

South African CRIME QUARTERLY

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- > Recent writings by and on the police in South Africa
- > Perceptions and motivations of police reservists in Johannesburg
- > Policing taverns and shebeens
- > SAPS crime statistics, Victims of Crime Surveys and the media
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Cover

Eastern Cape police commissioner Lieutenant General Celiwe Binta warned police officers to stay vigilant and be professional when doing their work but to also know their lives would most probably be threatened at some stage. Binta was talking at a police passing out parade for 826 constables held in Bhisho. Police constables from the Eastern Cape and Free State graduated. © MARK ANDREWS/Daily Dispatch

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EDITORIAL

When, early in 2013, we began planning this edition of *SACQ* to focus on policing, we expected that by the time of publication the Farlam Commission investigating the Marikana massacre would have concluded. We also expected that the commission of inquiry established by the Western Cape provincial government to look into policing problems in Khayelitsha (the O'Regan Commission) would be close to concluding its work. The findings and recommendations of these commissions, we hoped, would offer important insights into what is troubling policing in South Africa, and what needs to change. This was unfortunately not to be. Both commissions have been fraught with legal challenges that have delayed their progress, and neither is likely to conclude until some way into 2014. Despite this, we have retained policing as a focus for this edition.

One inevitable effect of the many delays and protracted hearings of the Farlam Commission is that it has fallen from the public gaze, making news only when something sensational occurs. In his article, Bill Dixon returns to examine the reporting about the Commission during its earlier days. He considers the contention made by both social commentators and lawyers for the families of miners that the massacre at Marikana resulted from a 'toxic collusion' between the police and the political and the economic elite; and by extension that the police were an instrument in the hands of those holding political and economic power. While evidence is emerging of close communication between the police and mine managers in the lead-up to the massacre at Marikana, Dixon argues that it would be a mistake to draw simplistic conclusions about the extent of the reach of these relations. He draws on the work of Steinberg and Hornberger to show that policing in South Africa is a far messier affair, and that relationships of power manifest in a multiplicity of ways.

In a response to Herrick and Charman's article about the policing of liquor in the Western Cape (*SACQ* 45), Andrew Faull delves deeply into this messy business of daily policing. While Charman and Herrick offered the perspective of shebeeners being policed, Faull reflects on the daily experiences of police who enforce liquor laws. His article shows the complexities and contradictions inherent in policing private spaces, and forces us to look beyond policing for solutions to alcohol-related harms.

There is very little research or literature about police reservists in South Africa. Claudia Forster-Towne contributes an article to this edition of *SACQ* in which she considers how reservists view their work and their motivation for joining the reserve. Her article reflects on the way in which race and gender influence reservists' motivations and aspirations. The article reminds us, painfully, that the spectre of apartheid manifests itself in how many people continue to make sense of the world through assumptions about race.

We depart from usual practice for this edition of *SACQ* by offering a special on-line feature that is not included in the hard copy edition of the journal. We are grateful to Juan-Paul Banchani, Elrena van der Spuy and the Centre for Criminology at the University of Cape Town for the comprehensive bibliography of South African policing literature. While the bibliography is only available in electronic format (see www.issafrica.org/sacq), Van der Spuy's article, which considers the contribution of ethnographers and autobiographies to our understanding of policing in South Africa, is available both in the hard copy edition and on-line.

Megan Govender's article is not about policing, but rather about the way in which crime statistics and the National Victims of Crime Surveys are presented and used to support opposing views of public perception about the levels of crime.

We conclude this edition of the journal with a discussion between two policing researchers, Oliver Owen, whose ethnographic research has been undertaken in Nigeria, and Andrew Faull, whose research has been done in South Africa. They discuss the differences in how police performance is managed and measured in the two countries.

The Academy of Science of South Africa recently undertook a review of SACQ and recommended that the journal retain its accreditation status with the Department of Higher Education. If you are a regular reader of SACQ you will have noticed changes to the journal over the course of this year, and will see even more changes in the coming year, all of which are aimed at improving the quality of SACQ and are in-line with recommendations made by the Academy of Science.

Over the past year the editorial board of SACQ has played a significant role in informing practice and developing the policy of the journal. The board plays an active role in determining how we present ourselves, which issues to focus on and how we can improve the quality of the journal for our readers. SACQ is unlike other peer-reviewed journals, which have academics as their primary audience. SACQ aims to reach an audience of policy makers, practitioners (in the criminal justice system and civil society) and researchers (in the academy and in non-governmental organisations). The journal strives for a balance between academic rigour and accessibility. This means that while all articles are subject to double-blind peer review and must be of high quality, they should also be written in an easy-to-read manner and address issues that are relevant to policy makers and practitioners.

During 2013 the editorial board faced the difficult task of deciding whether to enter into an agreement with an established academic publisher or remain independent. An agreement with a publisher would have offered a range of benefits, including increased international reach and additional editorial support. However, it would have resulted in a significant reduction in the number of articles that would be accessible free of charge. After many months of deliberations and negotiations with the publisher, we decided to retain our open access status and remain independent. It is critically important to us that the journal remains accessible to readers who work in the criminal justice system and in non-governmental organisations, and we will continue to work in the coming years to ensure that this remains the case.

I would like to thank the members of the editorial board for their hard work and support of SACQ during 2014. I would also like to thank the sub-editors for their tremendous assistance. We are also deeply grateful to our funders, the Hanns Seidel Foundation and the Ford Foundation, as without their support it would not have been possible to retain the open-access status of the journal.

Chandré Gould (Editor)

Editorial policy

South African Crime Quarterly is an inter-disciplinary peer-reviewed journal that promotes professional discourse and the publication of research on the subjects of crime, criminal justice, crime prevention, and related matters, including state and non-state responses to crime and violence. South Africa is the primary focus for the journal but articles on the above-mentioned subjects that reflect research and analysis from other African countries are considered for publication, if they are of relevance to South Africa.

SACQ is an applied policy journal. Its audience includes policy makers, criminal justice practitioners and civil society researchers and analysts, including the academy. The purpose of the journal is to inform and influence policy making on violence prevention, crime reduction and criminal justice. All articles submitted to SACQ are double-blind peer-reviewed before publication.

WAITING FOR FARLAM

Marikana, social inequality and the relative autonomy of the police

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Although the Farlam Commission of Inquiry is yet to report, it has been widely assumed in the blogosphere, across large sections of the traditional media, and in some preliminary academic analyses too, that the shootings at Marikana on 16 August 2012 are symptomatic of a police force in thrall to a political elite intimately connected to international capital and increasingly corporatised and unrepresentative trade unions.

Against this background, this article looks to the notion of 'relative autonomy', considered in a classic discussion of 'the concept of policing in critical theories of criminal justice' by Otwin Marenin, to suggest that critics of the SAPS should not be surprised if, in moments of crisis, the police act as the agents of 'specific domination' rather than as guarantors of a 'general order'. It will go on to argue that, even if their worst fears are confirmed by Farlam, their conclusion about the nature of the relationship between the SAPS and a political elite may be too sweeping. Using insights from recent studies of everyday policing, it will suggest that the way in which the police respond to strikes, service delivery protests and other politically charged incidents may tell us surprisingly little about what officers actually do, and why they do it, in the course of their everyday interactions with individual citizens and interest groups less politically well-connected than the main protagonists at Marikana. In conclusion it is argued that, in the absence of significant social change to remedy the structural inequalities bequeathed by apartheid, the SAPS has not been able to transcend its colonial inheritance, leaving the business of police reform begun over 20 years ago unfinished.

WAITING FOR FARLAM

For many observers the events at Marikana in August 2012, when 44 people died – 34 of them at the hands of the South African Police Service (SAPS) in a single day – represent a turning point in South African policing. For the more implacable critics of the African National Congress (ANC) and its allies in government, the events of 16 August were the result of what Dali

Mpofu SC, counsel for the injured and arrested miners and their families, has described as the 'toxic collusion' between the police, the state and capital in the shape of the Marikana mine's owners, Lonmin.¹

Appointed by President Jacob Zuma on 23 August 2012 with Ian Farlam, a retired judge of the Supreme Court of Appeal, as its chairperson, the Commission of Inquiry into the events at Marikana was due to complete its work by the end of October 2013. At the time of writing in early August 2013, with issues surrounding the funding of the legal team representing the injured and arrested miners unresolved, it seems increasingly

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unlikely that this deadline will be met. Inevitably perhaps, commentators in the media (new and old) have been disinclined to wait for Farlam's official account of what happened on 16 August and in the days leading up to it. On the contrary, they have picked over the evidence presented to the Commission at more than a hundred days of public hearings like hungry vultures gorging themselves on a particularly tasty carcass, the rhetorical flourishes of Mpofu and his fellow advocates reproduced in countless headlines, news reports and commentaries.

'TOXIC COLLUSION'?

It is impossible to give more than a flavour of the narrative evident in the media coverage and the blogosphere here. Suffice to say that the search for smoking guns in the hands of senior politicians, union leaders, international capital and its domestic allies began within days of the shooting and has scarcely abated since. Writing in *Business Day* five days after 34 striking miners lost their lives, under a headline putting 'Ramaphosa in the Marikana crossfire', Sam Mkokeli noted that the businessman and ANC stalwart's Shanduka Group was an 'empowerment partner' of Lonmin.² 'Considered one of SA's most respected leaders', Mkokeli went on, 'Mr Ramaphosa has now been lumped with union bosses and owners criticised for their poor response to the labour unrest at the platinum mine that turned deadly.' But perhaps the unkindest cut of all came later in the article in a quotation from Julius Malema, the former leader of the ANC Youth League: 'Lonmin had a high political connection. That is why our people were killed. They were killed to protect the shares of Cyril Ramaphosa.'

Some five months later, following Ramaphosa's election as deputy president of the ANC and the revelation that he had been in touch by email with government ministers and senior executives in Lonmin in the days preceding 16 August, David Bruce was more measured in his criticism.³ As an authority on policing, Bruce was anxious to set Ramaphosa's intervention in the context of a policy of 'maximum force' first adopted by Minister of Safety and Security Nathi Mthethwa a year earlier

at a summit on police killings held on 8 July 2011. According to Bruce, Ramaphosa's characterisation of the miners' action as 'plainly dastardly criminal', and his call – in an email to a senior Lonmin executive – for 'concomitant action', may have had a more dramatic impact than he intended when, as seems to have been the case, he made similar comments about the strikers' criminality to Mthethwa.

[T]hough Ramaphosa's intervention might have been in some respects critical to what happened, it does not mean that he should be held responsible for the massacre. In the absence of Mthethwa's unlawful doctrine [on the need to use maximum force against criminals] Ramaphosa's emphasis on the miners' alleged criminality would not have had the same devastating implications. Far more than Ramaphosa, it is therefore Mthethwa who urgently needs to account for the role he played in relation to the massacre.

Sipho Hlongwane, writing for the *Daily Maverick*, cast his net even wider, asking 'how much, and when, did Zuma know'? After quoting Dali Mpofu's striking phrase about 'toxic collusion', Hlongwane takes Bruce's argument a stage further, implicating not just the Minister of Safety and Security in the Marikana killings, but the President himself:

The chain of command from the police officers on the ground in Marikana, right up to the president of the country, will be of great interest to the Commission, as it will establish who knew what and most importantly, who decided to carry out the operation in [the] deadly manner that it was.⁴

Commentators in the traditional and online media have not been alone in following the trail laid by Mpofu and others at the Commission's hearings. In his conclusion to the most substantial piece of academic research published on events at Marikana to date, Peter Alexander has this to say about the network of relationships between the police, Lonmin, the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM), and the government:

There is what one might call a *triangle of torment* linking Lonmin, the police and NUM. This extends beyond Marikana to include the government/ANC, big business (especially mining capital) and [the trade union federation] COSATU.⁵

Like many other commentators he too sees Ramaphosa, a senior figure in the ANC and the owner of a 9,1% stake in Lonmin, as the personification of these links.⁶

What then to make of all this controversy in the absence of Farlam's report? My intention in the rest of this article is to provide some context to a debate that is unlikely to end when the Commission's report is eventually published. I start with Otwin Marenin's classic analysis of the relationship between dominant groups and the police, memorably titled, 'Parking tickets and class repression: the concept of policing in critical theories of criminal justice.'⁷ I then move on to place the shootings, and what they may or may not reveal about the connections between the police, the state and dominant social groups, in the context of the history of state policing in South Africa and the everyday practice of the SAPS today in less highly charged circumstances than those prevailing at Marikana in August 2012. My contention is that, armed with Marenin's conception of the police as relatively autonomous, we should not be too surprised if, in the light of South Africa's history, leading politicians and their friends in business did indeed play a significant role in events at Marikana. But nor should we assume that it follows from this that the SAPS is a mere puppet in the hands of the state and a political-industrial elite. What Marikana shows, I will argue, is that, insofar as the deeply entrenched social inequalities evident at the end of the apartheid era have persisted into the second decade of the twenty-first century, they have undermined the basis for police reform, much as John Brewer warned as he reflected on the prospects for democratic policing back in 1994.⁸

RELATIVE AUTONOMY

Marenin's article is based on a reconceptualisation of the state as something rather more and rather

less than (in Marx's formulation) the executive committee of the ruling class.⁹ Drawing on developments in critical theorising about the state, its policies and the agencies through which they are put into effect, he suggests that the state should be seen as relatively autonomous, no longer simply an instrument of class rule but a 'powerful and independent actor in the political economy of social formations.'¹⁰ Having established this, he extends the analysis to the police as the principal bearers of the state's monopoly on the use of coercive force,¹¹ and one of the agencies whose feet are used when the state steps in to the lives of its citizens.¹² To see the police as relatively autonomous implies that, even in former colonies like South Africa, where police forces were established to pacify the population and maintain colonial rule, they are not simply the obedient servants of an oppressive state but also act as defenders of a wider range of social interests, including, crucially, their own:

It is clear ... that the police developed for numerous reasons and served numerous interests and that the police themselves are capable of shaping both the development of police work and their relations to the social formation in which they are anchored.¹³

Empirical and comparative studies of policing reveal wide variations in patterns of policing and forms of police organisation. Taken together, Marenin argues, they demonstrate that the police are able and willing to resist external control, including by the state, and exercise wide discretionary powers in ways that are informed by personal as well as organisational factors.¹⁴ As a result of the relative autonomy of the state from dominant groups, and of the police in relation both to those groups and to the state, the police act to protect not just the specific order that reflects the interests of the socially dominant, but also to maintain a general order that serves the interests of all citizens – the ruled as well as the rulers – in peace, regularity and public safety.¹⁵ It is particularly important to bear this final point in mind before we assume, based on the evidence of events at Marikana, that ordinary members of the SAPS are in thrall to a political elite intimately

connected to international capital and increasingly corporatised and unrepresentative trade unions. But before I return to how this general order is maintained in the second decade of the twenty-first century, a brief reflection on the colonial origins of policing in South Africa and the legacy of apartheid is called for.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

The South African Police (SAP) came into existence just over 100 years ago, on 1 April 1913. As John Brewer records, it was only a matter of months later that the new force was called into action to deal with a wave of strikes among 19 000 white miners on the Rand.¹⁶ In the course of two days of unrest, seven members of the SAP were hospitalised. But, out of a total of 161 people injured, over half (88) suffered gunshot wounds as a result of police fire, and no fewer than 22 strikers were killed. From the moment of its foundation then, there could be no doubting that the SAP would defend the interests of the mine owners, capital and the colonial state – and resort to lethal violence in doing so. The colonial style of policing persisted into the second half of the twentieth century when the pattern of discriminatory and oppressive activity hardened still further under apartheid. Throughout the late colonial and apartheid eras the primary task of the SAP was ‘to contain and control black South Africans by keeping them in their political, economic, social and moral place as a subject population.’¹⁷ As Mike Brogden and Clifford Shearing observed in the early 1990s:

[W]hat the SAP shares with state police elsewhere in the world is its access to, and use of, coercion. What sets it apart is the systematic use of extreme and bizarre forms of terror-invoking violence to promote compliance through intimidation with an extraordinarily oppressive order.¹⁸

But this is only part of the story, for, notwithstanding its abiding commitment to maintaining the specific order demanded by the colonial and apartheid regimes, the SAP also preserved at least the semblance of a general order.

It did so mainly by responding to ordinary crime in the white suburbs in the manner of a regular civil police force. But it also maintained a vestigial presence in the townships, where much of the responsibility for managing behaviour that did not threaten either the security of the state or the safety of whites was sub-contracted to a range of paid and unpaid, official and unofficial proxies.

The relative autonomy of the old SAP, and the ability of its members to follow their own political instincts, was very clearly evident in the large number of officers who refused to fight on the side of Britain and her allies in the Second World War. As Brewer indicates, many preferred instead to join the Afrikaner cultural organisation, the *Ossewabrandwag* (OB), and serving SAP officers were implicated in protests against the pro-war government of the day, involving the armed wing of the OB, the *stormjaers* (or storm troops).¹⁹ Half a century later similar signs of disloyalty emerged in response to then-President FW de Klerk’s reforms in the early 1990s. Once again, the sympathies of many members of the SAP led them to side with conservative opponents of the National Party and turn a blind eye, if not lend active support, to the activities of the *Afrikaner Weerstandsbeweging* (AWB) and other far-right organisations in the violent run-up to the 1994 elections.²⁰

Looking forward to ‘policing the new South Africa,’ Brewer was worried that the relative autonomy of the police would delay, if not derail, the changes to its ‘role, style, organization, and structure.’²¹ To prevent this from happening he believed that the state would have to ‘assert complete control over the police, at least in the short term.’²² He was also concerned with the broader context of police reform. Unless deep-rooted political and economic problems were addressed, the police would be left to deal with the consequences of structural inequality.²³ Under these conditions, even the most thorough programme of reforms would do little to improve relations between police and policed.

