using an illegal firearm while protecting his sheep. Again he laughed, 'If you kill someone they will become an 'unknown' [a body which police can't identify].' It was an extraordinary statement to make to a researcher and police colleague. While his bravado may have been exaggerated, his claim to be in possession of an illegal firearm, which he planned to keep for himself, seemed genuine.

Ndungwane's story, like similar stories shared by others, highlights the blurred boundary between officers' personal and occupational lives as the two become entangled with each other. It seemed some believed it was fine to break the law, as long as the risks of exposure and sanction were minimal.

If correct, I believe this perception, relatively common among both SAPS officers and the broader public, has its origins in the apartheid era, and in the transition to democracy. As such, a brief review of key developments is helpful.

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Between 1950 and 1960 the urban African population in the country grew by 50 per cent to 27 per cent of the African population (Lee, 2011:229). Housing shortages meant many erected informal shacks on the urban fringe, sparking clashes with municipal authorities. The majority considered themselves temporary city visitors who planned to return 'home' to the countryside after earning money in the city (Mager & Mulaudzi, 2011: 370). New laws were introduced requiring Africans to carry pass books proving their right to be in cities.

In 1952 the ANC and the South African Indian Congress (SAIC) launched a campaign to defy apartheid's race laws. Eight thousand protestors were arrested by police (Mager & Mulaudzi, 2011: 372). Nearly a decade later in 1960 an anti-pass march resulted in police killing 69 protestors and wounding 180 at Sharpsville. In the aftermath the ANC and Pan African Congress (PAC) were banned, in response to which the movements replaced peaceful disobedience with armed struggle (Mager & Mulaudzi, 2011:396). In subsequent years, coercive violence was increasingly deployed by the state to ensure adherence to the law. But while the South African Police force (SAP) coerced adherence in white urban space, it largely left black townships unregulated, violent and lawless (Posel, 2011: 348). By so doing the state signalled to black South Africans that they could do as they pleased if it didn't impact white South Africa. In the absence of state police, informal providers of coercive force emerged in the form of gangs and community configurations across the country's townships (Steinberg, 2008; Shaw, 2002). In effect, the state had taught South Africans that order was achieved through force, and that whomever controlled force, controlled space. By 1983 the University of Cape Town speculated that (black) Cape Town was one of the most violent cities in the Western world (Super, 2013:26). But before this, the seventies saw conscientised black urban youth grow to see their parents as subservient to the white state. As already mentioned, in 1976 nearly two hundred were shot dead by police as they protested Afrikaans language instruction in schools.

The 1980s saw a call from the United Democratic Front (UDF) and ANC to make the country and its townships ungovernable through civil disobedience, and in 1985 the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) and the UDF crippled the economy through massive strikes and the flouting of race laws. In 1984 a partial state of emergency was declared, and in 1988 a full state of emergency, as the government lost control. In

1986, the state's attempts to control the movement of Africans within the country collapsed, leading to increased migration to cities. Apartheid's end was in sight. At the same time, official crime statistics (representing mostly white urban space) revealed a sharp increase in murder, robbery, housebreaking and other crimes (Super, 2013:26), suggesting the political civil disobedience encouraged by the anti-apartheid movement was feeding other, non-political criminality.

Contemporary South Africa was shaped by these and related dynamics; systems that actively restricted and shamed the black population and produced a generation of angry and desperate people who, limited in their potential, at times turned to rebellion and crime, unchecked by the white state. Having largely been blocked from owning property or starting businesses in white cities, entrepreneurial aspirants tied their hopes to private taxis, tuck-shops and illegal alcohol sales on the urban fringe, businesses that still appealed to some of the officers' I shadowed.

When the ANC came to power it believed that to stem the violence and crime that had taken root in the previous decades, South Africans simply needed a democratically elected government and an accountable, rights-based criminal justice system (Steinberg, 2012; Shaw, 2002; Super, 2013). As a result, it neglected its detective service and failed to develop its capacity to effectively investigate, and so to deter, crime (Steinberg, 2012). Crime spread from the former black ghettos across the country's suburbs and farms, acquiring a new and frightening visibility as the SAPS and newly liberated media sought to acknowledge victims by counting and labelling their experiences, while millions of young men who had pegged their hopes on the 'better life' promised by the ANC, found its delivery slow.

Despite the SAPS having almost doubled in size since 1994, detectives have struggled to stay on top of their caseloads, leading some to return to the coercion of old, threats, violence and torture, and the buying of information (financial coercion) from informers wherever they can.

As limited as this synopsis is, my aim has been to illustrate that the societal attitudes that emerged from this past (sphere 3) shape 1) South Africans' attitudes towards law and law enforcement; 2) the way officers entangled in this history see South African society, 3) the way officers perceive themselves and their personal trajectories in society; 4) and how they practice police work. In all instances, both police officer and civilian views are coloured by an understanding of the world based on relative freedom in the absence of coercion. This sense of freedom has been amplified by the shift in language and law in the transition from apartheid to democracy, from oppression and restriction to rights and possibilities. Put another way, apartheid taught South Africans that society was not fair and that breaking the law in pursuit of equality (however broadly defined) or ease of living, could be justified. In contrast, democracy has taught South Africans that they have a right to aspire, but that their aspirations will be difficult to attain within the bounds of the economic and legal system. It has also shown them that they are in danger of criminal victimisation and that the state is limited in protecting them. For many this has produced a retreat from engagement with the state and a turn to private, gang and vigilante security. Together these factors lead to minor abuses by police, such as speeding, but also to serious crimes, such as Ndungwane's alleged theft from an accident scene, as officers' lives are entangled in organisational and contextual forces.

Brodeur (2010) defines police as agents authorised to use diverse means prohibited to others to maintain order; they are empowered to break rules in order to enforce rules.