CONTEMPORARY POLICING

An equally complex picture emerges if we take a more rounded view of contemporary policing than

is summoned by Mpofu's allegations of 'toxic collusion' between the SAPS, the state and local and international capital. Hard though it is to put them to one side, the shootings at Marikana, the SAPS's response to protests by farm workers in the Western Cape, and its reaction to the slow-burn crisis of service delivery protests, are not typical of day-to-day police activity. In fact, if recent ethnographic research is to be believed, one of the most remarkable features of police work in the townships of Gauteng and inner-city Johannesburg is how, in the normal course of members' interactions with the public, the relationship between the SAPS and the state recedes into the background, almost to the point of vanishing.²⁴

In a series of publications over the last decade, Jonny Steinberg has documented how members of the SAPS interact with the public under conditions in which popular consent to policing is at best conditional, at worst entirely absent.²⁵ This is in part a consequence of the breakdown in relations between the police and black South Africans under apartheid and in part a result of the unattainable middle class aspirations of a new generation of officers raised in the townships but eager to leave them for the suburbs. In Toekomsrus, a coloured township outside Randfontein, he found that the introduction of a new style of sector policing had encouraged local residents to use the police, not as their first port of call when, in Egon Bittner's words, 'something-that-ought-not-to-be-happening-about-which-someone-had-better-do-something-about-now' occurred, but as 'a kind of surety, an underwriting of the private and informal justice process.'²⁶ In places like Toekomsrus, where the old SAP had been seen not as a guarantor of residents' safety but a major source of insecurity, and where protection had long been 'bought, sold and bartered' in a multiplicity of transactions between individuals and groups in civil society, free of state intervention, Steinberg argues that the new SAPS has failed to find the 'moral authority to rise above the logic of this terrain', leaving its members to 'negotiate their way into it and join its other players' by acting as enforcers of last resort in a system of 'informal delict'.²⁷

For Steinberg, the reduction of the SAPS to the role (sometimes literally) of hired guns to be deployed at the whim of citizens seeking to settle disputes they have been unable to resolve by other means, and the ability of individual police officers to oblige them by bringing the authority of the state to bear on private problems, underlines how blurred the lines between the state police and private enforcers have become.²⁸ This privatisation of state policing, and the degree of autonomy that state officials are able to exercise as a result of it, are graphically illustrated by a case discussed at length by Julia Hornberger in her study of policing in inner-city Johannesburg.²⁹ A woman she calls Peggy makes the first move in a protracted tale by opening a case against a man identified as Sam, to whom she had sub-let her space in a cramped two-bed apartment. When a white detective, Sergeant Klopper, and a colleague arrive at the apartment to arrest Sam (ostensibly for intimidation), Peggy is roundly abused by Sam's girlfriend:

So, you damn bitch, you called *your* police to throw us out of this house! But this is our place and you will regret this, because I will now call *my* police! You will see what comes from this ... don't you think that we don't have our own police?³⁰

Sometime later she carries out her threat by opening her own case against Peggy with different officers based at the same police station as the detectives who had arrested her boyfriend.

Hornberger calls this notion, captured in the words of Sam's angry girlfriend, the 'your police – my police imaginary'.³¹ In the case discussed by Hornberger, its origins lie in Peggy's concern to reclaim her space in the apartment from Sam – something she was unable to do using the civil law. The criminal process is initiated 'to mobilise the police to intervene in a case in which they would otherwise refuse to do so'.³² For those living on the margins in a world where rules are 'flexible, imprecise and contested', and where 'the formal dichotomies of criminal and lawful, private and public are blurred and no longer hold', calling the police is one way of advancing individual claims to space or property.³³ Thus, Hornberger suggests, the

coercive power of the state vested in the hands of its police becomes a resource of private power to be deployed by the multiply disadvantaged in circumstances where the state has failed to provide alternative means by which they can resolve disputes and meet their basic needs for shelter and security.

Hornberger also shows how poor people like Peggy and Sam's girlfriend are able to take advantage of fractures within the police along 'racial fault lines' and exploit 'differences in interests, loyalties and organisational and individual rationales'.³⁴ Sam's girlfriend's contacts are black, while Peggy's police are white. Peggy's police are also led by a detective who is affronted by Sam's lack of respect for her and keen to gain the kudos to be had from finding an illegal weapon after recently transferring from a unit dealing with more serious crime.

What the contemporary ethnographies of policing produced by Steinberg and Hornberger suggest is that, far from acting as the praetorian guards of a proto-authoritarian political-industrial elite, police officers in Toekomsrus and inner-city Johannesburg have taken a central tenet of democratic policing – that priority be given to servicing the needs not of government but of individual citizens and private groups – some way beyond its ideal conclusion by exploiting their relative autonomy to compete alongside other enforcers in a ruthlessly competitive market for security.³⁵

CONCLUSION

The main argument presented here is that, as we pore over the evidence being presented to Farlam, we need to keep in mind the historical and contemporary context of policing. The Commission may well find evidence of the 'toxic collusion' alleged by Mpofu, but the history of South African policing should make such a discovery rather less than surprising. Instead of wondering how things can have come to such a pretty pass less than 20 years into South Africa's new democracy, we should perhaps be wondering whether the old connections between the police,

the state and a ruling elite were ever broken, even as that elite metamorphosed to accommodate the likes of Ramaphosa and the government ministers who may (or may not) have had a hand in directing the brutal suppression of the Marikana protests. If such a finding is made, we also need to recognise that strikes and service delivery protests, though commonplace in some respects, are exceptional in others. If the evidence collected by Steinberg and Hornberger is anything to go by, the state's writ does not run far when it comes to everyday policing across large swathes of urban South Africa. The relative autonomy enjoyed by SAPS members, together with an underlying lack of consent to state policing inherited from the dismal days of apartheid, make it relatively easy for those at the opposite end of the social scale to Ramaphosa to manipulate officers into supporting their efforts to resolve disputes when informal means have failed, and formal mechanisms of civil process remain both unintelligible and unaffordable. In the end, the tragic events of 16 August 2012, and the yawning gap between a share-owning elite and the striking miners, and between the police and the policed, as exposed by events at Marikana, may best serve to confirm the truth of Brewer's observation that the legacy of colonial policing cannot be overcome in the absence of a wider process of social change, and no amount of police reform will succeed in reconfiguring police-public relations if the structural inequalities of a society remain unaddressed.³⁷



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NOTES

1. Politicsweb, Toxic collusion between state and capital caused massacre – Dali Mpofu: points to be made in the opening address on behalf of the injured and arrested protestors, 24 October 2012, <http://www.politicsweb.co.za/politicsweb/view/politicsweb/en/page71619?oid=335155&sn=Detail&pid=71619> (accessed 9 September 2013). For a flavour of the arguments presented to the Inquiry by Mpofu see the notably testy exchanges between him, counsel for Lonmin, Schalk Burger SC, and the Chairperson at the public hearing held on 4th June (Transcript, Day 101, pp. 10828-10849, <http://www.marikanacomm.org.za/transcripts.html>, accessed 9 September 2013).

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AUTOBIOGRAPHIES OF A SPECIAL KIND

Recent writings by and on the police in South Africa¹

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The occupational culture of police organisations has long fascinated policing scholars. In the Anglo-American world ethnographic enquiries have contributed much to our understanding of police perceptions, beliefs and actions. This article takes a closer look at efforts to describe and analyse police culture in South Africa. Three genres of writings are considered. Structural accounts of police culture and ethnographic accounts of the police are briefly discussed before turning to a more detailed consideration of a third and emerging genre: police autobiographies. Two recent autobiographies written by former policemen are explored in some detail with the view to considering the contribution of the autobiography to our understanding of the complex occupational dynamics of police and policing in South Africa.

POLICE CULTURE AND ETHNOGRAPHIC ENQUIRIES

The quest for understanding the occupational culture of police organisations has been one of the defining features of the field of police studies. Here the tradition of ethnographic research has been particularly important. In fact, it is difficult to imagine policing studies without a body of ethnographic work. In a recent comprehensive overview of the ethnographic tradition of the police as occupation and organisation, Peter Manning takes the reader through 60 years of ethnographic research.² He demonstrates how critical it has been for our understanding of how police organisations function and how the occupation of policing takes shape through a complex interaction between perceptions, beliefs and actions. Police organisations are complex and the social constructions of that world vary among

those situated at different points. Organisational specialisation means that functionaries attached to different divisions such as the uniform, detective or intelligence branches, for example, may engender distinct sub-cultural characteristics. Given this diversity, Manning suggests that it is best to think of the organisation 'as peopled by segments' each confronting its own set of 'contingencies'.³ Police culture, it turns out, is best conceptualised in plural terms.

Well established in Anglo-American research circles, the ethnographic tradition has a limited presence in the developing world. Take the case of African police. There is almost no body (except in the case of South Africa) of ethnographic enquiries into the organisational dynamics and subcultural tendencies of police in Africa. One recent exception is the work of Bruce Baker.⁴ His ethnographic explorations of policing in Uganda, Rwanda and Sierra Leone bring home, if not in great depth, the impact of civil strife on police culture and how it ends up shaping post-conflict reconstruction of the organisation.

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EXPLORATIONS OF POLICE CULTURE IN SOUTH AFRICA

Explorations of the occupational dynamics of the police in South Africa have evolved in response to new opportunities for research. Prior to the 1990s, given the restrictions on research into the police (as with regard to prison conditions), those interested in police culture relied on structural analyses of the wider political imperatives that shaped police actions on the ground. Only after 1994 did the space for ethnographic enquiries really open up. In the section below we briefly take stock of structural and ethnographic accounts before focusing on the genre of police autobiography in more detail.

Genre 1: Structural accounts in police historiographies

Structural analyses of the police contributed much to our understanding of the context (socio-historically, as well as organisationally) within which the police operated. Three such accounts appeared in quick succession just as monumental political changes got underway in the early 1990s. Each in turn emphasised the occupational dynamics associated with the policing of the colony, the policing of the racial state and the policing of counter-insurgency.

In *Black and Blue* John Brewer⁵ provided a detailed account of the origins and development of the state police in modern, twentieth century South Africa. Here the emphasis is on the *colonial* origins of the police, designed as a political tool to defend the regime's interests and to control resistance among the subjugated population. Brewer's generic depiction of colonial police is one where the police institution is centralised in structure and paramilitary in orientation. Police-community relations are at heart hostile. In the context of public order policing the police rely on coercive tactics to control 'unruly mobs'. Such structural features (centralisation, paramilitarism, partisanship, the routinisation of coercion) shaped police habits of mind.

In *Policing for a New South Africa* Brogden and Shearing⁶ explored more closely the cultural aspects of police and policing the racial state. In their analysis an intimate link is drawn between the Afrikaner Nationalist state and the cultural values, habits and practices of the police. Religious doctrine guided the police as they battled the forces of 'communism' in the defence of white Christian civilisation. From such analysis the police rank and file emerges as an integral part of the solidarity project of the racial state. In their ways of thinking and doing, the police embraced a deeply sectarian project defined by the nationalist ideology of their ethnic leaders.

In *Policing South Africa* Gavin Cawthra⁷ focused on post-1976 developments in South African politics and their impact on policing strategies. The securitisation of the state further fed the engine of militarism in police thinking and tactics. Covert and auxiliary units – bound by a cult of secrecy – proliferated. The ideological justification of fighting a 'just war' served as a powerful legitimating device for street level operatives to resort to dirty tactics in their quest to contain and silence political opposition. In this context police abuse of power, including torture, became routine.

Structural accounts of the colonial character of policing, the impact of racial politics on the organisation after 1948, and imperatives associated with counter-insurgency go some way to demarcating broad features of the occupational culture of the South African police. However, for those interested in the specifics of the occupational culture – its micro dynamics, if you wish – ethnographic-type explorations reveal, at times, surprising counter-narratives to the standard model sketched above.

Genre 2: South African police ethnography in recent years

Compared to the rest of the continent, ethnographic-type police studies in South Africa are relatively well developed, albeit of recent origin. In this tradition (loosely defined), there are a fair number of book-length and article publications that have appeared in the last decade

or so. While varying in the extent and quality of the ethnographic fieldwork involved, each of these texts lifts some of the veils with which police often disguise what they are actually up to.

So, for example, in *Transforming the Robocops*, Monique Marks explores the impact of radical changes since the early 1990s in the rules regarding the deployment of police in public order situations.⁸ She brings to life the perceptions and experiences of public order police personnel (foot soldiers and managers, old guard and newcomers) to a rapidly changing political and organisational environment. For a year, Antony Altbeker followed South Africa's police officers around as they traversed the spaces of urban and rural South Africa.⁹ In *The Dirty Work of Democracy*, he brings personae and context alive, as a good ethnographer should. He shows us ordinary cops intervening in a multitude of difficult spaces which demand that they be 'tough and uncompromising'.¹⁰ A third text is Jonny Steinberg's *Thin Blue*, which focuses on the policing of congested areas of poor urban settlements, where trust in the police is tangential and consent to be policed still needs to be developed.¹¹ What Steinberg brings to life are the creative ways in which the police engage with a hostile environment and how such operational responses reflect the occupational mindset of the police. Lastly, Julia Hornberger's anthropological enquiry into the way in which the police engage with human rights principles and practices in the inner-city policing field of Johannesburg makes a critical contribution to our understanding of how the normative rules associated with human rights are received, twisted, sabotaged and transformed within the everyday operational space occupied by the police.¹²

Each of these works was produced by an academic. There are others, for instance, like Andrew Brown, who produced an engaging account of his time as a police reservist, but claim no academic pretensions, and write solely from a desire to enlighten the public about what years of police work meant to them – or at least to justify themselves in their own and others' eyes.¹³ Andrew Faull's compilation of police 'stories' also deserves

mention here, as each of the stories – in raw form – reflects the experiences and views of ordinary police on a wide range of topics.¹⁴

Genre 3: Police autobiographies and police culture

While ethnographies of a scholarly kind cast indispensable light on police culture, what then of 'insider' autobiographies and memoirs from the belly of the beast? The use of biographies as source material and as suitable objects of enquiry has been the subject of some sociological debate. Liz Stanley, for example, explores the genre of biography and memoirs in knowledge production and engages with them as sources from the point of view of 'facticity', 'veracity' and 'validity'.¹⁵ Others have considered the utility of police biographies more specifically.¹⁶ For Howe et al., police autobiographies deserve attention for their glimpse into the workings of police cultures.¹⁷ Others again have warned that that while (auto)biographies routinely assert the aim to 'tell it like it was', these claims are always mediated through historical context, social location, and personal ideology.¹⁸ This means of course that for academic purposes police memoirs need to be subjected to critical scrutiny.

The recent South African police biographies of concern differ in terms of style, focus and objective. Not all are autobiographies in the true sense of the word. But all profess to tell a story from the inside of the *actual* work of policing – as opposed to various outsider accounts of a generally condemnatory nature. At least six publications of quite recent vintage deserve mention.

The first four publications are perhaps the least revealing but deserve some minimal attention as they do add information which is not generally public. Thus, for example, there is the work by Pierre Wessels, *Uit Nood Gebore* ('Born out of need').¹⁹ Wessels was a senior officer of the Counter-Insurgency and Riot Units of the South African Police (SAP). His book provides an overview of the evolution of these units from the 1970s onwards. Photographs of force deployment in the 'theatre' of counter-insurgency capture

unusual police tools such as armoured vehicles and heavy artillery. The story told through these images is one of policeman-as-soldier exposed to the nasty ravages of war on the borders and then inside the country itself. A detailed account is provided of contacts with the 'enemy', of being caught in cross-fire, of being led into ambushes, of landmines going off, of endless skirmishes between protagonists and of the many injuries suffered by the police during the post-1976 period of counter-insurgent policing. This is an account written not only by an insider but also from the particularistic vantage point of the insider, partisan, and celebratory of the 'successes' of these units.

A second text published in 1997 comes from a former general of the SAP, Herman Stadler. Titled *The Other Side of the Story: A True Perspective*, it offers a police version of the truth based on 'facts' or, in the words of the author, 'an honest attempt to put things into proper perspective', of policing a revolutionary onslaught aimed at making the country ungovernable.²⁰ Take into account, says Stadler, that between 1976 and 1990 the police had to respond to 1 400 acts of terrorism.²¹ The police confronted physical danger day after day. Thousands of police were 'maimed leaving widows and orphans behind' in their attempt to contain the 'monster' that had been created in the 'name of freedom'.²² In this version of the history, it is the police who are at the receiving end of 'endless intimidation' – through propaganda onslaughts, sabotage and mass mobilisation – part of a strategy, the author claims, to 'discredit' the police and make the country 'ungovernable'.

A third text within this genre is that of a former Commissioner of Police. Johan van der Merwe's autobiography, *Trou tot die Dood toe* ('Loyal unto Death') is an account of how the South African police maintained 'law and order' amid terror and decades of political conflict with the view 'to protect and to serve'.²³ Given the author's almost unparalleled access to the innermost secrets of the old SAP, it is a somewhat disappointing work. Nevertheless, it illustrates a recurring mindset among the old guard of the SAP. As such the text, as cultural artefact, reveals a fair amount about the political assumptions and the ideological

viewpoints that shaped a cadre of senior police's views of themselves and their role vis-à-vis the apartheid order.²⁴ The accounts of both Stadler and Van der Merwe, we need to remember, were compiled at a time when the proceedings of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission were underway. Both accounts reconstruct police history in the shadow of hearings into human rights violations by the security forces.

These three books attempt to put across the case for the old SAP. By and large they are rather dull. The prose is mostly leaden and stereotyped. A very different account of that history comes from a much decorated (but eventually discarded) covert operative, Eugene de Kock. The biography *A Long Night's Damage – Working for the Apartheid State*, written together with Jeremy Gordin, follows De Kock's career within the police from 1968 to 1993.²⁵ It is a career marked by hands-on counter-insurgency training in the Rhodesian bush. Later, as founder member of the anti-terrorist police unit *Koevoet* 'who became entangled in the madness of Ovamboland', it was his job to 'hunt' terrorists by the hundreds.²⁶ He did so with considerable conviction and much success. After six years of 'hunting terrorists' he was transferred to the police terrain of Vlakplaas, where he eventually became the commanding officer of the notorious CI covert unit. The confessions of two colleagues about the death squads that operated from the Vlakplaas base changed his fortunes. In May 1994 he was arrested and charged with 129 offences, and in 1996 was sentenced to prison for 212 years. This biography then brings to full circle the rise and decline of a three-times decorated counter-insurgent operator with all the details of the excesses involved in doing the job.

The professional biographies of Van der Merwe (2010) and Stadler (1997) represent the histories of a cadre of senior officers whose later careers were spent in the luxury of their police headquarters' offices. In contrast, the biography of De Kock (1998) presents the murky world of the executioner and the dirty hands of the covert operative, offered, in the end, on the altar of truth and reconciliation in exchange for the amnesty enjoyed by others.

TWO RECENT ADDITIONS TO THE GENRE OF SOUTH AFRICAN POLICE AUTOBIOGRAPHIES

A senior detective's life in the old SAP

In 2012 two further texts written by former policemen, distinct in terms of generational cohort, location within the police organisation and historical period, appeared. The first is General Wouter Grové's rendition of his career as a detective (and member of the security branch) in the SAP.²⁷ The second is Nic Howarth's account of nine years as a sergeant stationed with a riot unit on the East Rand.²⁸

In *The Roadmap of a Detective* Grové describes his professional career as a detective over 36 years. The story unfolds, slowly and methodically, over 400 pages.²⁹ On the cover the boyish face of Grové sporting a 1960s hairstyle is superimposed on a detailed map of the former Eastern Transvaal and Natal provinces where he spent much of his career. The language utilised in the biography is an old-fashioned Afrikaans. The tone of the conversation is serious. The story is told in slow and chronological order. The personal milieu that is described is tangibly shaped by the cultural outlook and practices of a poor rural Afrikaner community, from which many members of the old SAP sprang.