But, he suggests, police are more self-regulated than regulated by law, so that there exists only a thin line between legitimate and illegitimate actions. Considered against this definition, two further points can be made in relation to the officers I shadowed. First, they were aware of the illegality and rule-breaking of their actions, but didn't think them important in relation to their mandate to reduce crime in South Africa. Secondly, believing their greatest contribution to the reduction of crime to be the provision of a coercive deterrence, they were unconcerned about their own petty offences like speeding, littering or labelling language, especially in the absence of coercive organisational oversight, despite these being a greater feature of their work than forceful engagement with the public. Rather than these acts mirroring Brodeur's law breaking in defence of order, they seemed to be evidence of a quiet overflow of power, a spillage of their right to prohibited means, about which they were unconcerned. They were a quiet celebration of the power that comes with policing a fragile, emerging democracy, but a celebration that at times threatened to undo the order they hoped to shape through visibility and force.

On personal freedom

In Chapter Four I discussed attitudes toward sick-leave, and described the lengths to which SAPS managers sometimes go to check that officers are legitimately ill when they call in sick. The logic is that if officers know management might call on them when they report being sick, they are less likely to abuse the system. But in 2013, 80 per cent of SAPS employees took an average of 10 sick days (SAPS, 2014:266), suggesting such interventions have limited effect.

There were other, less obvious ways in which coercion or its lack shaped officers personal and occupational lives. At three of the four stations I met officers who had suffered

health complications due to the overconsumption of Coke. Two officers had been hospitalised because of their habits. One of them told me she had drunk so much Coke because her husband had worked for the company and so received a free quota every month. She said the company had had to provide employees with free Coke to prevent them from stealing it, suggesting that without such a disincentive theft was only natural.

She had since stopped drinking the free Coke because of the damage it caused to her stomach, but others I met resumed their habits after medical intervention. Officers routinely consumed soft drinks, *vetokoek* and fast food on duty, little of which was healthy. They knew the food was bad for them but seemed set on pushing their bodies to the brink before changing their habits. In 2013, 7.7 percent of discharges from the SAPS were due to ill health (SAPS, 2014:257).

Like attitudes towards sick leave and food, the absence of coercion shaped some officers' sex lives. At one of the stations in particular it was assumed that many (heterosexual) male officers, most of whom were married or involved in serious relationships, had one or more lover in the precinct. Officers there repeatedly encouraged me to participate in what they joked was 'police culture', to take a lover in the area.

On two occasions while on patrol with Warrant Jiyana he found humour in civilian men falling out with their partners after being caught with another lover. His advice to them was 'not to cheat so close to home.' When we passed a group of women shouting at and hitting a man in the streets, Jiyana engaged them and then laughed, saying:

It is right that they are beating him in the street, he cheated too close to home. You must respect your wife. When you cheat you must not cheat close to home.

The fact that Jiyana and colleagues used the word 'cheat' implied that they believed having sex with someone other than their wife or primary partner was, at least in some

contexts, socially frowned upon. However, they believed that ‘cheating’ was part of being a man and so an expected norm. In this context it was a man’s fault if he was silly enough to ‘cheat’ in a context in which he was likely to be discovered.

Relatedly, one officer told me, ‘I don’t use condoms with my girlfriend, only with the other women.’ He had been in a relationship with his girlfriend for five years. He said that only once had he not used a condom with a lover and that afterwards he had panicked that he might have contracted HIV. He said the six week wait to test his status was excruciating, and as a result he would not have unprotected sex again. It was only through the coercive threat of HIV that he had changed his behaviour.

Similarly, two of the detectives at one of the stations regularly referred to their ‘number twos’. One of them had been in a relationship with his ‘number two’ for ten years, visiting her each time he attended a crime scene at night. He said he loved his wife but that ‘a good number two makes the marriage strong.’ He had been caught ‘cheating’ with other women in the past and knew that if his wife learned of his long affair his marriage would be over, but he believed he could keep things under wraps.

Of course there were officers who did not approve of these attitudes and behaviours. One detective made a point of drawing my attention to the photographs of his wife and children on his desk. He said I wouldn’t notice such pictures on the desks of other detectives because they wanted to be free to chat up potential lovers who might visit their offices. The pictures were a commitment device to prevent him from doing the same, a kind of self-coercion. A few doors down another detective told me he had found a condom in his teen son’s wallet and had confiscated it. The logic of coercive control that pervaded the SAPS had spilled into these officers’ self-narratives and was shaping their private lives. But

like streets made dangerous by SAPS officers chasing residents indoors, the detective's son was obviously at greater risk without the condom than with it.

In all of these examples, I have tried to illustrate the manner in which coercion is viewed as a necessary means to forge ones' path in the world, and to build a better country. These attitudes are likely grown both from growing up in South Africa (sphere 3) and from working in the SAPS (sphere 2). And yet at an individual level (sphere 1), many officers seemed to believe that without coercive threats, they were free to pursue their own interests. As such, coercive thinking existed alone in each separate sphere, but took a particular shape in the confluence of the South African (and more local) context and the SAPS organisational culture, and their entanglement with personal trajectories (identity).

Shaping a hopeful tomorrow

On a Saturday morning in my final weeks at Yorkton, I cycled in to meet Sergeant Jonker to accompany him on an investigation. But when I arrived I found his mentee, Student Constable Carelse, sitting at his desk. In contrast to her more formal week-day attire, she was dressed casually in blue jeans and a purple tank top. At about 24, the casual attire accentuated her youth and conjured a lightness that seemed out of place among the bureaucratic weight of the docket-filled desk.