Grové left school in Standard 9. In 1961 he underwent basic police training. The latter was characterised by military discipline. There is reference at an early phase of field training to the proverbial *klopjagte* in search of drugs, liquor and guns in Pretoria.³⁰ This exposure to the sins of the city left a deep impression on the rural Grové. His first station deployment was Plessilaer, a black community situated outside Pietermaritzburg, with a few Indian and white families. After a couple of years Grové left Plessilaer with a deep sense of satisfaction in having delivered a service to the dispossessed. It is an observation he takes care to emphasise. Conventional depictions of the overtly political role of apartheid police, he notes, make no reference to ordinary police work that

benefited the subordinates of the racial state. At Plessilaer he developed his 'approach' to policing – a form of community-based policing which entailed establishing contact with community leaders and developing good working relationships. In pursuing the latter he claims to have been ever mindful of local cultural customs. In his account of the social environment in Plessilaer it is the micro politics that is emphasised. There is only passing reference to the wider macro imperatives of apartheid regulations and the police's role in enforcing discriminatory statutes. As a detective responsible for the investigation of crime in an area inhabited by the racial underclass, for Grové at least, it would seem the politics of race took a backseat. In fact, he takes care to describe himself as a professional policeman responsible for the consistent application of criminal law and procedure.³¹ This depiction challenges the overtly structural depictions of apartheid police as mere 'storm troopers' of apartheid – a viewpoint which, incidentally, John Brewer himself challenged as too neat to do justice to the ambiguities and ambivalence of policing as it happened on the ground.³²

Grové's training as a detective and thereafter his rapid move through the ranks of the organisation is discussed in detail. One is left with an impression of an orderly process of upward mobility characteristic of a rule-bound bureaucracy that provided opportunity for further education. In Grové's case he matriculated and went on to complete a number of in-service training courses. Later still, he pursued tertiary qualifications through UNISA. His career trajectory as detective was a rewarding one. Without flourish, and indeed without great style, the subculture of the professional detective is brought to life. Grové portrays a subculture with an entrenched work ethic, deep loyalty to the division, making the most of limited resources, taking pride in thorough investigations, measured by successful convictions in court, and of the resulting job satisfaction. (He also frequently reiterates his firm religious convictions.)

By the mid-1960s Grové's career path as a promising detective was interrupted by a call to

'higher' duty. He was drawn into the specialist ranks of the security police and posted to Nkandla as branch commander. From here onwards he became part of what he describes as 'a totally new subculture of the South African Police' with access to the kinds of resources which the detective branch could only dream of.³³ His specialised training exposed him to the SAP's (and indeed the National Party's) interpretation of communist ideology. As a religious man he found communist antipathy toward religious beliefs deeply worrying. As the story unfolds, the 1960s provided opportunities for the security branch to grow exponentially. Grové was posted to Pietermaritzburg. His commanding officer (Hans Dreyer) demanded knowledge about every 'terrorist' in the area.³⁴ In pursuit of this security objective Grové put his own strategy – an early variation on the theme of 'winning hearts and minds' – to work. His objective was to build an informer network through establishing relationships with local tribal authorities.³⁵ But it was a strategy not necessarily valued by his superiors.

In 1970 Grové was sent to join the SAP's contingent in Rhodesia at Victoria Falls where he worked in close cooperation with Rhodesian security forces. He writes that their operational strategy was the antithesis of his own, as they moved like an occupying force through areas of settlement, kicking down doors and demanding information. In 1972 came a transfer back to Middelburg, Transvaal, as head of the regional Security Branch. A difference of opinion (the nature of which Grové does not disclose) with the new commander led to his re-entry into the detective service. From 1976 onwards as senior detective he oversaw the investigation of serious crime. Monthly inspections at 13 police stations, involving arduous docket analysis, consumed much of his time. Again the image of the police organisation that emerges from these descriptions is of one tightly supervised and operating in a quite rigid bureaucratic fashion.

Finally, Grové's biography also reflects on the dynamics of political transition and the dislocating effects on the organisation. In 1992 he was appointed as national head of Detective Services, overseeing various specialist divisions. It was then

that allegations of dirty tricks involving the Murder and Robbery squads were made public – and he considers the difficulties which he confronted as manager at the time. He reports on the complicated internal process of restructuring – of amalgamation and rationalisation – which had to be managed, and the widespread feelings of insecurity that accompanied it. After a gruelling interview, Grové was re-appointed as head of the detective division. He was quickly confronted by a range of challenges. His plea for investing resources into the detective division went unheeded. The drive towards rationalisation resulted in a flight of specialised policing skills to the private sector. The introduction of a new tier of government and the appointment of provincial commissioners posed further challenges for coordination. But above all deep mistrust between ANC politicians and senior police meant that the old protocols were no longer adhered to. Lateral entrants utilised their direct lines to ANC politicians to bypass old routines, and in this context, as head of the detective division, he was no longer sure of his decision-making role.

Amid the complicated internal processes of restructuring, however, new opportunities for internationalisation and regionalisation opened up. When the regional police body, the Southern African Regional Police Chiefs Cooperation Organisation (SARPPCO), was established, travel into the regional and the wider continent became common. In 1993 Grové successfully presented the South African case for re-entry into Interpol. At the next meeting of Interpol he stood for vice president, but lost with a small margin to an Egyptian colleague. Upon his return to South Africa he – like many of his senior colleagues – opted out of the police force and received a golden handshake. He was relatively young for retirement. Somewhere in the unfolding of a story about his career he states that during 36 years of service he had 'never shot anyone fatally'.³⁷

A riot cop on the East Rand

For a sharp contrast in style and substance to Grové's, there is Nick Howarth's autobiographical account as a member of an East Rand 'Riot Squad'

unit.³⁸ The professional world of the detective could not be more different than that of Howarth's as riot policeman. Howarth's book comprises a lively account of nine years as a sergeant stationed with a Riot Squad Unit (of some notoriety) in a volatile space (the East Rand), at the high point of political conflict (1986 through to 1994).

For one academic description of the lay of this piece of land we turn to the historians Bonner and Ndima:

Between July 1990 and the first national democratic elections in South Africa in April 1994, the Witwatersrand experienced the most sustained bloodletting in its brief 100 year existence. From July 1990 to April 1992 alone, 1 207 people died and 3 697 suffered injuries in a sequence of attacks, reprisals and counter reprisals between hostel dwellers, squatter populations and township residents. The East Rand was the epicentre of violence in this phase as it was in later ones, accounting for 36.3% of total deaths and 67.6% of total injuries. The preponderance of these occurred in the Katorus region (Kathelong, Thokoza and Vosloorus) of the near East Rand.³⁹

Howarth writes in a lively personal way that none of the other works considered remotely approaches. The author's appeal to a particular audience is direct. This book is written as a tribute to all riot cops 'who left their souls and their sanity in townships in South Africa', to colleagues who died on the East Rand, and to the wives of all riot police. Howarth is vehement in his truth claims: he aims at 'setting the record straight' and 'challenging the propaganda' that discredited the work of the riot units.⁴⁰

As a 17-year-old English-speaking white South African, Howarth landed up joining the SAP in 1986 as an alternative to the military. What is interesting here is that he is an outsider within the culturally hegemonic institution at the time. In the insular Afrikaner-dominated world of basic training, Howarth as a *soutie* was considered 'easy meat', a target for endless harassment. Howarth in fact appears very much as a sceptic within an

organisation where the fit between political ideology and religious belief was not questioned. One afternoon, as an exercise in field training, Howarth and others were thrown into the turmoil of a strike organised by COSATU on the East Rand. They were told to disperse a 300-strong 'mob'. The confrontation was violent, and for Howarth the event was cataclysmic – 'something snapped' and he came out a 'changed man', a 'monster' perhaps.⁴¹ Then he was assigned to elite reaction unit training at Grootvlei police base. The physically demanding six-week course consisted of drill, training in weapons, shooting, grenade attacks and overall survival skills. They were being prepared for war, he comments, by ex-Rhodesian and Angolan veterans. At the end of the training only three out of 47 passed out. As successful trainee, Howarth then joined the East Rand Reaction Unit deployed on the East Rand (at the time generally referred to by the white public as the Riot Squad).

In his account of policing on the East Rand political turmoil is upfront, and the police are locked into daily skirmishes, attacks and counter-attacks in the Katorus complex with its mix of hostels and a resident population containing many ANC activists. The conflict is complex and deadly, involving a diverse set of actors (political groupings, trade unions, squatters, township residents, hostel dwellers, militias, security forces). Fatal shootings are daily occurrences. This is a world far removed from the one inhabited by Grové during his 36 years of service. Are the police heroes or villains? This is a question not easily answered. One is struck by Howarth's description of the ever-changing role of the police – at one moment an intervention force for the greater good, at another mere bystanders looking on as the skirmishes between competing militias take its course, then again as provocateurs and active participants in the wider conflict. The rules on the ground are murky at best. Bureaucratic procedures and tight systems of oversight do not define this kind of policing. Improvisation is the name of the game and survival is very much at stake. In the initial phase of deployment, Howarth recalls, he was involved in house penetrations in support of the work of other specialist divisions.

Dangerous work at best. During Operation Vula, he elaborates, 15 house penetrations a day were common. The heady mix of adrenalin and fear experienced helped to forge a sacred brotherhood. As warriors operating on the killing field they too developed the illusion of being 'bullet proof', yet injury and death also stalked the security forces.⁴²

The unit worked and played equally hard. Off duty, large amounts of alcohol brought relief. Night after night brawls broke out. Of the routinised order of Grové's professional world there was little to be seen. This is an account much closer to that of De Kock, but in contrast Howarth does not emerge as a bad guy, just one whose fortune (or fate) was inserted onto a pre-existing stage.

The professional world of which Howarth writes has a tactile presence. There are graphic descriptions of the stench of burnt bodies smelling like 'sweet and sour sosaties'. The memory of a burnt body being picked up, breaking in half, the innards slipping out onto the ground, is sketched in detail. Howarth records how a fellow policeman turns sideways to vomit.⁴³ Another scene is dragged from memory: of three dogs ripping a body apart on the streets of Kathelong. The reader is not spared the smell of body fluids oozing from the hundreds of corpses which are collected from the frontiers of the urban war. In fact, the subtext is very much one of routine banality and the loss of innocence induced along the way. In this world, which the riot unit on the East Rand inhabited at the tail end of the 1980s, peace accords and political negotiations only had an ephemeral presence. From their vantage point war was the intimate companion of the delicate peace that was being chiselled in the boardrooms of CODESA.

Howarth's account of the policing of the East Rand between 1987 and 1994 is of course neither sober nor impassionate. His depiction of cops being 'piggy-in-the middle' is far removed from the conventional (critical) depictions of security conduct during these times. This attempt at 'setting the record straight' has to contend with long-standing views of apartheid security force complicity in either orchestrating or fomenting

political violence and aiding Inkatha-linked militias. But Howarth's insider account comes at a time where the nature of the violence that accompanied the transition has become the subject of re-interpretation. What is being questioned now is the old, neat distinction between brutal perpetrators (the apartheid state and its security forces in collaboration with Zulu conservatives in Inkatha) and hapless (ANC) victims. Complicity in the turmoil and violence is now more readily recognised. In the words of the historian Gary Kynoch:

... the narrative that casts the ANC as victims of a state orchestrated onslaught versus the Inkatha sell outs who opportunistically sided with the white government (and its security forces) does not accurately capture events on the ground in Thokoza and Kathelong ... A more fractured, less partisan picture emerges from the voices of those who survived the township wars.⁴⁴

CONCLUSION

Finally, what contributions do these two autobiographies make to our grasp of the realities of policing under apartheid? Grové and Howarth's biographies bring very different tales from the field of apartheid policing. They suggest forcibly the importance of time and place more generally and organisational location more specifically in the construction of memoirs. There are very few places where the world of the professional detective responsible for the investigation of crime through three decades intersects with the routine realities of the riot cop deployed in a context of urban insurgency. This disjuncture between the professional worlds of Grové and Howarth is a function of many factors: the cult of the personality involved (deeply religious man versus wayward rebel); the distinction between senior officer removed from the action and foot soldier patrolling in Katorus; the differences between two specialised divisions (the detective and public order divisions), and the certainty versus ambivalence of the political spaces they occupied respectively. If Grové's story is pedestrian and mundane, Howarth's is 'remarkable' and full of excesses. If the former captures organisational

stability and moral certainty, the latter in contrast speaks to institutional flux and deep ambiguities.

These two biographies provide rather different views of the same organisation. In a way the two accounts demonstrate what Peter Manning had in mind when he spoke of the occupational culture peopled by 'segments', each with their own 'idiosyncracies'.⁴⁵ In contrast to structural accounts of police that remind us of the macro dynamics which shaped the institutional mindset, police autobiographies insert human agency into the equation and bring both personalities and micro dynamics to life. From the account of Grové we are reminded that, as under other perverse regimes, honest and/or diligent people went about their work with a certain integrity in an organisation that was partially rule-bound. From the account of Howarth the deadly monotony of war-time policing is described from the perspective of those who inhabited the frontlines on the East Rand in the dying days of white hegemonic rule.

Structural accounts, as John Brewer warned, run the risk of depicting the police as mere 'storm troopers' of the apartheid state. Like ethnographies, autobiographical accounts too have the potential to bring to life the nuances of policing, the ambiguities and compromises forged along the way as reconstructed by those who live to tell their stories. Unlike ethnographies, autobiographies lay no claim to the methodological or analytical strictures of academia. However, as South Africans in search of a textured understanding of our changing police culture, as enacted by human agents in challenging contexts, we would do well to consider the genre of police autobiographies more carefully, even as we try to subject them to critical analysis.



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NOTES

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WHITE HOBBY/ BLACK OPPORTUNITY

Perceptions and motivations of police reservists in Johannesburg

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This article discusses the racialised and dichotomous way in which suburban reservists articulate their motivations for joining the South African Police Service (SAPS); namely, that white reservists are believed to join as a hobby whereas black reservists join for an opportunity to gain employment. Using interviews, this article illustrates how these perspectives are tied to broader societal expectations, which are informed in and through race and class relations. It concludes with a call for further research to build on this largely exploratory research.

South Africa is home to more academic material on policing than any other police service on the continent. However, there is a glaring gap in available literature: the failure to research reservists, despite the reserve being operational since the early 1960s.¹ South African reservists comprise just over 16% of the entire SAPS workforce in Gauteng.² However, little is known about why these individuals choose to use their spare time to police their communities.

This article is a portion of findings that came out of research done to understand the perspectives of suburban reservists in Johannesburg. However, the aim of the research was not only to understand their perspectives but to question how such perspectives were shaped by difference, namely

through race, gender and class. Owing to space limitations this article focuses on one of the most dominant discourses to emerge during the interviews with the 23 reservists, that is, the racialised way in which motivation for joining was articulated. Due to most of the interviewees being white men, this article is primarily about their views, but it must be noted that the four white women and three black men interviewed did tend to corroborate the views of the white male reservists. Interviewed reservists were of the opinion that black people joined the police reserve in the hope of gaining access to permanent employment, whereas white people joined for fun and excitement.³

Constable 2⁴ succinctly summed up this view when she stated, 'Most white people do it as a hobby. Most black people are looking for jobs.'⁵ These assumptions (or at the very least perceptions of these divergent motivations) can be tied to broader societal expectations, which are informed

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by both racial and gendered rhetoric but are also indicative of varying class positions.⁶ I found the prevalence of such a discourse both interesting and unnerving. Why was there such a common belief that white reservists joined for pleasure but black reservists joined out of need? Due to the dominance of this discourse as well as its extremely binary construction I felt it necessary to further deconstruct it.

WHAT IS THE POLICE RESERVE?

In South Africa very little is known about, or has been written on, police reservists or the reserve. In fact, there is no academic material on the reserve and the only written account of reservists' experiences is a colloquial book written by Andrew Brown about his experiences as a reservist in Cape Town.⁷

With this in mind, I was unable to track down any documentation that explicitly stated the start of the reserve. However, I was able to infer that the reserve began in the early 1960s, firstly because Colonel L (white male, 73 years) stated⁸ that he started working as a reservist in 1964, two years after it was started in 1962. Secondly, I found a speech in which Minister of Justice JP Vorster opened up the reserve to non-whites (that is, Indian and coloured, not black, people) in February 1962, meaning that the official start of the reserve may have been earlier.⁹ Despite the uncertainty regarding the exact start of the reserve, it is not surprising that it was established in the early 1960s, because the country was in a state of emergency following the Sharpeville massacre, the banning of the African National Congress (ANC) and the Pan African Congress (PAC), as well as the arrest of ANC leader Nelson Mandela.¹⁰

A reservist, simply put, is 'a member of the community who performs policing duties or activities for the SAPS on a voluntary basis without being paid for those services.'¹¹ This article is mainly concerned with A type reservists, as these are the most common types of reservists and are the ones who look and perform like regular police officers while on duty.

Table 1: Types of reservists¹²

Types of reservist	Function and allowances
A	Carry out the same operational duties as regular members
	May wear a uniform
	Undergo training about functional policing
B	Carry out support duties
	May not do functional duties
	May not wear a uniform
	May undergo legal training that pertains to their tasks
C	Have specific skill or expertise than can be utilised by the SAPS (such as divers, doctors, or pilots)
	May wear a uniform if their commander permits it
D	May carry out operational duties in specific sector
	May wear a uniform depending on duties
	Trained in aspects of sector or functional policing

In order to become an A type reservist one has to fulfil several criteria as set out by the SAPS. These include being between the ages of 18 and 70, having a matric (grade 12) certificate, and being willing to undergo both physical and psychometric testing.¹⁴ During the course of the interviews it also emerged that reservists should have access to full-time employment and that the reserve should not be seen as a 'fast track' to becoming a permanent member.¹⁵ These requirements in and of themselves are racialised, gendered and classed, as they are tied to broader societal processes.¹⁶ For example, needing to have a certain level of education and English proficiency may exclude those (and their children) who were previously disadvantaged by Bantu education.¹⁷ Furthermore, it was found in my research that the term 'reservist' implicitly means 'men', as more emphasis tends to be placed on the physical requirements of the job (which, I am told, actually make up a small portion of the work), than administrative skills (which are perceived to be feminine). Although ever present, discussing the gendered ways in which reservists understand their work is beyond the scope of this article. However, in many of the quotes I have italicised the use of masculine orientated words so as to indicate how taken for granted the profession is as being male.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND¹⁸

In order to analyse both subject formation and broader social practices a mosaic of theories were needed, not only to capture the voices of reservists themselves but also to take into consideration organisational constraints and processes. Below I give a glimpse into the theoretical framework used for my broader research,¹⁹ which considered how reservists' perceptions of their labour are informed through difference, and allowed my analysis to cut across micro, meso, and macro levels while emphasising agency within structural constraints. The theories used included Joan Acker's²⁰ 'inequality regime', Anne McClintock's²¹ 'situated psychoanalysis' and Foucault's²² concept of 'bio-power'.

The theory of inequality regimes premises that class is both racialised and gendered and that the workplace is a site of 'conflict' or, rather, a place from which inequality and difference are practised and reinforced through various forms of control and compliance. Differential treatment (or inequality, as it were) is based on broader societal processes, but the visibility and legitimacy of said inequalities (whether based on race, gender, class or other social structures) can vary from organisation to organisation.²³ Therefore, inequality regimes is a very context-specific theory and is important for understanding reservists and how they function, as it provides a means of accessing how work, within organisations, is practised through difference. Despite this intersectional²⁴ approach (looking at class, race, and gender), inequality regimes, as a theory, fails to account for how these differences are articulated in and through discourses.