Sitting next to Carelse was a girl of about four who I would learn was her daughter. Carelse greeted me with a smile but her daughter avoided my gaze and greeting. Carelse told me Jonker had postponed the planned investigation. Disappointed, I said I would head home, but first I tried again to connect with her daughter. Dropping down to her level I asked her a number of questions. She ignored all but one of them, telling me only what

grade she was in at school. But when I asked her whether she wanted to be a police officer like her mom, Carelse immediately replied on her behalf, ‘No! She’s going to study!’

Like so many SAPS officers, Carelse saw ‘study’ and ‘police work’ as incongruent. It seemed she believed she was beginning her career in the SAPS only because she had been unable to study beyond high school. She didn’t want the same for her daughter, didn’t want her choosing police work because she couldn’t find another job.

Carelse was preparing to leave so I waited to walk out with her. As we made our way down the empty corridor she pointed to a crack in her group Captain’s door and whispered, ‘He is here every Saturday and Sunday, working, working, working. It’s not right. You have to have time for yourself, too.’ And yet she was also working on a Saturday morning, her young daughter in tow. The SAPS was shaping her life but to some extent at least, she was pushing back and shaping it in return. Her personal identity was entangled in that of the SAPS and its culture. She would work hard when the organisation asked her to, but would also seek to cordon off a time for herself and for her daughter’s future.

My exposure to officers’ private lives was limited to what they chose to share with me. What seemed clear, however, was that in them I was glimpsing lives in flux in a changing society. Ultimately, some of the most important shaping work SAPS employees did was at home, with their children, families and communities.

Snippets of a world beyond police work

In Chapter Five I alluded to the importance of the car as a symbol of upward mobility for many officers. Cars were usually discussed in the context of something that could be purchased with savings and a bank loan, a sign of accomplishment. But not everyone thought a new car worth the money. I spent a significant amount of time with Warrant

Jiyana, visiting scrap yards and road-side mechanics in search of spare parts for his second hand 'cockroach'. It was something he was invested in, something through which he could see his effort shape a machine and so shape his life.

He told me he called his car a 'cockroach' because he couldn't afford a new one, and that it was always a work in progress. Still, he said he would buy a brand new car for the first of his children to finish university. There was no greater gift they could give him than getting a tertiary degree, he told me, and he would over extend himself financially to mark such an accomplishment. This was the man who had woken his eleven year old daughter in the middle of the night to watch him forcefully reclaim her stolen phone from a house into which he had not been invited (Chapter Six). In his life, as in so many officers, coercion could be deployed in the form of both carrots and sticks.

Similarly, Constable Mxenge, the Mthonjeni murder detective who robbed and slapped teens in the holding cells (Chapter Three), spent his weekends coaching a teen football team in his neighbourhood. He told me he did it to keep the young men away from crime. He routinely appealed to me – someone he saw as part of a more privileged world than his own – to help him with sponsorship of team kit. He wanted to instil a sense of pride in the teens, to occupy their time and deter them from conflict with the law. Yes, in his capacity as a SAPS detective he used violence to punish, but he also volunteered his time so that young men might avoid the police cells where he or his colleagues might steal from and beat them.

The same was true of another detective, Sergeant Februarie. He also coached a youth football team in his neighbourhood. He told me he had saved his money to buy a minivan so that he could transport them to games, investing his SAPS salary in the lives of boys in the hope that he might steer them away from prison. Another officer at the station

was known in the area as ‘Skip’, short for ‘Skipper’, because of the lead he took in coaching teen football when off duty. ‘It’s not easy without the support of my family,’ he told me:

These things cost money and you have to do it out of your own pocket. Then at about the age of fifteen the kids start to drop out and become gangsters. It’s peer pressure, they turn to crime, they become tempted.

While Mxenge and Februarie told themselves they could divert teens from crime, it seemed Skip saw his efforts as only a temporary measure. Still, he was invested in it.

During my time in Gompo, officers there organised a two-day sporting weekend for youth from the villages – an energy and resource intensive feat intended to distract young people from crime. Independently, Gompo’s Constable Magona wanted to get village youth involved in golf to keep them away from crime. As well as working for a private security company before joining the SAPS, he had worked as a professional caddy at a golf club in a nearby coastal town. He thought young men could benefit from having the skills passed onto them, both the caddying and the playing of golf.

In all of these examples, officers were invested in shaping the lives of young men and women, both their own children and relative strangers, in ways they hoped would steer them away from conflict with the law. They weren’t investments in children alone, but in a broader sense of shared risk and community. Like the violence meted out by Yorkton’s detectives on the Cape Flats, they were actions that to me said, *‘We are like you. We know the dangers of your path. We are trying to make things better for you, for all of us.’* It was a posture likely informed by every aspect of their lives: the context in which they had grown up and still lived (sphere 3), the organisation for which they worked (sphere 2), and their personal journeys (sphere 1) and entanglements through their intersections.

Dancing to a different tune

While some of who SAPS officers think they are, and how they practice police work mirrors negative stereotypes about them, there is a fair amount which remains hidden from public view. The few occasions that I socialised with officers gave me insight into practices that seemed in contradiction of their occupational mandate, but also insights that challenged the image of the organisation as being the ‘same as the apartheid police’.

Social events organised by the Yorkton and Mthonjeni stations are notable. At the Mthonjeni event, station staff and their partners came together to eat, drink and dance the night away. To some degree at least, rank, class and culture evaporated in these spaces and South Africans from different backgrounds came together in celebration. DJs played music from Brenda Fassie and Mafikizolo, to Kurt Darren, artists singing in different languages and styles but celebrated by SAPS staff as if they were the products and inheritance of all. Old and young, Afrikaans and Xhosa, they *lang-armed*⁶⁹ and line danced, sang and laughed together as if there were little to divide them, and so much to unite them.

Similarly, team-building games played at a Yorkton event, encouraged station staff to tap into their inner child. Members of the ghost squad cheered on two of their colleagues in a three-legged race, hopping along as if their lives depended on it, their lips stretched wide with smiles. The previous week they had been accused of killing a man at the station, yet there they shouted and cheered, exploding with joy. In that moment they were just South African men, quite probably raised and still living in relatively difficult and violent environments, but securely employed in the SAPS and enjoying a few hours in the sun with their colleagues.

⁶⁹ ‘Long-arm’ – a kind of dancing

When one of Yorkton's senior officers asked me what I thought of the event, I told him I was impressed. 'This is how I do a *braai*,' he replied:

Those other police *braais* are just booze fests. I don't do that. This is about team building. At the beginning of the year I told my members that we were on a bus and that the destination we were heading to was that of crime reduction. I told them that the bus was not going to stop until we had reached that destination, but that we might need to pull over for a service at some point. This is our service today. This evening the bus will pull off again and carry on heading for its destination. I believe that at the end of the day we will all go to God. Some of us will go before others but we will all go in the end.

He took a drag on his cigarette and turned away. He was trying to shape his officers' worlds. To be sure, he wanted their main focus to be 'crime reduction', but he recognised that they needed some time out. Ultimately death and God were the only constants for him, as for so many others. What happened in between depended on what could be coerced and achieved with a combination of carrots and sticks in the space where the personal, organisational and national intersected.

When the day is over

In Chapter Three I suggested that it was in the morning meetings and parades, when officers and detectives gathered before moving to their offices and cars that I saw the most joy in those I shadowed. But I didn't always hang around for end of day meetings and parades; they were usually brief and uneventful. The truth is that those which I attended were also joy-filled. Yes, the officers were tired after work, but there was a lightness that returned to them in those moments. At times one didn't need to search for it, it was right on the surface, bubbling up through the jokes and cheeky exchanges shared before meetings began and once officers had been released for the day. And in a sense that is exactly how it

felt, that they were being *released*, set free. They were being allowed to return to who they really were, without the coerciveness of commanders and the constraints of bureaucracy to direct their performances and shape who they should be. It was as if in the mornings they surrendered a part of themselves to the organisation and claimed it back only at the end of the work day.

In 2008/09 I conducted a series of in-depth interviews with SAPS officers exploring their experience of life in the organisation (Faull, 2010b). I ended the interviews by asking what they would want to tell South Africa, were they given a chance. Responses were dominated by a longing to be recognised as ‘human’. They didn’t want to be blamed for matters that were beyond their control. They craved gestures or words of gratitude that suggested their efforts were appreciated. Viewed through the lens of my recent fieldwork, these interviews take on a different hue. It was as if the officers I interviewed then were asking to be recognised for what I saw in the morning meetings and afternoon parades, spaces that remain invisible to the public. They wanted to be seen as people whose investments, challenges and joys were found within the SAPS, but were in more abundance outside of the organisation where they could cast off their impossible occupational mandate and live as others live. Perhaps they hoped that so perceived by the public, they would find the ontological security that for many remains elusive amidst the precarity of life in South Africa in the early twenty-first century.

Summary and Conclusion

In this chapter I have highlighted behaviour focusing on that which fails to meet the imagined ideals of an exemplary police service. By stripping away the organisational façade of order I have exposed some of the informally patterned cultural and shaping work carried

out by discretion-empowered officers (Loader & Walker, 2003:101) in an environment characterised by precarity and ambition. I have highlighted minor infringements more often enacted in township and village spaces than in the affluent inner city with which most police are less familiar. I have suggested that this is because where officers (as individuals and small groups) feel more comfortable (where coercion is absent) they are more likely to disregard traffic laws, litter, and resort to violence to solve conflicts among peers, particularly involving categories of people and spaces with which they are familiar. I suggest that their turn to such behaviour, like the crime and violence they are tasked with tackling, has its roots in the disparate ways the apartheid state governed black and white space and the opposition to state law and authority this fostered. Extended into the democratic era, disorderly space encourages disorderly police conduct, while order encourages police compliance with the imaginary of fair policing. This is a product of the entanglements at the centre of my conceptual framework, where personal identity and police work are shaped by, and shape each other in different South African contexts.

I have contrasted these infringements with exercises in positive coercion, such as officers volunteering to coach sports teams, or rewarding children who succeed at school. These acts – the positive and negative - prefigure officers' desires for upward mobility in a precarious social and economic environment. As such, they reveal a cognitive dissonance: officers long for an easier, more stable life for themselves, their children and their communities but lack the means to accomplish this through their work. As such, personal identities and imagined futures, shape the way they work. Where they can they retreat to the 'backstage' actions with which they are more comfortable (Hornberger, 2011), such as speeding, littering, eating fast food and violence. At other times, hope informs their investments, particularly in spaces to which officers' personal identities and investments

are wed. When enacted on duty, these actions, disproportionately enacted outside middle-class space, become the culture-making acts that shape South African society.

Chapter 8: Conclusion – The Accidental Police Officer

The last entry

On a Sunday afternoon in April, 2013, I sat at a desk in the house I was renting in a village near Gompo. I was about to start typing up the notes I had made during an eight hour shift with the Patterson Crime Prevention Unit (CPU) the night before. Very early in my fieldwork I had developed the habit of beginning diary entries by noting my mood. I did this so that when revisiting the diaries, I would have some sense of how my emotional state at the time may have shaped the way I recorded my observations. ‘I feel strange’, I wrote that afternoon:

I guess the strangeness comes from the feeling that this was probably my last shift, and yet that so much remains unresolved... That feeling that it’s over and now I need to make sense of it all.