McClintock²⁵ shines here, as the psychoanalytical terms she uses such as fetish, disavowal, anachronistic space, and abjection are useful in the analysis of spoken language – although she herself uses them to analyse texts such as diaries and books, as well as images such as adverts and photographs. Nonetheless, her theory (situated psychoanalysis) is sensitive to essentialism and rather focuses on discussing how inequalities are articulated through one another in historically

informed but also deeply personal ways. As such, it is the 'no-go zone' between Marx's material history and Freud's psychoanalysis as it seeks to highlight how the individual subject is formed through historically informed discourse and practice. This is important here, as the racialised ways in which motivations are expressed are historically located and loaded with conflicting desires and attachments.

Central to both these theories, and any discussion on inequality, is power. However, for the purposes of this analysis, Foucault's²⁶ concept of 'bio-power' is particularly useful. For one, it helps to bring the body into the picture. It is necessary to understand how bodies are disciplined (anato-mo-politics) and chosen (bio-politics) to perform in the police, as perceptions of race tend to be coupled with preconceived ideas of worth and function. Furthermore, Foucault's concentration on discourse is attractive as it helps to access people's world views through language without losing sight of structures and history.

Hence, this article serves as an analysis of discourse (as opposed to discourse analysis) in that it focuses on the political ways in which certain issues are given prevalence. That is, my analysis will target taken-for-granted assumptions of the interviewed participants, and link them to broader social relations.²⁷

METHOD AND METHODOLOGY

During the course of six weeks in March/April 2013 a series of interviews was conducted with reservists operating in suburban Johannesburg. Access was gained through a friend of the author, who is also a reservist. He acted as my gatekeeper, introducing me to reservists he knows. For fear of bias I did not interview my gatekeeper, but he served as a valuable resource during the research process. A further two reservists were found on the professional social media site LinkedIn by sending them messages (after noting they had mentioned reservists in their list of work) to ask whether they would be interested in participating in interviews and could introduce me to more

reservists. These three reservists were all middle-class, white South Africans, living and working in suburban Johannesburg. This had implications for the research as they directed me to their reservist networks, which tended to be racially and

geographically homogenous – a noticeable limitation of this study but one that was, unfortunately, unavoidable.²⁸ The skewed demographic of my sample is clearly evident in tables 2 and 3.

Table 2: Individual interview – demographics

Name	Acronym	Type	Age	Gender	Race	Home language	Date of joining	Current status
Constable A	CA	A	34	M	W	English	2001	Inactive since 2010
Constable B	CB	A/C	36	F	W	English	1999	Active
Constable I	CI	A	30	M	B	Setswana	2008	Active
Constable M	CM	D	27	M	B	Sepedi	2008	Permanent from 2009
Constable P	CP	A	66	F	W	English	2001	Active
Constable Q	CQ	A	29	F	W	English	2006	Active
Constable T	CT	A	34	M	W	English	2006/7	Active
Constable W	CW	A	49	M	B	isiXhosa	2006/7	Inactive 6 months
Sergeant R	SR	A	59	M	W	English	1993	Active
Warrant Officer B	WOB	A	64	M	W	English	1996	Active
Captain D	CD	A	63	M	W	Afrikaans	1982	Active
Captain K	CK	A	40	M	W	English	1991	Active
Captain P	CAP	A	39	M	W	English	1994	Active
Colonel L	CL	A	73	M	W	English	1964	Retired 2010

Ordered from lowest rank to highest, then alphabetically.²⁹

Table 3: Group interviews – demographics

Name	Acronym	Type	Age	Gender	Race	Home language	Date of joining	Current status
Group 1	G1							
Constable R	CR	A	30	M	W	English	2009	Active
Sergeant B	SB	A	45	M	W	English	2001	Active
Sergeant C	SC	A	39	M	W	English	1996	Active
Sergeant Z	SZ	A	42	M	W	English	1996	Active
Group 2	G2							
Constable E	CE	A	50	F	W	English	2007	Active
Constable S	CS	D	48	M	W	Afrikaans	2007	Active
Constable Y	CY	A	32	M	W	English	2000	Active
Warrant Office G	WOG	A	38	M	W	English	1995	Active
Captain X	CX	A	65	M	W	English	1982	Active

Ordered according to group, then from lowest to highest rank and alphabetically.³⁰ These two groups of reservists were interviewed together and at different stations.

Table 4: April 2013 – Reservists at five stations in northern/western Johannesburg

Station/area	Black male	Black female	White male	White female	Coloured male	Coloured female	Indian male	Indian female	Total
Randburg	2	0	14	3	1	0	1	0	21
Honeydew	7	9	21	7	3	9	0	0	56
Florida	3	3	5	3	10	2	3	0	29
Roodeport	3	11	9	2	1	0	0	0	26
Honeydew 2	0	0	21	0	1	0	0	0	30
Total	15	23	70	15	16	11	4	0	154

Honeydew cluster stats, SAPS³¹

The overrepresentation of white men in the sample is partly due to an inherent shortcoming of the snowball method, which was used both due to time constraints and because of the organic way it can illustrate affiliations and networks (which tend to be historically and racially constituted). Furthermore, the snowball method was useful because I was conducting interviews in areas that remain predominantly white (that is, northern and western Johannesburg) due to the country's racist past. Table 4 is an indication of how overrepresented these areas are by white reservists, particularly white men.

However, this is not representative of the province. Looking closely at the demographics for reservists currently serving in Gauteng, it is clear that black men make up the majority (73%) – despite interviewees being of the opinion that white male reservists make up the majority of recruits. That said, white men are over-represented in the reserve, making up 17% of reservists, despite only being 7,5% of the total population in Gauteng.

Table 5: April 2013 – Demographics of reservists in Gauteng province

Gender/Race	Black	White	Indian	Coloured	Total
Male	3 030	1 291	116	154	4 591
Female	2 470	394	18	55	2 937
Total	5 500	1 685	134	209	7 528

As provided by the SAPS³³

I am sensitive that in trying to discuss the motivations for joining the reserve, the voices mainly being heard are those of white male

reservists. However, one must be careful to assume that the views of white reservists are homogenous and/or that the views of those coming from other racial groups are not in line, or do not overlap, with those of white reservists. A community (such as reservists or the police more generally) may tend to share common views within the group, meaning that people from different racial backgrounds do not necessarily have different views, although their history and class positions may differ. These views come from within the community and are informed by the community's history and the relationship of members with one another: '[E]ven when we talk in our own words, these words may not be "ours" at all ... [because] ... within any community there is a finite range of things it is conventional or intelligible to say about a given concern.'³⁴ That is, language is inter-subjective (as opposed to being objective or subjective). It is awarded validity when groups agree on an aspect, and is reinforced again in discourse.

This became evident in that the views of the white female reservists and black male reservists interviewed tended to corroborate those given by the white male reservists. Furthermore, I picked up little conflict with these views during my informal (and largely unstructured) interactions with permanent force members (who were mainly black men and women). The SAPS gave me official approval to carry out observations and talk to permanent members in two of Johannesburg's police stations. These were not done in a systematic manner, as officers tended to be working when I was around and seemed

uncomfortable in my presence. I rather used the opportunity to learn about police processes as well as to engage in informal discussions with those who were willing, so as to gauge the permanent officers' perspectives of reservists and their working environment.

WHITE HOBBY/ BLACK OPPORTUNITY

Of the 23 reservists interviewed, 17 stated at some point that they had joined the reserve because it was fun, exciting, or they viewed it as a hobby (something they did in their leisure time). On the other hand, only one of the individual interviewees, Constable B (white female, 36 years), did not express the opinion that black reservists joined out of a desire for employment and opportunity.

These were of course not the only motivations to emerge. Many (eight of the 14 individual interviews) said that community engagement and wanting to make a difference informed why they joined. However, several respondents openly stated that, if they were to be honest, they had joined out of a desire for adrenaline and excitement. Take for instance my conversation with Captain D (white male, 63 years) below:

CFT: Why did you become a reservist to begin with?

CD: The ulterior motive I think was, at that stage, I'm a little ashamed to say, just the adrenaline ... To us there's no such thing as a police reservist, when you're booked on duty, you're a policeman full stop. We wear the same uniform, undergo the same training, same weapons, same vehicles, same duty, and same authority. When you booked on duty you are simply a policeman ... If somebody had asked me in those days 'Why do you do this?' I would say something noble sounding like 'well, it's a community service and there's not enough policemen'. Somebody once commented, 'nonsense, it's the little boy in you still playing cowboys and crooks', and that was probably closer to the truth.³⁵

Even though reasons for joining the reserve are complex and often involve processes of subject formation (being seen as a police officer and wanting others to see you that way too), reservists tended to construct reasons for joining in a very binary fashion. However, a comment by Warrant Officer B (white male, 64 years) nicely illustrates some of the other reasons for joining that inform reservists:

WOB: ... you've got us as people who want to serve the community. We want to have fun, we enjoy the camaraderie of being a group and we are a little bit elite from the general public and it's something about the uniform. When we put that uniform on there is a slightly elitist sort of feeling that we are doing something special and you've got the uniform, you've got the gun, albeit the gun is sort of a badge of rank in a matter of speaking, and you go out there to do your bit to protect the society but it's not without altruistic motives in terms of 'Okay that is what I am here for' but there is the excitement and enjoyment of driving fast cars ...³⁶

Warrant Officer B joined not only to help the community but also out of a desire to feel special ('elitist sort of feeling'), belonging ('camaraderie'), nationalism ('protect society'), and excitement.³⁷ Although I recognise just how complex the reasons for joining the reserve can be, the fact that the discourse of white hobby/black opportunity was so prevalent means that it requires further attention and should be deconstructed. It is valuable to know, so that changes can be made that help to shift and alter this common perspective and hopefully create a more inclusive working environment.

Why is it thought, overwhelmingly, that one group of people joins the reserve because they think it is fun work, while the other does so for employment? One of the overarching justifications for this was the assumption that white people had better access to higher paying jobs. Take for instance Constable T (white male, 34 years) explaining to me the 'spectrum' of people who join the reserve:

CT: Well, you know, if you look at the reservists, there's a huge spectrum, right from *guys* who are business owners, CEOs of quite big companies, corporates, right down to *guys* who live in rural areas who just want to use the reservists as a stepping stone to become a permanent force, and to get a job. I mean, it's a fact, it's a reality ...

CFT: Is that also racially divided, because you're speaking about rural areas?

CT: Ja well, generally there's not that many whites living in rural areas. I mean, there are but I think those whites are just trying to survive, you know, the other *chaps* there are trying to survive, but they're trying to find jobs and things and it's so difficult for people to find jobs, so the police ... I think through friends and connections ... word of mouth has spread and the *guys* join the reservists, with the bigger picture of becoming a *policeman*, and some of them do go far, some of them do very, very well. Others sort of fly by night.³⁸

From the above it is clear how higher paying jobs ('CEOs', 'business owners') and suburban areas are articulated as being the domain of white reservists, whereas unemployment ('no jobs') and rural areas are equated with black people.³⁹ Constable T was by no means the only interviewee to make such deductions. These divisions are not only articulated through employment but also through euphemisms of education. Constable Q (white female, 29 years), for example, answers a question on whether she thinks reservists are better educated than permanent force members – and also answers along racial lines:

CQ: I do. I definitely do because these are people ... I find them to be much more well educated. They're directors of companies, they're doctors ... not all of them. Okay, the people that I associate myself with. I always question people who are unemployed and wanting to be reservists. I can't understand. I sometimes wonder, you're living in a location, or ... maybe it's a trust fund baby, I don't know. But something always just says to me why, if you don't have an income would you now want to volunteer to be a reservist. It's something

that's always just stuck very hard in my head. You know, is it a shortcut to becoming a permanent force *policeman* ...?⁴⁰

Again there is a collapse of professionals ('directors', 'doctors') with white reservists, and the pursuit of employment and poorer areas with black people (thought to live in locations). The idea that black reservists are only looking for employment was not only the opinion of white reservists, in fact, all three black interviewees agreed, such as Constable M (black male, 27 years) and Constable I (black male, 30 years) below:

CM: Most ... black reservists wanted to use the reserve as a quick way to become permanent in the police. Because going from reservists to be permanent is easier, you are first preference. So most of them ... wanted to be reservists to be permanent.⁴¹

CFT: And why do you think most black members want to become permanent force members?

CI: I don't know why ... Unemployment, like I'm not employed ... To get a job. And they are not passionate about the police.

CFT: They are not passionate?

CI: They are not passionate, some. Most of them ... are doing crime in the police.⁴²

Despite the prevalence of this discourse very few reservists were reflective as to why this division may exist. Rather, they used this perceived difference in motivation as an indication of 'desire to be there'. However, although white people say that they want to be in the reserve, most of them find the pay (or the perception of pay) unsatisfactory and not something they would be willing to accept. This is reflected in the following two conversations:

CFT: Do you think white reservists, the ones you work with you here want to be permanent force members?

CI: To my station, no.

CFT: Why not?

CI: They say [the] salary's too small and they already have too much responsibility. If [the] salary were not small they would love to be.

CFT: So it's not that they don't like the job, it's the money?

CI: The money is a big problem and they've already got their own responsibilities. If the money was okay, believe me most of them would flock ... I'm sure.⁴³

CY: ... This is my passion. If the money were better I would probably be in it but I need ...

CFT: How's that for the rest of you? How many of you would be PFs [permanent force]?

CX: Most of us, I think. [CY, CS, and WOG agree.]⁴⁴

This, by default, is stating that poor pay is something, societally speaking, that is acceptable for black people or, at the very least, is what they are assumed to have access to. This points to what I would like to call a 'racial dividend' – borrowing from Connell's (2005)⁴⁵ patriarchal dividend – in that 'white people, in general, have gained, and continue to gain from the economic and social subordination of black people (both historically and institutionally)'.⁴⁶ Constable Q and Constable W (black male, 49 years) were the only two reservists to be somewhat reflective as to their racial dividend. In fact, Constable W provided an astute historical account as to why there may be a racial division in the motivations for people joining the reserve:

CW: We come from a past where we have been stereotyped that there are certain jobs for men, certain jobs for women. It was legislated ... ja, I mean in terms of apartheid. There were jobs that were assigned for women and there were jobs that were not for men. There were jobs for blacks and jobs for whites. If you know how the apartheid regime is structured it's the same.⁴⁷

Constable W, in this explanation, has also picked up on the gendered nature of policing and that it is primarily considered the preserve of men.⁴⁸ As a result of white reservists' racial dividend they are thought to be better able to afford the 'luxury' of policing:

CA: Also as a general rule from what I have seen the white men are generally a lot more affluent. You know ... Not from wealthy areas

but they are doing this as a hobby ... for whatever reason. To help the community. They've got a basic job, which helps paying for it, and it's generally a much higher paying basic job than most of your black males [have].

CFT: Why do you think that's important?

CA: I think ... Effectively it's a luxury item. Your white male is in a much better paying job ... can afford to spend the time or buy the time to go reserving as opposed to a black male who's ... [a] painter or manages a small team at a plumbing place, and suddenly making ends meet is so much more difficult. So they've got less luxury time to spend in the reserve.⁴⁹

Again we see the triangulation of race and class (and implicitly gender as well). To summarise, 'luxury is reserved for those with the money to have it and here it becomes clear that the variation in white men's motives for joining can also be tied to their better social standing'.⁵⁰ This reasoning is abundant, despite people needing to be employed in order to work as reservists. However, deviation in these motivations is not necessarily unfounded. Of the three black reservists interviewed, one (Constable M) was now a permanent member and another (Constable I) was hoping to become one soon. This cannot, of course, be used as an indicator of the behaviour of black reservists more broadly (further research is required here), but the fact that none of the 20 white reservists interviewed were trying to become permanent is telling.

In fact, Constable I (black male, 30 years) provides an interesting example, as the SAPS tends to use people in his position to work full time without payment. Constable I works four days on, four days off with permanent SAPS members. His labour is controlled through the hope and anticipation of possibly gaining access to employment – despite the fact that he has explicitly been told that reservists do not have a fast track to becoming permanent members.⁵¹ Therefore, in a country with high levels of unemployment, the dichotomy white

hobby/black opportunity is not unjustified (even if it is simplistic). In fact, it highlights just how racially divided South African classes are and points to the divisions in value attached to the labour of different groups of people. That said, despite the common view that black people join the reserve for opportunities, these opportunities are not reflected in the hierarchical makeup of the reserve.

Prior to the implementation of the moratorium reservists were able to move up the police's steep hierarchical structure. However, it was only in 1981 that black officers (in the SAPS more broadly) were able to outrank white officers.⁵² Since 1994 there have been attempts to correct the unfair racial distribution within the organisation, but if we look at the upper ranks of reservists in Johannesburg as late as 2005 we notice that they remain dominated by white men:

help reshape the demographic of the hierarchy through direct controls that gave preference to 'previously' disadvantaged groups, but these made him feel uneasy:

CL: I'm apolitical, which the police are, but in spite of being apolitical there's always something that niggles at you. And what niggles you is that the police today, and not only the police, in the country ... Automatically if you're black you get pushed, if you're white you don't get pushed, and the trouble is that we have too many people who are there today not because of what their knowledge is or what they can do or the competency, just because they black and they're absolutely useless.⁵⁵

This sense of injustice (black people being 'pushed') is probably felt more intensely by white permanent members than reservists (such as

CO1). As

Altbeker notes: 'In this organisation, more so than any other, these changes have been experienced almost like betrayals of trust, rather than a simple, technical matter of adjusting promotion

Table 6: February 2005 – Ranks and demographics of reservists in Johannesburg

Rank and group	Black male	Black female	White male	White female	Coloured male	Coloured female	Indian male	Indian female	Total
Snr Superintendent			2						2
Superintendent			5						5
Captain			14	4	1				19
Inspector			34	3	4		1		42
Sergeant	11	1	80	13	7		3		115
Constable	220	70	225	78	34	5	22	4	658
Total	231	71	360	98	46	5	26	4	841

(South African Reserve Police Service, 2004 – Provided by interviewee).⁵³

Although the names of the ranks have since changed, the makeup is likely to be similar, especially considering that the moratorium was implemented four years after this was produced, not allowing for enough time for those at the bottom of the structure to move up (one has to do a minimum of two to three years of service to move up a rank). Only white men and women and one coloured man are found in commissioned ranks (Captain and above). Even in the rank of Sergeant, the second lowest rank, black men are severely under-represented (under 1%). However, Colonel L did say that before the implementation of the moratorium there were interventions to

policies and prospects.⁵⁶

Despite reservists not feeling as strongly about changes to rank as they do about possible changes to the uniform,⁵⁷ the above reinforces the rhetoric of 'we [white people] want to be here' versus 'they [black people] are looking for a job'. But Colonel L is taking it a step further, because not only are black people thought to be becoming reservists for the need of employment but are generally thought (by white reservists) to be given preference when it comes to promotions. Looking at Table 6 it would appear that this is not the case, especially considering that reservist promotions ceased in April 2009.

There are, therefore, numerous unobtrusive controls, such as the hope of employment or a sense of accomplishment, which are shaped by broader social processes. That is, 'compliance is also maintained by self-interest combined with positive feelings of accomplishment.'⁵⁸

CONCLUSION

The prevalence of the belief that black reservists join for opportunities, whereas white reservists join for excitement because they have the luxury to do so, tells us something about the society in which these individuals live; a society that is characterised by gross inequalities in access to education and employment opportunities, articulated through racial relations and manifested in simplistic constructions as to who belongs where and who is valued, or not. Despite being passionate about the work, the reluctance of white reservists to even consider joining the police full time because of its perceived poor pay is indicative of a group whose labour is worth more due to its racial dividend. This is of course tied to the history of the country, where those disadvantaged by colonisation and the apartheid government were left to grapple with Bantu education and were earmarked for certain types of work (generally the most marginalised and least desired jobs).

Considering the sociological ways in which people come to understand their role within a state organisation such as the SAPS, and how these are informed both by history and personal circumstances, further research is needed in different spaces (townships or rural areas, for instance) to find out how the reasons for joining the reserve are expressed in these spaces. This could help the SAPS in the development of its much anticipated National Instruction (which will speak directly to reservists), but will also have far-reaching implications for community policing and its ability to be successful. Only when policy makers understand why individuals do the work can they decide whether more people should be

encouraged to do so, and see how this resource can be given added value.

The exploitation of hopefuls is a trend that both the SAPS and municipal governments should be made aware of – possibly even reconsidering the resistance to fast-tracking some reservists in their desire to become permanent members. Again, this requires further research to understand what the possible backlashes might be. Nonetheless, having unemployed individuals who work for a state organisation four days on, four days off, and who fall through the cracks, is unacceptable.

In sum, this article serves as a starting point in a discussion that merely gives a partial perspective into the common discourses expressed by reservists, but also aims to highlight that these views are socially constructed and informed through axes of difference, such as race.



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NOTES

1. Since April 2009 there has been a moratorium on the recruitment and promotion of reservists and with the anticipation of a new National Instruction, which will likely lift this moratorium (with conditions), now is an exciting time to consider reservists and their roles in the SAPS. Furthermore, looking at the ways in which these motivations are racialised may indeed help policy makers and other practitioners grapple with the complexities of people's motivations for joining.
2. Claudia Forster-Towne, *Informed in and through difference: the perspectives of Johannesburg's suburban reservists and their role in the SAPS*, Appendix 1, Masters thesis available from Lund university's thesis database, <http://www.lunduniversity.lu.se/o.o.i.s?id=24965&postid=3806208>. This information was provided through email correspondence with the SAPS.
3. In the transcribed interviews I have endeavoured to exactly reflect the original tone and flow of the conversation; however, the quotes used in this article have been slightly edited for readability and to remain in line with SACQ guidelines.
4. Constable 2 is a permanent member whom I spoke to when I was at a station doing observations in the CSC. Permanent members were spoken to on an ad-hoc basis (not organised interviews) during ride-alongs and when I was doing station observations to help my own knowledge of policing. Numbers are used to distinguish permanent members from reservists (where I make use of letters).
5. Station visit 1, 2.
6. Forster-Towne, *Informed in and through difference*, 32-35.

7. Andrew Brown, *Street blues: the experiences of a reluctant policeman*, Cape Town: Zebra Press, 2008.
8. See the section below titled 'methodology' for a detailed discussion of the research methods.
9. BJ Vorster, Minister of Justice, announces extensive security measures following the Sharpeville Massacre, South African History Online (SAHO), <http://www.sahistory.org.za/dated-event/bj-vorster-minister-justice-announces-extensive-security-measures-following-sharpeville-> (accessed 8 March 2013).
10. Timeline in Andrew Faull, *Behind the badge: the untold stories of South Africa's police service members*, Cape Town: Zebra Press, 2010, 285. For more on the history of reservists and the SAPS more broadly, as well as how they functioned in and through difference, see Forster-Towne, *Informed in and through difference*, 26-30.
11. How to become a reservist, SAPS, http://www.saps.gov.za/careers/become_a_reservist.htm (accessed 15 January 2013).
12. Ibid.
13. This category of reservist came about prior to the 2010 Soccer World Cup as a means of bolstering policing presence. Many have since converted to A reservists.
14. Who may become a reservist, SAPS, http://www.saps.gov.za/comm_pol/reservists/reservist_who.htm (accessed 15 January 2013).
15. The exclusion of these on the SAPS website is open to speculation but may be as a result of the 'lowered standards' used when recruiting D reservists prior to the 2010 Soccer World Cup.
16. Forster-Towne, *Informed in and through difference*, 39.
17. Bantu Education Act No 47, South African History Online (SAHO), <http://www.sahistory.org.za/bantu-education-act-no-47-1953>.
18. For a more detailed discussion on the theories used to analyse these findings please consult Forster-Towne, *Informed in and through difference*.
19. Forster-Towne, *Informed in and through difference*.
20. Joan Acker, *Class questions: feminist answers*, Maryland: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, 2006.
21. Anne McClintock, *Imperial leather: race, gender and sexuality in the colonial contest*, London: Routledge, 1995.
22. Michel Foucault, *The history of sexuality, volume 1: an introduction*, translated from the French by R. Hurley, New York: Random House, 1978.
23. Acker, *Class questions: feminist answers*, 111-129.
24. A term first coined by Kimberle Crenshaw, Mapping the margins: intersectionality, identity politics, and violence against women of color, *Stanford Law Review* 43(6) (1991), 1241-1299.
25. McClintock, *Imperial leather*.
26. Foucault, *The history of sexuality*, Volume 1.
27. Carol Lee Bacchi, Discourse, discourse everywhere: subject "agency" in feminist discourse methodology, *Nordic Journal of Women's Studies* 13(3) (2005), 198-209.
28. During the data gathering stage of this research I only had six weeks (which was later extended to seven) to gain access to this community. While in Sweden I had managed to make contact with the three reservists mentioned but only one interview had been set up prior to my arrival in South Africa. This also had to do with reservists wanting to speak to me face-to-face before committing to engaging in such research. Once in South Africa I relied heavily on the networks of the reservists I had already gained access to and due to the limitations of the mini-thesis timeline given to us at Lund University I did not have more time to go into adjacent areas where I could better access reservists of different demographics. Furthermore, while in Johannesburg I found my days so packed with interviews, visits to the police station and ride-alongs that it was not practically possible to fit in any further interviews. It is my hope that now back in South Africa I will be able to further my research and fix this gaping hole in my research.
29. Forster-Towne, *Informed in and through difference*, 17.
30. Forster-Towne, *Informed in and through difference*, 18.
31. See Appendix 4 in Forster-Towne, *Informed in and through difference*. Note: These statistics were not found in an official SAPS publication but were provided by a reliable source. I have no reason to doubt the legitimacy of these figures.
32. As provided by the SAPS in email correspondence: Maswangani, 'Feedback: statistics on Gauteng reserve police: Ms Forster-Towne'. See Appendix 3 in Forster-Towne, *Informed in and through difference*.
33. Ibid.
34. Deborah Cameron, *Working with spoken discourse*, London: Sage Publications, 2011.
35. Captain D, 5.
36. Warrant Officer B, 37.
37. Forster-Towne, *Informed in and through difference*, 32.
38. Constable T, 3-4.
39. It is important to note here that although this discussion is on racial constructions these are articulated through gender – that is, policing is seen as the domain of men.
40. Constable Q, 24.
41. Constable M, 10.
42. Constable I, 4.
43. Ibid.
44. Group 2, 14.
45. Raewyn Connell, *Masculinities*, (Second Edition), Cambridge: Polity Press, 2005, 70.
46. Forster-Towne, *Informed in and through difference*, 34.
47. Constable W, 3.
48. Although many men join for different reasons, which are articulated through racial and class processes, these motivations are also implicitly articulated through gender. This is a story about men (as could be seen from the male orientated words used within quotes) and women are alien or anomalies in these stories. Although this article has focused primarily on the relationship and coming into being in and through of race and class, other social processes and structures further influence their articulation – such as gender, able-bodism, sexuality, age and ethnicity. However, these were beyond the scope of the paper. Nonetheless, you can view a more detailed discussion on gender in Forster-Towne, *Informed in and through difference*.
49. Constable A, 19.
50. Forster-Towne, *Informed in and through difference*, 35.
51. Forster-Towne, *Informed in and through difference*, 53-54.
52. Julia Hornberger, *Policing and human rights: the meaning of violence and justice in the everyday policing of Johannesburg*, London: Routledge, 2011, 32.
53. Note: These statistics were not found in an official SAPS publication but were provided by a reliable source. I have no reason to doubt the legitimacy of these figures.

54. Acker, *Class questions: feminist answers*, 122.
55. Colonel L, 5.
56. Antony Albeker, *The dirty work of democracy: a year on the streets with the SAPS*, Johannesburg: Jonathan Ball Publishers, 2005, 177.
57. Forster-Towne, *Informed in and through difference*, 46-55.
58. Acker, *Class questions: feminist answers*, 124.

POLICING TAVERNS AND SHEBEENS

Observation, experience and discourse

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This article sketches the views and experiences of police officials responsible for enforcing liquor legislation in the Nyanga precinct of Cape Town. It is intended as a complementary response to Herrick & Charman's article, Shebeens and crime: The multiple criminalities of South African liquor and its regulation (SACQ 45) and should be read together with that piece. Their article drew on data gathered from shebeen owners and raised important questions about the efficacy and potential harm of the policing of shebeens.¹ By describing incidents of alcohol-related law enforcement, this article suggests that such work can be as difficult and confusing for law enforcers as it is for those being policed. It supports Herrick and Charman's suggestion that current approaches to alcohol-related enforcement need to be interrogated in order to reduce harms without alienating communities.

In late 2012 I spent three months shadowing detectives and patrol officials in the Nyanga precinct of Cape Town. Part of this work included attending formal alcohol compliance operations involving the South African Police Service (SAPS), Cape Town Metropolitan Police Department (MPD) and Law Enforcement officials. At other times I worked with uniformed SAPS officials conducting daily patrols. This included responding to complaints at taverns and shebeens, or closing them down. As someone with an interest in the contemporary explorations of procedural justice in policing,² I was mostly impressed by the politeness and patience with which officials carried out these operations. However, there was no hiding the fact that their work often caused distress to those affected. Most often shebeen owners stood in silence and watched as police carried away their alcohol

supplies – their livelihoods – listening to the city officers explaining what they needed to change in order to become legally compliant. At other times it was more conflictual.

Because of my experiences in Nyanga it was with great interest that I read Herrick and Charman's article (SACQ 45) that explores the policing of shebeens in Brown's Farm and Sweet Home Farm.³ Brown's farm is an area in the Nyanga precinct that local police see as their greatest generator of violent crime. Herrick and Charman's article provides, through the narratives of shebeen owners, important and moving insights into the human impact of liquor-related law enforcement in that area. Drawing on survey and interview data the authors paint a picture of a world in which the daily struggles of the urban poor are compounded by the ambiguities, irregularities and alleged abuses of liquor-related law enforcement. As such, they raise important questions about whether state

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intervention in this area has a positive impact. In fact, for owners cited in the article it seems clear that police intervention makes things worse. Shebeeners,⁴ many of whom are women, report victimisation at the hands of both criminals and the police. But with very few alternative means of equivalent income available to them it is suggested they have little choice but to continue.

To summarise their argument, Herrick and Charman suggest the following:

- Alcohol is believed to be among the primary drivers of South Africa's high rates of violence.
- Shebeens are understood by policy makers to be the scenes of alcohol-related violence or as catalysts of alcohol-related violence.
- But shebeens are also important sources of livelihood within poor communities, many of which are already extremely vulnerable to criminality and violence.
- Shebeens provide spaces for socialising in communities in which these are often lacking.
- Violence in shebeens is perpetrated by patrons and criminals but also by police and other law enforcers.

Mentioning that the Western Cape Liquor Act (27 of 2008) came into effect in April 2012, resulting in a surge in shebeen raids with the intention of closing them down, the authors believe their data show that:

- Police have failed to communicate the mechanics of the Liquor Act to shebeen owners.
- Because of their location in residential areas many shebeens are ineligible for liquor licences.
- Many shebeeners do not have access to alternative forms of equivalent income so are almost compelled to continue trading illegally in order to survive.
- While raids of unlicensed shebeens are legally justified, shebeeners report a lack of due process, inconsistent application of the law, police requests for bribes and confiscated liquor being retained by police.

The authors conclude that:

Without interrogating the actual experiences of liquor control implementation as opposed to its stated intentions, our research suggests there will be direct and indirect consequences for the nature of the informal liquor trade ... [which] holds the potential to compound alcohol-related harms amid new forms and situations of violence.⁵

In this regard the article echoes work that reminds us that many societies are structured so that their citizens think about and respond to crime and policing along entrenched, narrow lines, automatically coupling the two.⁶ As such, through their work, police produce and disseminate meaning about the world.⁷ Loader points out that hard-nosed state responses to insecurity challenge a state's ability to recognise the security claims of all of its citizens, especially the marginalised, equally and in ways that sustain their sense of national and community belonging.⁸ He suggests that the 'symbolic power' police wield in marking people, places and actions as *not belonging*, or unwelcome, especially when this power is deployed with great numbers, fanfare, or in repetition, not only marks those things as unwelcome but threatens the basic rights and principles of democracy, while often doing little to build safety.⁹

In 'interrogating the actual experiences of liquor control implementation' Herrick & Charman have explored how shebeen owners feel marked as unwelcome. I would argue, however, that it is just as important to interrogate the experiences and views of the officials mandated to enforce the control of liquor, the markers of symbolic deviance. Their perceptions as citizens and police are both shaped by, and shape, alcohol and other related policies and their interpretation up and down the police and government management chain, so that their views carry weight. During my time in Nyanga I was able to observe with police and city officials a range of alcohol-related actions, and discuss their thoughts on these. I sketch some of these below. But first, an overview of the links between alcohol and violence.

ALCOHOL AND EXCEPTIONAL VIOLENCE

When the SAPS annual crime statistics were released in September 2012, *City Press* called the Nyanga precinct ‘the most dangerous place to be a South African.’¹⁰ A total of 233 murders had been reported in the area, as had 163 attempted murders, and 1 046 assaults with intent to do grievous bodily harm (GBH). By September 2013 murder had increased to 262 and attempted murder to 1 010, while assault GBH saw a marginal decline to 952. But police based in Nyanga didn’t need a newspaper or crime statistics to tell them their precinct was special. They would routinely refer to the area as ‘the Republic of Nyanga,’ alluding to its perceived uniqueness, the ‘murder capital of the world’ where things worked differently, and rules and the law didn’t apply. Murder was a daily occurrence. Police there worked hard. If nothing else, their mantras describing Nyanga’s apparent exceptionalism served to remind them that their work was unending.

Asked about their views on the causes of crime in the area, officials at the station routinely mobilised a few key themes. These included:

- The prevalence of shacks (and lack of formal housing)
- High unemployment
- Drugs
- Gangs
- Scarcity of public space
- Lack of respect, especially among the youth
- Alcohol

Alcohol was always near the top of the list. It was often presented as the most obvious driver of violence. I was told things like, ‘It’s all about liquor. Abuse of alcohol plays a big part with our people,’ and ‘When we go drinking we sit and have a drink but when they go drinking they fight. [Nyanga precinct residents] fight over women, fight over a cigarette, anything.’ More nuanced responses would only be offered when I challenged police, for instance, on why thousands of students at the city’s universities weren’t killing

each other, despite regularly consuming excessive amounts of alcohol. Although many police themselves lived in the surrounding townships and claimed to be heavy drinkers, they always framed the residents of their precinct as being exceptional. As one patrol official put it, ‘There’s nothing wrong with alcohol but these people behave like monkeys. I drink a whole bottle of Jameson but I never get into a fight.’ Even an official who lived in the precinct was able to distance himself from the shebeen and tavern goers: ‘I drink but not like these people. They are destroying themselves.’

Unsurprisingly, shebeens and taverns were central to station discourse on alcohol and violence. I was told people killed each other inside shebeens and taverns, outside shebeens and taverns, and on their way home from shebeens and taverns. They killed each other for accidentally knocking over drinks in shebeens and taverns, for unpaid loans made in shebeens and taverns, or for cigarettes requested in shebeens and taverns. Faced with such talk one might have thought that police were painting all residents with the same exaggerated and dirty brush. This is dangerous, because words weave mythologies into which police can buy, and which can guide action. But I would learn that behind this generalised talk, views of crime in the area and the policing of alcohol were varied. The discourse was not without some foundation. Indeed, the first murder scene I attended in the precinct was that of a man killed by ‘friends’ after a day of drinking and an unpaid debt. After stabbing him they had dumped his body in a shallow ditch and placed a large rock on his head. Faced with comparable scenes and narratives on a daily or weekly basis, one might begin to forgive local police the apparent exaggeration of life in their jurisdiction and their desire to identify clear sites of blame, such as alcohol. Once a cause has been identified it can be attacked. As suggested by Herrick and Charman, this is what is happening to alcohol in the Western Cape. Alcohol has been identified as a cause of violence and police and law enforcement have been tasked with addressing it.

The intent to intervene in alcohol sales and consumption is not only a provincial priority. The

National Development Plan (NDP) lists 'combating alcohol abuse' both as a health priority and as necessary for the achievement of its goal of reducing injury, accidents and violence by 50% from 2010 levels.¹¹ It calls for an 'in-depth study' into the 'relationship between drugs, alcohol and violence', suggesting that while there appears to be a correlation between them, this is not fully understood in the South African context.¹² These policy moves are indicative of a global linking of alcohol consumption and violence. The World Health Organisation (WHO) reports 'strong links' between the two across countries and cultures.¹³ It suggests that regulating the sale of alcohol, raising alcohol prices, improving drinking environments and providing interventions for problem drinkers have been shown to reduce violence.¹⁴ Most of this evidence was gathered in developed countries where law enforcement is less likely to have the kinds of detrimental impacts on the livelihoods of sellers of alcohol as those described by Herrick and Charman, and where the delivery of policing and security as an equally deployed 'public good' is probably more pronounced than in South Africa.¹⁵ Related interventions in Brazil, Colombia and the former Soviet Union were shown to reduce violence quite significantly, but the impact on livelihoods is unknown.¹⁶

In South Africa research has suggested that between 27% and 50% of homicides might be linked to the consumption of alcohol.¹⁷ The Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation's report on the violent nature of crime in the country also listed 'the role of alcohol' as important to what it called South Africa's 'culture of violence'.¹⁸ However, police discourse on the links between alcohol and violence in Nyanga appears not to be based on research but rather on attempts to come to terms with daily and weekly experiences on the job.