I had set out to answer the question, ‘Who do South African police officers think they are and how does this shape police practice?’, I had spent eight months and over 800 hours shadowing police officers, and recorded my observations and conversations in a seven hundred-thousand word diary, and yet the answer to my question wasn’t obvious.

Five pages into my diary entry I received a phone call from Gompo’s Constable Booi. He told me he was in the area with a friend and wanted to swing by for a drink. I had accompanied him to a Patterson tavern the previous Friday night and we had established that we shared a taste for Savanna Dry cider. He had told me he would visit me at home for a drink when he was off-duty, but I hadn’t expected him that soon.

Booi was in his late twenties, fit and wiry. He had grown up in Port Elizabeth where, on finishing high school, he had completed three years of a four year business degree before dropping out. He had signed up with the SAPS and been posted at Gompo, which he

found quiet and dull after life in the city. He was friendly and confident and the two of us got on well.

He arrived shortly after hanging up, driven by a friend in a gold-coloured VW Golf, a symbol of wealth amidst the poverty of the area. Emerging from the car his friend introduced himself as Andile. 'I'm a tenderpreneur,' he beamed through silvery eyes. He was hopelessly drunk. In South Africa a 'tenderpreneur' is a pejorative term used to describe people who get rich winning government tenders through political connections. I had never heard anybody self-identify with the term, let alone with pride. But Constable Booi didn't seem to think his friend's behaviour odd, neither his identification nor his intoxication.

Walking into the house Booi told me they had driven from East London, a hundred kilometres away. I fetched Booi a Savanna from the fridge, but told Andile I wasn't comfortable giving him more to drink with such a long drive ahead of him. Instead I offered coffee or tea. Both men protested. Annoyed and tired from the night shift, I responded unkindly, 'I should probably call the cops when I see someone as drunk as you driving, but I see there's already a cop here.' I immediately regretted it. Perhaps I wasn't just tired. Maybe I felt my fieldwork was finally over and I could speak more openly about those aspects of the SAPS that made me uncomfortable. But neither man seemed offended by my comment and so we continued chatting. We continued chatting for a while before Booi announced that he needed to be at work in ninety minutes and would visit again that night. At the car I noticed a young woman passed out on the back seat. I asked Booi who she was, 'I don't know, probably one of his girlfriends,' he said. Andile emptied his bladder next to the road and climbed into the driver's seat. Within ten minutes of their arrival they were gone.

Constable Booi surprised me again at 22:40 that evening when he delivered on his promise to visit. This time he was on duty, in a marked police car, with his partner for the night, Constable Kani. I welcomed the two inside and offered them tea, coffee or Coke. Kani said he'd have some Coke, but Booi surprised me by answering, 'No, I'll just have a Savanna.' I thought he was joking and was about to pour him a glass of Coke when he repeated his request. I asked if he was serious, 'Yes, it's night shift,' he responded, 'there's no Captain Dlamini,' referring to Gompo's station commander. I told him I couldn't support police officers drinking on duty. Kani withdrew from the conversation, taking out his Blackberry to play a game. In an attempt to change the topic I asked Booi about a woman he had met when we were at the Tavern. He said he had gone home with her but that he had met someone new the following day, 'I'm young,' he said, 'I must have fun.' Half an hour later the two left.



When Booi visited me mid-diary entry I was frustrated. I was tired from the night shift, wanted to get the long entry down, and felt 'strange' - anxious about how all the data I had collected would help me answer my research question. But like every other SAPS officer who allowed me the privilege to glimpse their inner selves, I owe Constable Booi a great gratitude. I was too selfish to see it at the time, but he had brought me exactly what I was looking for: the answer to my question.

When, eight months earlier, Warrant Officer Skrikker had taken me to his house, it was to show me what he had made of his life. Similarly, when Booi took me out to his favourite tavern, and when he and Andile visited me at home, he was offering me a glimpse of the life he was building outside of the SAPS, showing me a piece of the story he told himself about himself, which he believed to be true. It was a life of friends with connections,

drinking, dancing, women and fast cars that could carry him from the former whites-only city to the former black homeland, with speed and comfort. It was a life in which his status as a securely-employed young South African man gave him some access to the promises of the ‘new’ South Africa. It was these elements of his life, he signalled to me, which gave him his sense of being, far more than the uniform he put on when he went to work. Yes, he was a police officer, but he was foremost a young man making his way from the precarious periphery to the more stable centre of a fragile society. For the moment, the SAPS was simply the vessel through which he could achieve this, a container for his pursuit of ontological security. It was the overlap and entanglement of these forces – the individual (sphere 1), the organisational (sphere 2) and the local and national (sphere 3) – that shaped the way he worked. That was Constable Booi’s narrative, and it is the central narrative of this thesis.

In the remainder of this chapter I review my main findings.

South Africa, precarity and police work

South Africa in the early twenty-first century is a place of minority wealth and widespread poverty, social and economic precarity and violent crime. It is one of the most unequal societies in the world and possibly one of the most violent. It has been shaped by centuries of race and gender based oppression in which the state ascribed descriptive, identity-shaping labels to people, and used these to limit access to resources and opportunities. It relegated vast swathes of the population to ethnic homelands and tied hundreds of thousands of Africans to a white-owned economy, cajoling men in particular to the outskirts of white cities where they were often forced to live in isolated male-only compounds, or in

townships, for most of each year. Established to serve the white nation, the South African Police force (SAP) played only a limited role in crime prevention and investigation in townships. In their absence, community and vigilante groups, and gangs, competed to monopolise security. Outside of townships, the SAP stopped Africans to request papers proving their right to be in white South Africa, and returned those without authority to the rural homelands. The ebb and flow of (mostly) men in this way, introduced rural Africans to new identities, religions, cash, markets, goods and practices, which were carried back to the rural areas. The migrant labour system simultaneously emasculated and taught violence to its oppressed workers, and spurned generations of men and women with identities split between the cities in which they worked and the rural areas they called 'home'.