Data from 2005 to 2008 suggest that while 41,1% of South African men were 'current drinkers', this figure was highest among white men, at 69,8%.¹⁹ Almost no white men live in Nyanga. Of the 17% of men involved in 'risky drinking', most were described as coloured and poor. Again, coloured

people are a minority in the Nyanga precinct. While more white than black men have been shown to drink regularly, black households spend more than twice as much of household income on alcohol (3,8%) as do white households (1,5%).²⁰ The same is true of low to middle income households, which spend far more of their income on alcohol than high income households.²¹

In police sociology it has often been said that policy makers who hope to change police practice must first seek to understand police culture.²² While notions of 'cop culture' have been questioned,²³ there is much to be learned by exploring the stories police officials tell about their professional lives. If nothing else, they allow an assessment of whether dominant narratives need challenging, replaced by new narratives that might help steer police action in new, more democratic directions.²⁴ So while my observations of police and other officials in Nyanga are not exhaustive, I believe that sharing them can help contribute to a more holistic understanding of the processes described by Herrick & Charman's subjects and, importantly, provide insight into the local narratives that guide police action in Nyanga.

My experiences relating to liquor enforcement can be broken into three broad categories:

- Formal, multi-agency compliance operations involving the SAPS, Cape Town Metropolitan Police Department (MPD) and Law Enforcement
- Semi-formal task assignments
- Everyday policing of alcohol, taverns and shebeens

In the remainder of the article I offer examples of these different types of enforcement to illustrate the complexity of policing shebeens and taverns and the perceptions held by the officials involved.

Formal, multi-agency operations

Multi-agency operations occurred weekly during my time in Nyanga. They were dominated by the city's Law Enforcement officers (approximately six officers who are by-law focused) with two or three

members of the MPD, and between three and six SAPS officials. While many South Africans struggle to distinguish between the three policing organisations, they are quite different. *Law Enforcement* is constituted and managed by the City Council and is responsible for the enforcement of Cape Town City by-laws. These include by-laws relating to noise, parking, graffiti, zoning, public drinking and loitering. Within Law Enforcement there exists a *Liquor Enforcement and Compliance Unit* which:

Polices premises that sell liquor to make sure that they comply with the necessary regulations and legislation ... [by] inspecting liquor premises (such as shebeens, pubs and bars) for compliance, closing unlicensed liquor premises and issuing fines for liquor offences ... The unit also helps implement the City's strategy on drugs and alcohol.²⁵

Similarly, the Cape Town MPD is constituted by and accountable to the City. Its mandate includes by-law enforcement, crime prevention and traffic policing. Neither Law Enforcement nor the MPD investigate crime. Anyone arrested by these officers must be handed to the SAPS and the case followed up by the SAPS' Detective Service.

Despite being outnumbered by city officials during these multi-agency operations in the Nyanga precinct, SAPS members led the operations, directing the group to locations they had pre-selected. The focus of this work was both to check compliance of licensed tavern owners and to seize alcohol and warn or fine illegal traders. Operations at times went as far as using an undercover buyer and marked money to try and 'trap' people illegally selling alcohol. While all officials involved in these traps and raids searched for illegal alcohol, Law Enforcement and MPD officers specifically issued fines and warnings, also for violations not related to alcohol enforcement, such as expired or missing fire extinguishers in licensed taverns.

When I asked an MPD officer how warnings worked, I was told that owners were given three written warnings, after which they could be fined R10 000 for non-compliance. This was explained

to me at a large shebeen, complete with pool tables, sound system and beer advertisements, but without a bottle of alcohol anywhere on the property. When we returned a week later during a similar operation, a SAPS official joked with the owner, saying with a big grin, 'Please tell me you've got something for me this week.' The man smiled nervously as the premises were searched and he was issued another warning. Looking over a copy of the document as we drove away, I realised he was not being asked to apply for a liquor licence; he wasn't that far ahead in the process. He had not been given an official warning document but rather an application form to apply for zoning of his property as a business. It was difficult to imagine how this might be successful, considering he was surrounded by residential shacks and houses, but it seems this was the way enforcement was to work. It struck me that this was a form of teasing, telling shebeeners there was a vague possibility they might be able to acquire legal status when in reality their chances were slim. Nevertheless, for their part it seemed the police were doing as the law required.

The SAPS official's quip about having 'something for me this week' is indicative of an important element of liquor enforcement. Like almost all contemporary policing, officials are encouraged to meet pre-defined performance targets. SAPS officials are encouraged to confiscate large quantities of illegal liquor. While this isn't overtly stated it looks good on the books. Each September when the Minister of Police announces the annual crime statistics, much is made of the categories described as 'crimes dependent on police action'. These are offences like drunk driving or possession of illegal substances or firearms, which rely on police initiative for detection. As such, police managers encourage operational members to reach minimum confiscation and arrest targets in attempts to reach higher figures than the previous year. The same applies to alcohol. When annual crime statistics were released in September 2013, the first point listed under the heading 'Key Highlights: 2012/13' in the official SAPS release presentation related to the policing of alcohol. The slide read, 'More than 1,1 million litres of liquor was confiscated and 92 929 identified illegal liquor

premises were closed down during 2011/12 and more than 1,8 million litres confiscated with 74 547 premises closed in 2012/13.²⁶ The SAPS is proud of this work. Indeed, its Annual Performance Plan for 2012/13 states that ‘the confiscation of liquor from illegally operating premises, have been diligently and successfully done (sic) at least for the past three years.’²⁷ The plan goes on to present the organisation’s goal of increasing the amount of liquor seized by 3% each year until 2015.²⁸ Quota-based approaches to the policing of alcohol have elsewhere been called ‘best practice’ but, in the absence of complementary initiatives that are not law enforcement based, can be very problematic.²⁹

Similarly, it is likely that Law Enforcement and MPD officers are incentivised to issue quotas of fines.³⁰ The Cape Town MPD’s Annual Police Plan 2012/13 states as its impact measurement of action to improve alcohol-related compliance by an annual 5% increase in arrests of intoxicated drivers as well as increases in total numbers of alcohol, drug and firearm-related operations.³¹ It also states that increased by-law compliance will be measured according to ‘the amount of fines issued.’³²

At the end of operations in Nyanga, when our convoy returned to the station the measure of success for the day seemed to be a tallying of fines issued and liquor seized. One SAPS official claimed that at times they spread their enforcement operations beyond their jurisdictional boundaries, ‘to get the statistics, to demonstrate success.’ He didn’t think this was right but he went along with it anyway.

On another occasion a police official joked with a shebeen owner, ‘Please man, be nice to me. Tell me you have something for me today.’ The inference was not that the police official wanted a bribe but that he wanted alcohol, which he could seize and report on as a sign of operational success. The owner openly replied that he had not yet bought his stock for the weekend. The police official turned to his colleagues and said, ‘This man is not being kind, he is not looking after me.’ A senior manager at the station told me the

pressure for liquor quantity came from the SAPS provincial office (who are tasked by Head Office to ensure local stations reach their 3% target). He claimed that, following early closures of shebeens, when the amount of alcohol available for seizure had declined yet pressure from province had not, station management had to ask the provincial office, ‘Do you want us to let them stay open so we can confiscate alcohol, or do you want to get rid of them?’ He said that since then, provincial pressure had eased, yet the police officials I observed still seemed to be chasing quotas. They were not satisfied returning to the station empty handed; it was not how they understood their role.

In my experience, when shebeen owners were issued with warnings or fines, officials almost always spoke to them in calm, polite and measured tones (I usually observed from a distance to minimise the impact of my presence and often I don’t think police were aware that I was watching). They appeared genuinely interested in helping owners understand why they were being warned or fined, and what they needed to do to prevent further action being taken against them (at least in theory). Of course there were times when voices were raised and force was used; however, I do think my observations are important to note in light of Herrick and Charman’s respondents’ descriptions of apparent police harassment. On occasion in Nyanga I observed police action that was detestable but this was never during formal alcohol enforcement operations. Police officials were not always as polite, communicable and personable as they could have been, but I did not witness outright abuse.

Herrick and Charman’s respondents also made reference to what they perceived as being regular requests for bribes from police. It might be obvious that police are unlikely to request bribes in front of a researcher but I think it almost as unlikely that they would request them in front of possibly unfamiliar members of other policing agencies. Because three different agencies were represented in these operations and because individuals assigned to the operations changed on

a weekly basis, it would be difficult for a corrupt official to solicit a bribe out of sight of colleagues, and difficult to plan coordinated extortion in a changing multi-agency environment. But perhaps I'm being optimistic. Outside of operations, individual police officials told me there was corruption at the station, while a Law Enforcement officer told me she felt unable to speak out against 'the dodgy things' colleagues did in the city agency. A case of theft had been opened against a SAPS officer after R15 000 had allegedly gone missing during a shebeen raid prior to my arrival at the station. While police officials didn't deny the possibility that one of their own may have taken the money, all felt that the individual accused was beyond repute and that it could not have been him. Still, I believe corruption in a multi-agency context is at the very least less likely than in everyday police work.

The morale of the participants in these operations in general appeared relatively high. They approached the work with energy and apparent dedication. Again, this may have been a by-product of the multi-agency approach, creating a context in which each agency performed for the others. And yet their apparent optimism was not always indicative of a belief in the value of the raids. As one usually energetic city official said to me at the end of an operation:

Closing down shebeens does nothing. People are going to drink no matter what. Eighty per cent of these shebeen owners are women, they're mothers raising children, selling beer for a little bit of money. No magistrate is going to lock that woman up. If I were in their situation I would do the same thing. You can't stop it. And if we move all the shebeens to one location³³ then people will have to walk a long way to get home and they will be in more danger. There is a breakdown in society. They talk about 'ubuntu' but I don't see it anywhere here ... These are bread and butter issues.

The official went on to describe how he felt frustrated at not being able to change things, not being able to make things better in the area. To me he appeared committed to his task,

empathetic to the community and dedicated to his job. But he was left frustrated, believing little positive impact would come of the work expected of him and the other enforcers of the law. On the few occasions when I saw him engage curtly with shebeeners I couldn't help but wonder if his temper wasn't fuelled by the contradictions he saw in his work.

On the other hand, while two Law Enforcement officers couldn't explain to me exactly why they believed the operations had an 'impact', they did think them worthwhile for the opportunities 'to provide education and explain to people why they need liquor licences and how to go about selling alcohol legally.' Two-way dialogue is an important element of the community policing paradigm, but in my observations dialogue appeared to be very one-sided, passing on information that didn't necessarily fit the context, for example explaining how to apply for a zone change when this would almost certainly be rejected. This would seem to be a flaw in the system.

Making a final stop before returning to the station at the end of a morning operation one Friday, we entered a brick house. The entrance room was empty but for two tables, four benches, two women and some empty beer bottles. It looked like a shebeen. But seeing us enter the room one of the women looked up and immediately told the first official that she had decided to stop selling alcohol. She said she had been arrested and fined by the court, and would not re-open. As we walked back to our cars a police official turned to me and said, 'That is why this work is important and why it is important that the court does not just let people off.' For that moment, at least, he was able to convince himself of the value of the operations.

The belief that police interventions in the sale of alcohol would help address crime in the area was generally accepted throughout the station, at least on the surface. It was an organisational narrative that allowed police to make sense of things and was therefore mobilised to also motivate particular approaches to daily policing, as discussed below.

Semi-formal task assignments

By ‘task assignments’ I refer to once-off actions designated to a group of SAPS patrol officials by station or cluster management. Ordinarily such officials spend shifts patrolling designated portions (or sectors) of the precinct (often driving past shebeens and taverns), stopping and searching young men and responding to urgent calls for assistance. But on occasion they would receive special instructions, as the following example indicates:

At the shift’s parade the commander explained that the group had been tasked with visiting shebeens. Together with shebeen owners they were to capture information on pre-prepared forms. Captured data would include the name and personal details of owners, details of the shebeen such as whether there was alcohol advertising on the walls, whether it had seating and whether it was in close proximity to any schools or places of worship. On the surface of things one could see how such information would be valuable to the SAPS in its local planning, as well as for the liquor board. However, the vehicle I travelled in that night did not take the task very seriously.

At the first shebeen – a small shack out of which boomed loud, bass-heavy music – the driver of my vehicle rolled down the window and called the shebeener over. As with so much policing in Nyanga, police did not leave the vehicle. Instead our driver began asking the man the questions listed on the form while another official marked down the answers. The whole procedure took less than four minutes, including a request for a description of the inside of the shebeen. The officials did not verify anything the man said, not even his ID number. When I asked why, the senior official in the car said, ‘Nobody is going to show me their ID book if I ask.’ But he hadn’t even tried. It seemed he believed the whole affair was an exercise in futility.

We drove to another shebeen, hooting until the owner came out. While the senior police official chatted in friendly tones to the owner, whom he knew well, another official filled in the form. A

shebeen patron stumbled outside and urinated three metres in front of our police car, the kind of petty by-law offence basic alcohol legislation aims to prevent by requiring access to ablutions. Nobody paid him any attention.

A little while later a group of women stopped our car to complain about loud music coming from a shack. With the shack hidden behind others, about 15 metres from the street, we parked the car and made our way down a footpath, following the music. Discovering four men drinking around a table, police officials half-heartedly searched them while the owner was instructed to turn down the music. The form was completed in minutes, whereafter the senior official spoke to the group in a lecturing tone; the owner stood in a submissive posture and nodded. After a few minutes we left.

The remaining shebeen visits were similar to the above. It was a Friday night and our senior official’s first priority was to tell shebeens and taverns that they needed to be closed by midnight. This was not task-specific. It was his normal weekend routine; he didn’t want any trouble. When I asked him what we would do if shebeens failed to close in time he said, ‘We will *moer*³⁴ [the patrons] until they leave.’ For me this was indicative of the way police saw late night drinkers as undesirable, rather than the majority of residents as problematic. While the extreme rhetoric about the Republic of Nyanga appeared to tar all with one brush, in practice this wasn’t the case. The police only seemed to tire of and see as risk-prone those people who drank late into the night, in groups.

Later in the evening we passed a tavern that earlier had been overflowing with patrons. A police official proudly pointed out that it was now closed and that they were abiding by their licence agreement. His manner suggested that he believed this was in part due to the early evening visits. But while this might have been true, I believe the official was happier about the closure of the tavern than about its compliance with a licence agreement. The tavern had been in clear contravention of the licence agreement earlier in the evening when it had allowed its patrons to hang around in groups on the street outside its doors, drinking,

littering, loitering, urinating and making a noise in a residential area – all of which are by-law contraventions. Rather, like so many police working the precinct, the official saw empty streets and silence as signs of security he had helped bring about. The tavern had opened and closed without a violent incident and its patrons had apparently returned home without falling victim to one of the lethal attacks that are so common in the area. I believe these police were happy that they had helped shut the area down, encouraged people to go home and sleep without having to resort to ‘moering’ them – more than they were about holding a business accountable to its obligations. A tavern open for business was an obstacle to the objective of securing the area. A tavern shut down was a step closer to what one official in the car called ‘clean’ streets, those void of life and so also of death.³⁵

Everyday policing of alcohol

While targeted enforcement relating to alcohol is fairly regular in the Nyanga precinct, it is the everyday patrol officials who have the greatest opportunity to respond to alcohol-related infringements. For the most part, however, they don’t.

In my experience, on warm Saturdays the precinct was filled with residents walking the streets, many with drinks in hand. It was also fairly common to find men drinking in shebeens on weekdays, sometimes starting in the morning. On Saturday nights patrons of popular shebeens and taverns spilled onto the streets; large crowds ignoring the authority of the city and state. Although the police with whom I patrolled didn’t ever ask patrons for identification, it appeared that some, especially young girls, were underage.

When conducting everyday patrols, police had a much more flexible approach to enforcement than when undertaking formal alcohol-related operations. For the most part they would allow strict illegality as long as it was before midnight, and wasn’t resulting in immediate violence. For instance, one Sunday afternoon we passed a large shebeen, one that operated almost daily. It was

open for business and relatively busy. I asked the two officials in the car why they sometimes closed taverns and shebeens and at other times didn’t. One replied, ‘No, they must enjoy themselves. If we see trouble coming then we close it down.’ Asked how they could tell if trouble was coming he said, ‘when people are very drunk.’ It was not clear how the official believed he would ascertain levels of sobriety without entering the establishments or engaging with a sample of patrons standing outside.

Driving past the same shebeen on a Saturday evening with different police officials I noticed a girl of about 13 emerging from its entrance, drink in hand. Her presence did not elicit any response from the police. As she stood on the side of the road, ignoring our presence, I asked the officials how they decided when to intervene in underage drinking. A constable replied, ‘There is nothing we can do because the shebeen is illegal anyway so of course underaged drinkers will drink there.’ However, his partner then called the owner out and asked him to close up. I wondered if my question had made the official feel compelled to intervene. It was only 22:20 but the owner obliged, perhaps grateful that he had been able to trade until this hour. On another occasion we stopped outside this shebeen at 20:00. Music was blaring. Within seconds of the police car’s blue lights reflecting off the walls and window of the establishment the music had been turned down and people immediately began leaving. But when a technically illegal business receives such inconsistent police action, how does it fit into the broader SAPS strategy regarding the control and regulation of alcohol? When the SAPS proudly claims it closed down 75 666 ‘illegal liquor premises’ in 2012/13, are we to assume that a shebeen such as this, one that continues to function in the face of police recognition of its illegality, accounts for at least a handful of these closures? If so, this clearly sends mixed messages to its owner, who must manage his relationship with patrol officials while dodging formal raids.

While police on daily patrols didn’t see their role as shutting down illegal establishments, they did understand their weekend mandate as closely

related. Officials working Saturday night shifts in particular saw the maintenance of order around popular shebeens and taverns as one of their main responsibilities. In the early evening it was fairly common for police to stop outside a tavern and have a friendly chat with the owner before the tavern got busy. In fact, some owners even began recognising and greeting me, the researcher travelling with police. Police appeared to have good relationships with the owners of licensed taverns but also with some shebeens. On one occasion it was the owner who flagged us down as we passed by on a Saturday evening. She wanted to tell police that she had heard rumours that her business was to be targeted by robbers over the festive season. The SAPS official I was with told her to speak to other tavern owners and let them know that police would make regular visits to search patrons, and that when they did, the owners should lock the gates so that nobody could leave. He believed the word would spread and deter would-be robbers. I wasn't aware of police ever implementing the proposed strategy, but the interaction was indicative of a mutually beneficial relationship between some owners and police officials.

On busy weekend nights the streets outside popular shebeens and taverns were so busy that the police car could only creep forward at a snail's pace, patrons reluctantly parting to let it through. The cars I was in would pass the taverns and larger shebeens regularly during the night, especially when things were very busy. On one such evening we stopped our van in the middle of the crowd and the driver used the van's loudspeaker to ask the crowd to stop drinking in the street. His tone was gentle and respectful. They ignored him. The tavern owner came out and he told her there were too many people drinking in the street and she would need to close down. I suspected the action was in part motivated by his loudspeaker request having been ignored. We did a loop of the block and returned. The street was still full of patrons, drinks in hand, but the tavern was closing down. A man standing in front of us touched a woman he didn't seem to know; she threw her drink at him. Again the police official was on the loudspeaker, instructing

the man to empty his drink on the road and go home. This he did, but the majority of drinkers carried on as they were. As patrons spilled out of the closing tavern and the numbers in the street swelled, some began their slow amble home or elsewhere, walking into the darkness, drinks in hand. As we edged forward through the crowd a deep, loud bang filled the van's cabbie. Someone had thrown a heavy rock at us. The driver didn't immediately respond. Instead he said to me in a calm tone, 'They think I will run but I won't. I will close it down.' It seemed he felt affronted.

We rounded a corner, stopped a 100 metres away and called for backup to help disperse the crowd. In my wing mirror I could see two groups of people fighting behind us. They were kicking and punching each other quite violently. I alerted the police official to this but his response was only to say, 'The people deserve to be assaulted. If you spend time attending to these petty beatings then you can lose time.' Ironically, minutes later, when a man walked past us carrying a hammer, the official stuck his hand out the window and requested it be handed to him. The man complied and walked on as if there were nothing unusual about the request. A little later the police official said to me, 'Now we were just defending a murder but we are not here to arrest anyone.' Again, it seemed he understood his presence as being to oversee and shepherd people away from the tavern, into the night and home. But his presence had also been disrespected. As a result he seemed to be saying that if some patrons fell victim to violence on their way home, they deserved it. It was as if the prevention of murder in Nyanga was both the baseline and benchmark of crime prevention. In its immediate absence, the official believed good work had been done.

Rounding the corner we noticed two teenage girls walking and drinking. My partner shouted at them through the window, explaining to me that he was telling them they would be raped if they drank and walked up and down in that fashion. They ignored him.

We returned to the tavern. A heavily pregnant woman in her late teens stood drinking and

chatting with friends, metres away from our van. Her friend laughed and rubbed her bulging belly. Concerned that he might not intervene, I pointed them out to the police official, who shouted at them through the window. They moved a few metres and carried on drinking. To me his relative disinterest in the pregnant woman was emblematic of the fact that the SAPS does not see its role in the policing of alcohol as first and foremost a public health challenge, which appears to be the way it is framed in policy, but rather only as a means to mitigate criminal risk. This should be addressed.³⁶

Two more police cars joined us outside the tavern. By now tavern staff were sweeping inside the perimeter of their premises. I commented to the official that he had succeeded in closing the tavern. He told me with pride that he had been successful because he had been gentle with them. He said that because of this approach he hoped that in December when the taverns and shebeens were very busy he would be safe. He said, 'If you assault them they will throw stones at your vehicle,' inferring this wouldn't happen using his approach, although we had been stoned minutes before. It was clear that policing the multiple threats and illegalities related to drinking in the precinct required navigating a fine line between intervention, safety, community relations and the maintenance and exercise of police authority in the eyes of tavern and shebeen owners and the public at large. For while shebeen and tavern owners appeared to comply with police instructions, it seemed patrons considered the sellers of the alcohol as the only real authority in the policing of their premises and surrounds.

DISCUSSION

Having asked a participant in a formal, multi-agency compliance operation if he thought these were effective, he replied, 'Yes, they are. Now people know they cannot just walk in the street and drink in front of us.' When I pointed out that every weekend certain streets in the precinct were filled with drinkers he conceded, 'Yes, we will never change that.' Indeed, I made a point to ask SAPS, MPD and Law Enforcement officials what their understanding of public drinking was. Some

believed it was legal, others illegal. There was no consensus. Clearly though, none who believed it illegal, enforced it. Law Enforcement told me they only enforced it on beaches, but nowhere else.

Other common complaints from police officials were that the new Liquor Act allowed people to keep 150 litres of alcohol on their premises for personal consumption, or that when they arrested people for contraventions of the Act the courts dismissed the cases or handed down heavily reduced fines. They also believed shebeeners asked neighbours to store alcohol in surrounding houses, only to retrieve it for sale as and when needed. All of these were challenges they saw as being beyond their power to change.

Many of Nyanga's police understood alcohol to be central to the violence they encountered through their work. Some officials lived in the Nyanga precinct while others lived in surrounding townships with similar crime levels. For them, alcohol enforcement was about balancing a hard-line response to what they saw as a cause of violence with chasing performance targets and managing relationships with the communities in which they lived and worked – suppressing the idea that their work might not achieve its desired impact.

On occasion I would participate in the station's weekly community outreach events. We would walk through the streets distributing pamphlets and encouraging communities to form street committees. During one such event a woman approached me from between the shacks that mark the boundary of Brown's Farm. She was about 35 years old and carried an infant in her arms. She accepted my pamphlets but then asked me in earnest, 'Why are the police closing down the shebeens when we are only selling a little bit of alcohol? It's only in order to feed our children.' I fumbled for a response as the boundary between researcher and participant collapsed around me. One could not fail to be moved by her desire to understand. Fortunately, within seconds a police car pulled up and a senior member of the station's staff disembarked. I referred the woman to him. She approached him and with a tone of mounting

desperation repeated her question. She added that she had been arrested for selling alcohol, taken to court, fined R1 500 and threatened with five years in prison if she was caught again. She said she didn't have any work experience and couldn't find a job. She had been born in a shack and was still waiting for a house. In a calm tone the senior official responded, ignoring the questions about shebeens and instead addressing the topic of housing. He asked her if she had spoken to her councillor about it. When she said she had he said he would as well: 'I will tell him to build you a house.' With that he walked away.

Despite his seniority this police official couldn't offer the woman any real answers, any real hope. The tools of a police service are sometimes entirely inadequate for addressing the challenges they are asked to resolve. There is certainly much that police in Nyanga can do with regards to the regulation of alcohol. They can ensure that openly illegal sales and consumption of alcohol decrease. This in turn might alter the normalisation of public drinking in the precinct. Whether it would lead to any overall improvements in public safety is unlikely and it may in fact make things worse.

As Herrick and Charman point out, it is unclear if, how and who the current approach to enforcement helps. This is especially true in the face of the September 2013 revelation that murder in Nyanga increased from 233 to 262 year-on-year, a period during which liquor enforcement increased as part of concerted strategies across three different policing agencies. So perhaps the SAPS and other policing agencies need to reconsider their approach. Enforcement is important, but in the absence of alternatives it is perhaps futile and may cause harm. As perhaps the most obvious face of government on the streets, law enforcement officers (across all agencies) are well positioned to become knowledge managers and disseminators of information. They can guide sellers of alcohol towards legal or alternative solutions, rather than simply point them towards likely dead ends. But this will require cooperation across local and provincial government departments.³⁷

Many of Nyanga's police supported the 'alcohol causes crime' discourse but at the same time pointed out that their own heavy drinking did not result in violence. As long as Nyanga's police are faced with extreme levels of violence and murder they will want to be able to identify and give explanations for it, especially when they think they can address it. Without being able to improve residents' access to income, housing or employment, alcohol provides police with a tangible explanation, one they can target and act against.

It was never clear to me whether Nyanga's police truly believed in the liquor-related enforcement they practised. Sometimes it was easy to argue its merits. At other times they appeared resigned to the idea that the violence they confronted on a weekly basis had roots running much deeper than the sale and consumption of alcohol in the precinct. But this was a job they had been asked to do, a job they were being measured on. It was also a job that had been positioned at the centre of their own livelihoods. And so they did it.

It seems to me that fully understanding and addressing the link between alcohol and violence in Nyanga, as elsewhere in the country, may require a more nuanced and empathetic approach to enforcement, one that provides residents, police and city officials with alternative forms of community and peace building.

CONCLUSION

Consumption of alcohol has become embedded within explanations of crime and violence in South Africa. The South African Police Service has in recent years made concerted efforts to increase its focus on the enforcement of liquor-related legislation. Its planning documents suggest this focus will continue in the coming years. Herrick and Charman's article, exploring shebeen owners' experiences and perceptions of this enforcement in Browns Farm and Sweet Home Valley, highlights the harmful effects enforcement has on the lives of those targeted, while crime statistics from the area suggest enforcement may not be having any effect on violence.

For their part, SAPS officials appear to approach the enforcement of liquor-related legislation in a range of context-dependent ways. While multi-agency operations appear to enforce the law by the book, everyday policing unravels within far less rigidly defined boundaries. While police working formal operations support Head Office's goal of reporting impressive-sounding figures to the country each September, everyday police officials, sellers of alcohol and their patrons navigate a porous boundary between mutual respect, disdain and blame. In that space it can appear that the primary concern of police is to prevent what should be the inconceivable: murder. The relativity of crime, violence and victimisation is lumped into one. There is murder, and there is everything else that happens on the side.

Policing alone will not end the violence in Nyanga's Browns Farm, nor will an absence of legal access to alcohol. Between Herrick and Charman's article and my own, it appears that to some degree both the SAPS officials and shebeen owners are involved in struggle for personal survival. For the shebeen owners it's about basic business, 'bread and butter,' as the city official put it. For police it's about fulfilling a directive from above, balancing their relationships with superiors with those of the community, and holding on to a job – their own bread and butter. A continuation of current enforcement strategies is unlikely to result in reductions in the sale of alcohol or in sustainable improvements in safety. Conversely it risks positioning law enforcers as permanently opposed to large segments of the community, marking sellers and consumers of alcohol as deviant, and actively eroding their sense of belonging.



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NOTES

1. For the purpose of this article the term 'tavern' refers to a licensed (or previously licensed) seller of alcohol while 'shebeen' refers to unlicensed venues. The latter are often less formal than the former, though the distinction between the two is not always clear and the terms are at times interchangeable. Unlike Herrick and Charman, who

focused almost exclusively on the less formal shebeens, this article describes the policing of liquor, both formal and informal, in the Nyanga precinct.

2. Together with Brian Rose I discuss some of this literature as it relates to the SAPS in Andrew Faull & Brian Rose, Professionalism and the South African Police Service: what is it and how can it help build safer communities?, ISS Occasional Paper 240, Pretoria, 2012; more recently see: A Bottoms & J Tankebe, Beyond procedural justice: a dialogic approach to legitimacy, *Journal of Criminal Law & Criminology*, 102(1) (2012).
3. Clare Herrick and Andrew Charman, Shebeens and crime: the multiple criminalities of South African liquor and its regulation, *SA Crime Quarterly* 45 (2013), 25-32.
4. In this article I use the word 'shebeener' to refer to the owners of shebeens.
5. Herrick & Charman, Shebeens and crime, 31.
6. Ian Loader & Aogan Mulcahy, *Policing and the condition of England: memory, politics and culture*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003, 40-43.
7. Ibid., 44.
8. Ian Loader, Policing, recognition, and belonging, *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 605, *Democracy, Crime, and Justice*, May 2006, 202-221.
9. Ibid, 217.
10. 'Crime statistics – 'It's not safe here'', *City Press*, 22 September 2012, <http://www.citypress.co.za/news/crime-statistics-its-not-safe-here-20120922/> (accessed 7 September 2013).
11. National Planning Commission, *National Development Plan*, 2012, 51, 334, <http://www.info.gov.za/view/DynamicAction?pageid=623&myID=348761> (accessed 3 November 2013).
12. Ibid., 401.
13. World Health Organisation, *Violence prevention: the evidence*, 2010, 28, http://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/10665/77936/1/9789241500845_eng.pdf (accessed 3 November 2013).
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21. Ibid., 32.

22. John Crank, *Understanding police culture*, Cincinnati: Anderson Publishing Company, 1998.
23. PAJ Waddington, Cop culture, in Tim Newburn & Jill Peay, *Policing: politics, culture & control*, Oxford: Hart Publishing, 2012.
24. Monique Marks, *Transforming robocops: changing police in South Africa*, University of Scottsville: KwaZulu-Natal Press, 2005, 23; Janet Chan, Changing police culture, *British Journal of Criminology*, 36(1) (1996), 109-133.
25. Law Enforcement: Liquor Law Enforcement and Compliance Unit, City of Cape Town, <http://www.cape-town.gov.za/en/Lawenforcement/Pages/LiquorEnforcemenandComplianceUnit.aspx> (accessed 29 September 2013).
26. South African Police Service, Crime Statistics Overview RSA 2012/13, 22, http://www.saps.gov.za/statistics/reports/crimestats/2013/downloads/crime_statistics_presentation.pdf (accessed 29 March 2013).
27. South African Police Service, Annual Performance Plan 2012-2013, 1, http://www.saps.gov.za/saps_profile/strategic_framework/strategic_plan/2012_2013/annual_perf_plan_2012_2013.pdf (accessed 29 September 2013).
28. Ibid., 20.
29. For suggested best practice in Australia see Samantha Doherty and Ann Roche, *Alcohol and licensed premises: best practice in policing – a monograph for police and policy makers*, 2003, 53, [http://www.alcohol.gov.au/internet/alcohol/publishing.nsf/Content/42C710C8763AA9DBCA257263007A0F9E/\\$File/licensed_prem.pdf](http://www.alcohol.gov.au/internet/alcohol/publishing.nsf/Content/42C710C8763AA9DBCA257263007A0F9E/$File/licensed_prem.pdf) (accessed 3 November 2013).
30. For example, in 2011 it was revealed that Johannesburg Metro Police were under pressure to meet certain fine quotas in return for benefits. See for example, Thabiso Thakali, JMPD aims to rake in R20 million, *IOL News*, 13 August 2013, <http://www.iol.co.za/news/south-africa/gauteng/jmpd-aims-to-rake-in-r20m-1.1116950#.UkhMHZ90n90>.
31. Cape Town Metropolitan Police Department, Annual Police Plan 2012-13, 45, 47, http://www.capetown.gov.za/en/IDP/Documents/Statutory%20compliance%20plans%202012/AnnexF_Annual_Police_Plan.pdf (accessed 29 September 2013).
32. Cape Town Metropolitan Police Department, Annual Police Plan, 48.
33. A reference to a Western Cape government proposal for the creation of 'high streets' for better regulation. In the words of the provincial minister, 'To bring unlicensed liquor outlets within the ambit of the law, we aim to implement the High Street Model. These are designated streets within communities where commercial zones will be established. In these commercial zones, liquor traders will be able to operate with other businesses and do so with the correct zoning and licensing. With the help of the Violence Prevention through Urban Upgrade (VPUU), we have identified seven areas in the Western Cape to roll out the High Street Model pilot project. The areas are: Nyanga, Harare, Delft, Mfuleni, Philippi, Gugulethu and TR section in Khayelitsha.' – Minister of Finance, Economic Development and Tourism, <http://www.westerncape.gov.za/news/minister-winde-presents-statistics-western-cape-provincial-liquor-conference> (accessed 8 September 2013).
34. 'Moer' means 'beat' in Afrikaans slang.
35. Jonny Steinberg has made comparable observations suggesting the idea that 'safety resides in armed men sweeping the streets of danger' as 'deeply ensconced in urban South African consciousness' and in the way police approach their work. See Jonny Steinberg, Crime prevention goes abroad: policy transfer and policing in post-apartheid South Africa, *Theoretical Criminology*, 15(4) (2011), 349-364.
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THE PARADOX OF CRIME PERCEPTIONS

SAPS crime statistics, Victims of Crime Surveys and the media

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A disjuncture exists between perceptions of crime and the actual levels of recorded crime. The 2012/13 crime statistics released by the South African Police Service reveal an overall decrease in serious crime between 2002/03 and 2012/13. Yet, during this period, suspicions lingered among the public and media that crime was actually increasing. This article investigates the reporting of crime and demonstrates that household perceptions of property crime and violent crime can be interpreted and reported in contradictory ways. It can be variously shown that most households feel that crime has not decreased, nor do they feel it has increased and nor do they feel it has stayed the same. Consequently, the reporting of the perceptions of crime needs to be carefully and explicitly communicated to mitigate any confusion that may ensue.

Not a day goes by without the newspapers lamenting the high crime rate and the viciousness with which some crimes are perpetrated in South Africa.¹ The daily reporting of crime, especially violent crime, has ensured that crime and attendant issues continually remain in the public domain. Hence, assertions by the South African Police Service (SAPS) that crime rates are falling are often received with scepticism and derision by the public and media alike.² There is a growing suspicion that crime rates may be much higher than official figures divulge, undermining the credibility of the crime statistics.³ O'Donovan notes that crime statistics released by the SAPS have shown a decline from 2001, yet national

victimisation surveys (until 2007) regularly reveal that people's perception is that crime has been increasing.⁴ According to the 2003 National Victims of Crime Survey, 52,9% of people felt that crime had increased over the past three years,⁵ while the 2007 National Victims of Crime Survey indicated that 57,1% of people felt that crime had increased.⁶

This phenomenon is not unique to South Africa. Studies in the United States and Canada also accentuate the dichotomy between public perceptions of crime and official figures.⁷ Numerous arguments have been put forward to clarify this contra-diction. Firstly, the crime statistics do not fully reflect the crime situation, as some criminal activities go unreported.⁸ Secondly, people who have been victims of crime, or know of someone who has been affected by crime, are more inclined to indicate that crime has increased,

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even if the incident occurred outside the reporting period.⁹ Thirdly, social factors such as levels of trust in particular communities and concerns or anxiety about children may lead people to indicate that crime levels are increasing.¹⁰ Fourthly, the constant portrayal of crime by the media fuels fear and insecurities. Warr asserts that the continual bombardment of information from the media leads people to believe that the world is a much more dangerous place than it actually is.¹¹

Oddly, even a household's perception that crime has not decreased can be misrepresented. Consequently, the empirical data from victim surveys can be depicted to validate a particular position with regard to how crime is perceived. This article demonstrates that the data on perceptions of crime can be interpreted in several ways and subsequently reported to produce or validate particular views.

The article begins by describing the data that are employed to investigate the linkages between perceptions of crime and the reported crime statistics. Specifically, the article will examine the data from the 2012 Victims of Crime Survey (VOCS),¹² comparing this with the 2011/12 crime statistics (as reported in the addendum to the 2011/12 SAPS Annual Report) to determine if there is a correlation between people's perception and the actual crime rate.¹³

This is followed by an analysis of households' perceptions of crime and the different ways in which the same perceptions can be interpreted and reported. It will subsequently be demonstrated that the perceptions of households of levels of violent and property crime can be reported in different ways to support different contentions: these interpretations are examined nationally and provincially to ensure consistency of the findings.

DATA AND METHODOLOGY

This article uses two data sources to analyse the degree to which perceptions of change in crime levels are comparable to change in actual reported crime.

The actual crime statistics utilised in this article are the figures produced annually by the SAPS. The data are collected and collated at the national department and are representative of the crime situation in the country for a particular financial year.

The VOCS is a national household survey conducted by Statistics South Africa that focuses on people's perception and experiences of crime. The first VOCS was conducted by Statistics South Africa in 1998, while the the Institute for Security Studies (ISS) did the 2003 and 2007 VOCS. Subsequent VOCS (2011 and 2012) were undertaken by Statistics South Africa. The main objectives of the survey are to:

- Provide information about the dynamics of crime from the perspective of households and the victims of crime.
- Explore public perceptions of the activities of the police, prosecutors, courts and correctional services in the prevention of crime and victimisation.
- Provide complementary data on the level of crime within South Africa in addition to the statistics published annually by SAPS.¹⁴

Accordingly, the survey probes people's perceptions of crime and safety, law enforcement, the police, the courts and corruption. The VOCS was undertaken between January and March 2012, reflecting respondents' perceptions for the reference period January to December 2011 (unless the question specified otherwise). The design, data collection, methodology and the non-responses are discussed in detail in the VOCS report.¹⁵ Suffice to note that the sample comprised 31 007 households.