In the wake of increasingly militant and mass resistance against apartheid from the 1970s onwards, apartheid weakened and collapsed. In the aftermath, the country was enveloped in both great expectations and great violence. The new government's vision was to 'Improve the quality of life of all citizens and free the potential of each person' in a South Africa that 'belongs to all who live in it, united in our diversity' (Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996:2). But despite impressive improvements in access to housing, basic services and financial support since 1994, a majority of South Africans remain unemployed or poor.

During the early nineties, large scale reform saw the new government attempt to refashion the SAP into a 'service', replacing military ranks with civilian titles and reforming training and policy to embrace human rights and community policing. The South African Police Service (SAPS) assumed a key role in the country, both as the agency, which government presented as its most visible response to violent crime and, with almost 200 000 employees, one of the country's biggest employers. But in 2010, in the face of popular

discontent with crime, the SAPS and government abandoned the discourse of 'service' and returned to apartheid's language of 'force'. Civilian titles were replaced with the military ranks of old and political rhetoric on crime became increasingly militant. In August 2012 SAPS officers shot and killed 34 striking mine workers during industrial action in Marikana outside Johannesburg in the most extreme of many scenes eerily reminiscent of apartheid policing.

This brief overview sketches the context in which the men and women I shadowed live and work. It is this history and present which makes up Sphere 3 of the conceptual framework, bring context to the lives of the individual officers entangled in its throws.

Sphere 2 relates to the SAPS organisational culture, the other primary socialising force influencing officers' lives and sense of self. As police officers navigate the spaces between what society and their leaders expect of them, what the law allows and requires of them, and what they understand of their occupation (including its relationship to their understanding of themselves), particular ways of 'doing' police work manifest (Manning 1978, Newburn & Reiner, 2007). The traditional view contends that the socialising power of the police agency's organizational culture guides police practice (Manning, 1978), and that this culture must be considered if organisational reform is to be effective (Holdaway 1983, Crank 1998, Marks 2005). However, overt focus on organisational culture alone can prevent researchers from breaking new ground in police sociology and policy (Skolnick, 2007:41). This is where this thesis has sought to make a contribution, shifting the lens from a police organisation to the lives of its officers and the ways they are entangled in both organisational culture and broader contexts .

The popular archetype of police officers is of a crime-fighting hero, threatened but committed to the noble cause of keeping the vulnerable safe from crime (Manning,

1997:27). Yet little of what police officers do in the course of the average day involves crime. This is as true of American (Manning, 1997) and Canadian police (Brodeur, 2010) as it is of French (Fassin, 2013) and South African (Steinberg, 2008; Altbeker, 2006; Hornberger, 2011; Hornberger & Vigneswaran, 2010). In the absence of the popular police mythology materialising on the streets, police appeal to the occupational mythology to secure an occupational identity. They apply labels and tell stories, then give these life through ritualised performances that reinforce dominant themes that centre on a narrow vision of the police mandate.

But there is something far more obvious, mundane, but central, to being a police officer. It is a job. The twentieth century was a period in which employment became the locus for inclusion in global capitalism, and so central to identity and ontological security. This was as true in South Africa where work held particular importance for men, their aspirations, self-esteem and sense of self. It provided income and security, a means to survive and a title through which one might choose to be defined. But the notion that occupations should be identity-shaping vocations, that money is earned through activities which people voluntarily pursue, is a myth of capital and markets, and of the elites whose privilege allows them to describe their chosen activities as 'work'. The workplace and its activities, the income and opportunities it provides, certainly shape who people become, but this isn't because employees generally welcome it. Rather, work intrudes on their sense of self. Like Student Constable Carelse who disapproved of her Captain working all weekend, every weekend, individuals push back against the occupational forces that vie to mould them into that which they may never have imagined being.

Among the officers I shadowed, it was in the spaces in which they gathered before the work began and once it was over, that they seemed most at ease. There, it seemed,

they could shrug off the organisational forces that intruded upon their sense of self, and return to being the people they thought themselves to be.

The ‘accidental police officer’

Born and raised in the poverty-stained shadow of South Africa’s minority wealth, most of the officers I met found themselves in the SAPS after original aspirations had slipped out of reach. Some had actively disliked or been in conflict with the SAPS before signing up. And yet once inside, given a gun and uniform and asked to carry out the dirty work of the fragile democracy, they found themselves re-writing their self-narratives, reconsidering who they thought they were. They told themselves the SAPS was not ideal, but that it was not bad. It offered them a diversity of opportunity, job security and income which was impressive for people with only high school educations, so they re-authored their lives.

Most officers I met considered the rural Eastern Cape ‘home’. They remembered it as a place of authority and respect. Outside of affluent pockets, cities were viewed as places of danger and risk. In the urban township and rural town, officers sought to stop, search and label men – young, black and poor – whose lives were often too similar to their own for comfort, while in the affluent city they worked to protect its order and please its middle-class residents. City officers surveyed young men from the Cape Flats and reminded them that they were only temporarily welcome. At night city detectives invaded the Cape Flats to mete out a violence of fist and tongue that warned its young men to submit and conform.

In the rural town and village, officers selectively borrowed from a national discourse on urban crime, inserting it into the quiet countryside in ways that helped them make sense

of the crime that intruded upon its tranquillity, and to bring purpose to the days of boredom.

In the township, affluent city and rural town and villages, the violence officers believed poor, black, young men capable of, threatened their notion of success as police officers. It also threatened the vision of security they longed for in their communities, and the future they wished to provide for their children. As such, the '*skollie*' threatened officers' ontological security. Through their work, they sought to claim this back. They did this through actions that reinforced their sense of self and their right to project that sense of self into their vision of the future.

A job in the SAPS is primarily just that, a job. It is a means to strive and survive. The meaning and income it brings to officers lives is usually more important to them than the work they carry out. As a result, they seek first to please their institutional overseers, and so to ease the pressure of the work. This is achieved by enacting institutional performances that promote the myth that the SAPS is a rational, effective, evidence-based and rule-bound organisation made up of well trained officers performing common-sense crime prevention tasks, while hiding the grimy by-products of police work. Through official reports and statements, and carefully choreographed public performances, the SAPS and its officers present a strategically crafted façade behind which individual officers cocoon themselves and hone their sense of self.

Because officers are aware that the SAPS' front is part-fiction, and because of a general mistrust between South Africans, many officers seek to detach their sense of self from the organisation. Instead, they present themselves as what might be thought of as 'accidental police officers', people deserving far more respect and dignity, than the South African public gives them. But, with prospects of comparable financial remuneration and

stability outside of the SAPS unlikely for most, officers simultaneously and contradictorily invest in and protect the SAPS image. This is achieved through *public performance lies, data performance lies, internal and external lies*, which contribute to the *culture of suspicion*.

While officers aspired to live in nice houses and drive shiny cars, few had the money to do so. Instead they deferred their dreams to their children, investing in their education, while sharing what little remained with networks of precarious kin. Some officers invested in more than their immediate relatives. They volunteered their time and money to support youth who they believed to be at risk. Like the ‘*skollies*’ they hunted at work, the teens reminded officers of themselves. By investing in them outside of police work, officers hoped they could deflect them from the violence of the criminal justice system. In a sense they offered the teens carrots so that they might avoid becoming the objects of the violence through which some officers asserted their right to manhood and respect.

Like most South Africans, SAPS officers are accustomed to coercive governance, including assemblages of informal and non-state security and force provision. This familiarity, together with their intimate experiences of crime as private citizens and officers, justifies many officers’ belief that coercive policing of poor, young men is necessary. However, attitudes to coercion also inform their behaviour on and off duty. Where officers sense an absence of order or coercion, some revert to who they think they are – ‘free’ South Africans with ‘rights’ to do as they please, including breaking laws. In so doing they contradict the SAPS’s official front. Put another way, they feel entitled to leverage the freedoms of a fragile democracy in which they are intimately familiar with the state’s limitations in law enforcement. They reproduce both order and disorder where they find it. In so doing they shape, and are shaped by, South Africa in the early twenty-first century.

Who do SAPS officers think they are and how does it shape police practice? Like Warrant Officer Srikker and Constable Booï, they are men and women born and raised on the periphery, chasing a vision of a more prosperous future. At times proud, at times shamed by the work they do, they are nourished by the knowledge that while they may not be able to make South Africa safe, they can provide themselves and those they care for with a better life than the one they were born into. In the meantime, they do what they must do to get through the day, hold fast to the story they tell themselves about themselves, and with it secured, strive to colonise the future with a vision that is golden.

Summary of ranks, subject names and demographics

Below I list the SAPS rank structure, followed, on the next page, by a list of names and basic demographic information relating to officers mentioned in this thesis. ‘Race’ and gender are indicated using language employed by the SAPS. Names are listed alphabetically.

SAPS rank structure

Student Constable
Constable
Sergeant
Warrant Officer
Lieutenant
Captain
Lieutenant-Colonel
Colonel
Brigadier
Major-General
Lieutenant-General
National Commissioner (General)

Subject summary

Pseudonym	Basic information	Station
Jacobs (Captain)	Coloured, male, mid-40s	Mthonjeni
Paul (Warrant Officer)	Coloured, male, mid-40s	Mthonjeni
Hendricks (Constable)	Coloured, male, late-20s	Yorkton
November (Constable)	Coloured, male, late-20s	Mthonjeni
Kani (Constable)	African, male, early-30s	Gompo
Yoyo (Constable)	African, female, late-20s	Mthonjeni
Magona (Constable)	African, male, mid-30s	Gompo
Apolles (Warrant Officers)	Coloured, male, mid-40s	Mthonjeni
Diedericks (Lieutenant-Colonel)	Coloured, male, early-50s	Mthonjeni
Bungu (Constable)	African, female, early-30s	Gompo
Moshoeshoe (Constable)	African, male, mid-30s	Yorkton
Louw (Sergeant)	White, male, mid-40s	Yorkton
Dlamini (Captain)	African, male, mid-40s	Gompo
Bhele (Constable)	African, male, late-30s	Yorkton
Januarie (Captain)	Coloured, male, mid-40s	Yorkton
Jali (Constable)	African, male, mid-30s	Yorkton
Ndungwane (Constable)	African, male, early-30s	Mthonjeni
Carelse (Student Constable)	Coloured, female, mid-20s	Yorkton
Nxuba (Constable)	African, male, early-30s	Gompo
Nkomo (Lieutenant)	African, male, mid-40s	Gompo
Thangana (Captain)	African, male, mid-40s	Mthonjeni
Mda (Constable)	African, male, late-20s	Mthonjeni
Jiyana (Warrant Officers)	African, male, late-30s	Mthonjeni
Mxenge (Constable)	African, male, mid-30s	Mthonjeni
Deyi (Constable)	African, male, early-30s	Mthonjeni
Mashile	African, male, mid-30s	Gompo
Nzo (Constable)	African, male, late-20s	Mthonjeni
Mmaya (Student Constable)	African, male, early-30s	Gompo
Debeza (Constable)	African, female, early-30s	Mthonjeni
Cethe (Student Constable)	African, male, mid-20s	Gompo
Cruz (Colonel)	White, male, mid-40s	Yorkton
Noble (Constable)	White, female, early-30s	Yorkton
Skrikker (Warrant Officers)	Coloured, male, late-40s	Mthonjeni
Khumalo (Captain)	African, male, mid-40s	Yorkton
Davids (Constable)	Coloured, male, early-30s	Yorkton
Qoboza (Constable)	African, male, late-30s	Mthonjeni
Kriel (Warrant Officers)	White, male, late-40s	Yorkton
Mbelani (Constable)	African, male, late-20s	Gompo
<u>Qoboza</u> (Constable)	African, female, late-20s	Yorkton
Jonker (Sergeant)	Coloured, male, early-30s	Yorkton
<u>Mghayi</u> (Constable)	African, male, late-20s	Mthonjeni

Glossary of terms

Amapolisa: ‘Police’ in isiXhosa

ANC (African National Congress): the ruling party of South Africa since 1994. Founded in 1923, it was a primary domestic force opposing apartheid.

AVL (Automatic Vehicle Location system): Vehicle tracking technology used in SAPS cars

Bakkie: pickup truck

Bantustan: a territory within the borders of apartheid South Africa designated for occupation by Africans, also ‘reserve’ or ‘homeland’.

Bishops Court: one of the most expensive suburbs in Cape Town

Braai: barbecue

Cape Borner: an expression regularly used by Mthonjeni officers to describe adolescent boys whom they believed were born in Cape Town. The term inferred a lack of respect and ‘rural values’.

Cape Flats: a flat, sandy expanse of land south-east of Cape Town’s city centre. It was the area to which the apartheid state moved non-white citizens as part of its project to separate population groups. It remains poorer and more crime-ridden than the older and more affluent parts of the city.

Cape Town Metropolitan Police Department (CTMPD): The city’s metro police, managed and funded independently of the national SAPS, but significantly smaller.

Car guard: usually self-employed, often unofficial guard who ‘watches cars’ parked in public in return for an expected tip.

CID (city improvement district): an area in a South African in which property owners agree to pay a levy for supplementary and complimentary services intended to enhance the physical and social environment of the area; a form of private governance.

Cluster: a unit of administration in the SAPS. Each station belongs to a ‘cluster’ of stations, usually around five. One of the five is designated the ‘cluster station’, the accounting station for the group.

Cockroache(s): A colloquial term for township taxis.

Community Service Centre (CSC): The walk-in service area of police stations.

CPUT (Cape Peninsula University of Technology): a university in Cape Town

Crime Office: Some stations have “Crime Offices” staffed by detectives working twelve-hour rotations. These detectives are tasked with helping both the public and patrol officials with urgent requests relating to investigations, or with processing arrestees for uniformed officials.

Crime Prevention Unit (CPU). These are usually made up of two alternating groups of officials working disparate blocks of eight, ten or twelve hour shifts beginning and ending at times that correspond with patterns of crime. These units generally only patrol and respond to urgent calls for assistance, though in rural areas they sometimes duplicate the work of regular patrol officials.

Cubbyhole: glove box

East London: the second biggest city in the Eastern Cape province

FCS: Family, Child and Sexual Offences Unit

FET (further education and Training College): a provider of post-school diploma courses

Garage: petrol/gas station

Gatvol: Afrikaans, fed up

Hokkie: a small, wooden shack-like structure.

Hoot: to press on a car hooter or horn

ICD (Independent Complaints Directorate): government body investigating complaints against police, 1996-2012

IPID (Independent Police Investigative Directorate): government body investigating complaints against police, 2012 - present

Jolling: Afrikaans - partying, sleeping around

Klap: Afrikaans - hit, slap, punch

Knobkierie: A short club, a stick with a ball of wood at one end, a traditional weapon

Labola: Zulu, Swazi, Xhosa and northern and southern Ndebele – money paid by a man to the family of a bride to be.

Lang-arm: Afrikaans, a form of dancing, a bit like waltzing

Makwere: Short for 'Makwere-kwere', a derogatory term for non-South African Africans

Matric: the final year of high school.

Member: defined in the police act, 'officer' substitute

Moer: to beat or hit

Muti: Traditional medicine or enchantment

Okapi knife: a small, folding pocket knife

One up: Meaning a firearm is cocked, a bullet is 'up' in the chamber

Ontological Security: a state that manifests when an individual possesses the answers to ‘fundamental existential questions’ about the self and world (Giddens, 1991:47), sustained through the formation of a protective cocoon forged through routine (1991:167-69).

Panga: machete

Precarity: existence without predictability or security

Road block: a check-point on a road where police stop and search passing cars

Rondavel: Afrikaans – a round hut of the sort traditionally found in rural southern Africa but now built with concrete and brick.

Sangoma:

Serious and Violent Crime (SVC): a group of detectives assigned to investigate priority violent crimes in a cluster.

Shebeen: an illegal tavern

Skollie: Afrikaans – a gangster, criminal, naughty person

South African Police force (SAP): the apartheid police force

Spaza shop: Tuck shop

Spaza shop: tuck-shop

Standard (One...Nine): School years.

Tactical Response Team (TRT):

Taxi Rank: taxi terminus

Tik: Crystal Methamphetamine

Tracing: follow up on the last known location of a wanted suspect in order to bring them before the court

United Democratic Front (UDF): A non-racial coalition of civic, religious and workers’ organisations formed in the 1980s to oppose apartheid.

University of South Africa (UNISA) or the Tshwane University of Technology (TUT).

Vehicle Check Point (VCP): a relatively informal road block, usually lasting an hour or less and staffed by two to four officers.

Vetkoek: Afrikaans - fat cake, fried dough

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