The analysis of the data presented in this article was executed in Stata 11, with the application of a weighting variable to ensure the results are reflective of demographics in South Africa.

The VOCS asks respondents two questions (with three response options) that can be compared against crime statistics. These are:

- Question 2.4: How do you think the level of violent crime (e.g. assault, robbery, murder) in your area has changed in the last three years (January 2009 to December 2011)?
 - 1 = Increased
 - 2 = Decreased
 - 3 = Stayed the same
- Question 2.5: How do you think the level of property crime (e.g. burglary, theft) in your area has changed in the last three years (January 2009 to December 2011)?
 - 1 = Increased
 - 2 = Decreased
 - 3 = Stayed the same

These questions explore citizens' perceptions of the levels of violent crime and property crime over three years, namely January 2009 to December 2011. The SAPS does not specifically categorise crime as violent crime and property crime. The overarching classification of crimes that require police action are termed serious crimes. They are defined by the SAPS as:

- contact crime
 - murder, attempted murder, asexual offences, assault to do grievous bodily harm (GBH), common assault, robbery: aggravating and common robbery
 - Trio crime
 - carjacking, robbery: residential and business
- contact related crime
 - arson, malicious damage to property
- property related crime
 - burglary: residential and non-residential, theft of motor vehicle/cycle, theft out of motor vehicle and stock theft
- crime detected – police action
- other serious crime¹⁶

The SAPS reports on many types of crime, but this article focuses on violent crime and property crime since these categories feature in both datasets (SAPS and VOCS). Moreover, both datasets report nationally as well as per province, which enables comparison across provinces. The SAPS category 'contact crime' is analogous to violent crime and is therefore selected as the

proxy for appraisal of people's perception of violent crime. Similarly, the SAPS 'property related crime' corresponds to people's perception of property crime in the VOCS.

The property related crime variable comprises burglary, residential and non-residential, theft of motor vehicle/cycle, theft out of motor vehicle and stock theft, and is used as a proxy to provide a comparison with people's perception of property crime.

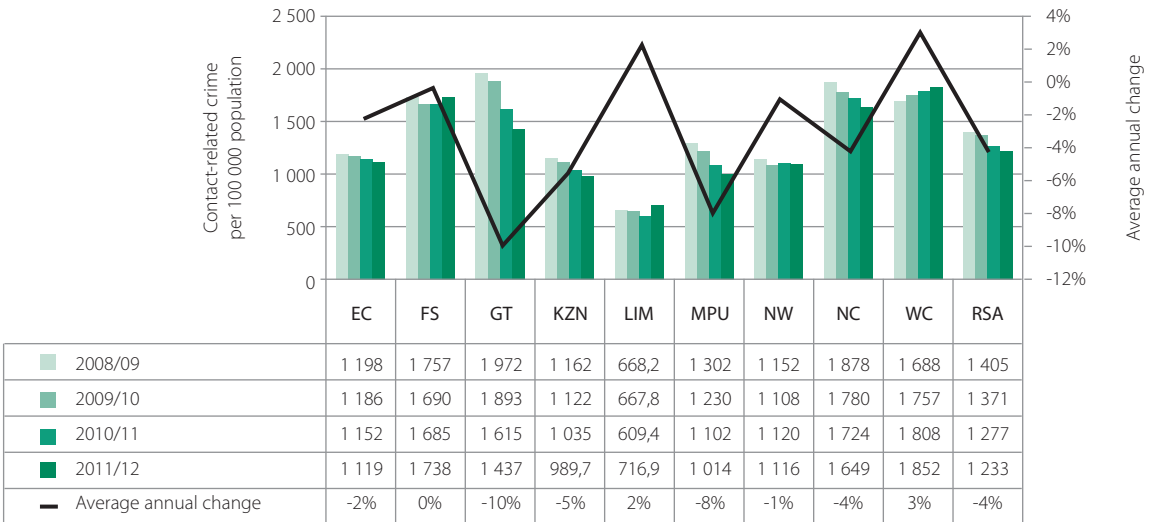
It should be noted that the SAPS reporting period does not coincide with the reporting period for the VOCS. The crime statistics reported in 2012 by the SAPS refer to crimes that were recorded during the period 1 April 2011 to 31 March 2012. The crime statistics can therefore only be compared with eight months (April 2011 to December 2011) of the VOCS, since the respondents were questioned on their perceptions of crime between January 2009 and December 2011. Hence, crime statistics for this period are utilised to yield impartial results. Since the SAPS does not report on crime statistics for this specific period, the crime statistics between 1 April 2008 and 31 March 2012 are used, since they cover the period January 2009 to December 2011.

The SAPS crime statistics therefore reflect a period of 48 months, while the victimisation surveys collect perception data for a 36-month period. The emphasis in this article is not the actual, but rather the change in, crime levels. The selected years will be reviewed to compare the changes in crime levels relative to people's perception of the changes in crime levels.

ANALYSIS

The VOCS questionnaire provides three options (increase, decrease or stayed the same) to ascertain households' perception of crime – these are qualitative measures. The crime statistics are quantitative measures reflecting the actual number of crime incidents reported to the SAPS during that particular financial year. The average annual change in the crime statistics is utilised to determine the change in crime over this period.¹⁷

Figure 1: Contact crime per 100 000 population



Source: Addendum to the 2011/12 SAPS Annual Report. Author's own calculation.

Violent crime/contact crime

Contact crime per 100 000 population decreased between 2008/09 and 2011/12, as reported by the SAPS. It can be observed in Figure 1 that there was an average annual decrease of 4% during this period.

The largest decrease in contact crime per 100 000 population occurred in Gauteng (GT), while there was no change for the Free State (FS), and small increases in Limpopo (LIM) and Western Cape (WC).

An evaluation of households' response to the question '*How do you think the level of violent crime [e.g. assault, robbery, murder] in your area has changed in the last three years (January 2009 to December 2011)?*' reveals that 33% of respondents believed that violent crime had increased; 38% believed that violent crime had decreased, and 29% believed it had not changed.

It can be seen in Figure 2 that most households felt that violent crime had decreased; which is consistent with the contact crime per 100 000 crime statistic provided by the SAPS. Moreover, the perception of WC and LIM households (where most households felt that crime had

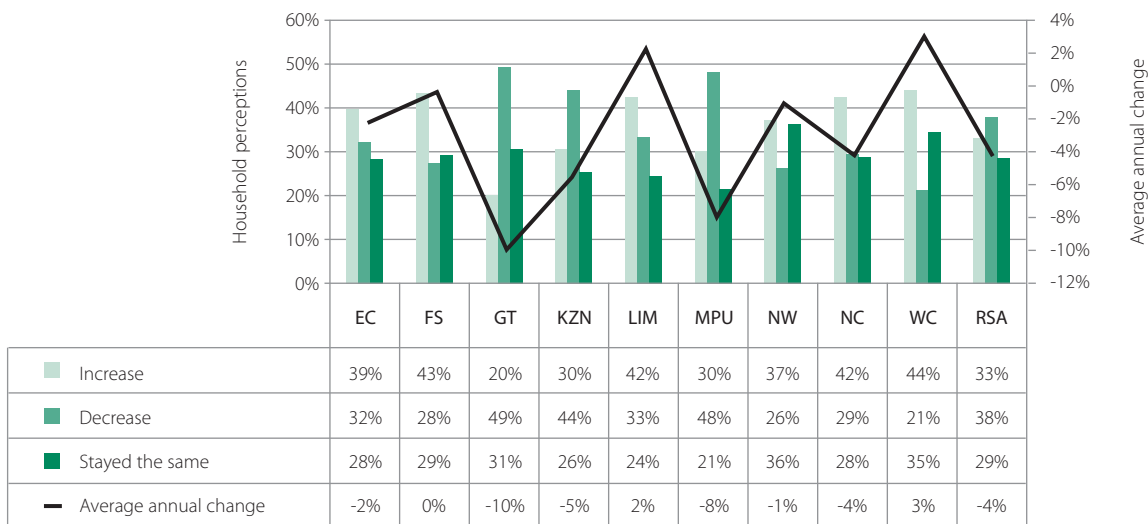
increased) appears to be aligned with actual crime figures, although there is a divergence with the FS household perceptions. The analysis of the SAPS data for the FS indicate there was no average annual change in contact crime per 100 000 population, but most households in the province felt that violent crime had increased.

It may seem that the households' perceptions align with the crime statistics. However, a different analysis of the same figures can provide a contrasting view. It can be construed that if 38% of households felt that crime had decreased, 62% (33% increased and 29% stayed the same) in fact indicated that crime 'did not decrease'.

It can be observed in Figure 3 that most households, nationally as well in the provinces, felt that violent crime between 2009 and 2011 'did not decrease'. Similarly, it can also be demonstrated that households perceived that violent crime 'did not increase' (Figure 4).

While 33% of South African households thought that violent crime had increased, most (67%) households felt that it 'did not increase'. Similar results are reflected in all the provinces, where it is indicated that most households perceived that violent crime 'did not increase'.

Figure 2: Households' perception of violent crime



Source: Addendum to the 2011/12 SAPS Annual Report. VOCS. Author's own calculation.

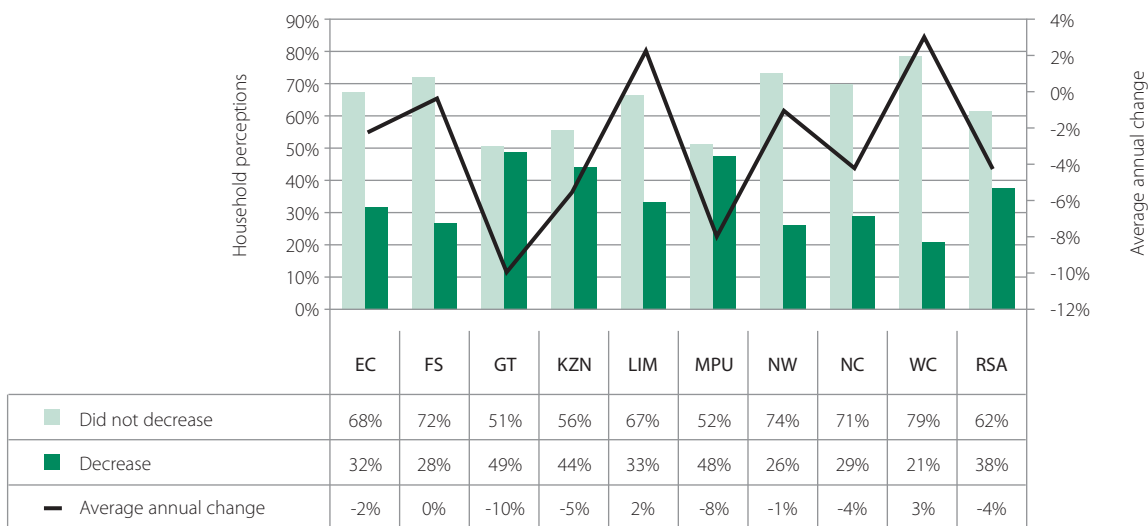
Equally, it can be said that households' perception of violent crime 'did not stay the same', as observed in Figure 5 (overleaf).

From this analysis, 71% of South African households believed that violent crime 'did not stay the same'. This was also reflected at provincial level.

The above analysis paradoxically demonstrates that it can variously be argued that:

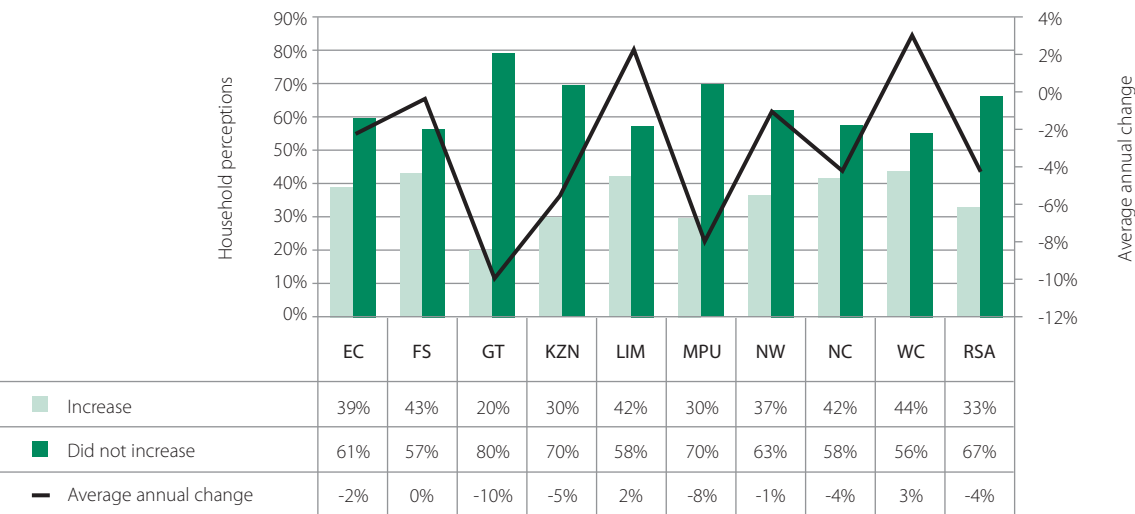
- Most households felt that violent crime 'did not increase'
- Most households felt that violent crime 'did not decrease' (if an analysis of dual categories of responses is done)
- Most households felt that violent crime 'did not stay the same' (if an analysis of dual categories of responses is done)

Figure 3: Households that felt violent crime 'did not decrease'



Source: Addendum to the 2011/12 SAPS Annual Report. VOCS. Author's own calculation.

Figure 4: Households that felt violent crime ‘did not increase’



Source: Addendum to the 2011/12 SAPS Annual Report. VOCS. Author's own calculation.

Property crime

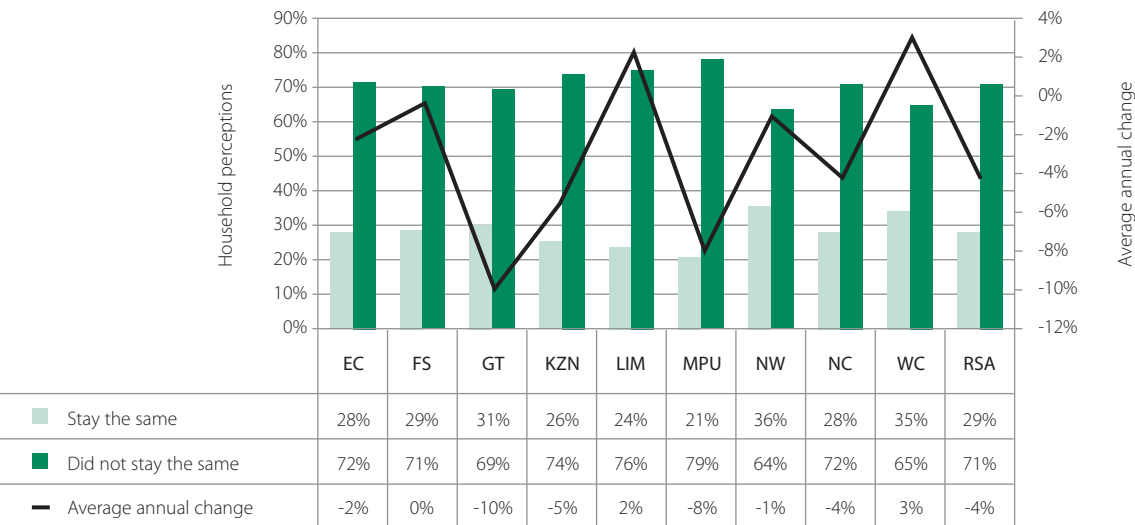
An equivalent analysis can be employed to investigate the perceptions of property crime, and so to determine if there is consistency between households' perceptions and actual crime statistics.

The SAPS statistics reveal that property related crime per 100 000 population decreased at an

average annual rate of 1% between 2008/09 and 2011/12 (Figure 6).

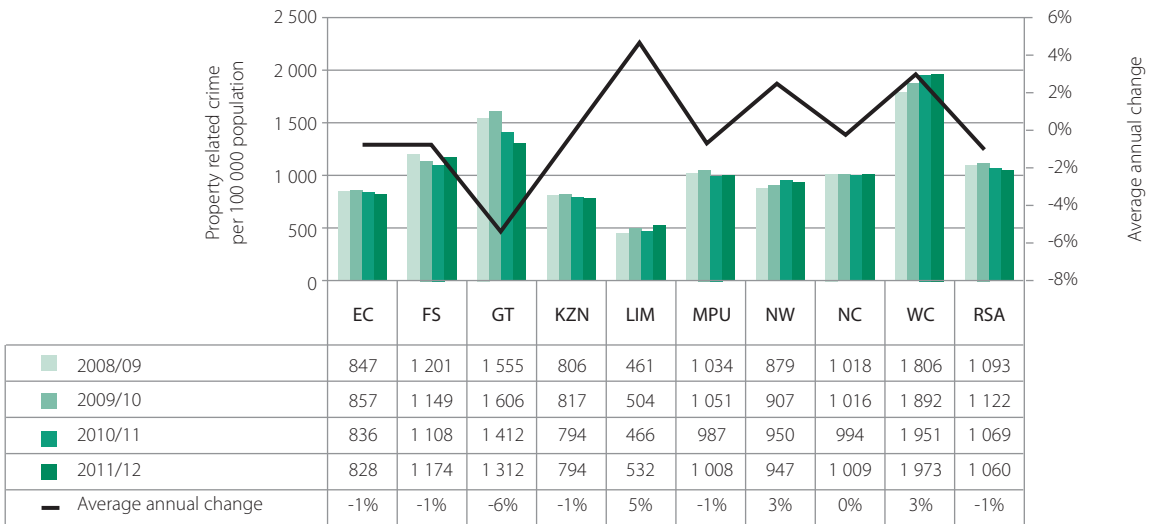
The Northern Cape (NC) did not experience any change in the rate of property related crime during 2008/09 and 2011/12. There was an average annual increase of 3% in the rate of property crimes in the Western Cape (WC) and North West (NW). Gauteng experienced the largest decrease of 6% in property crime.

Figure 5: Households that felt violent crime ‘did not stay the same’



Source: Addendum to the 2011/12 SAPS Annual Report. VOCS. Author's own calculation.

Figure 6: Property related crime per 100 000 population



Source: Addendum to the 2011/12 SAPS Annual Report.

An evaluation of households' perception of property crime, 'How do you think the level of property crime [e.g. burglary, theft] in your area has changed in the last three years (January 2009 to December 2011)?' reveals that 37% of South African households believed that property crime decreased, while 35% felt that it increased and 28% felt that it stayed the same (Figure 7).

These results mirror those of the perceptions of violent crime. That is, EC, FS, LIM, NW, NC and WC households felt that property crime had increased, although overall most households felt that property crime had decreased (Figure 7).

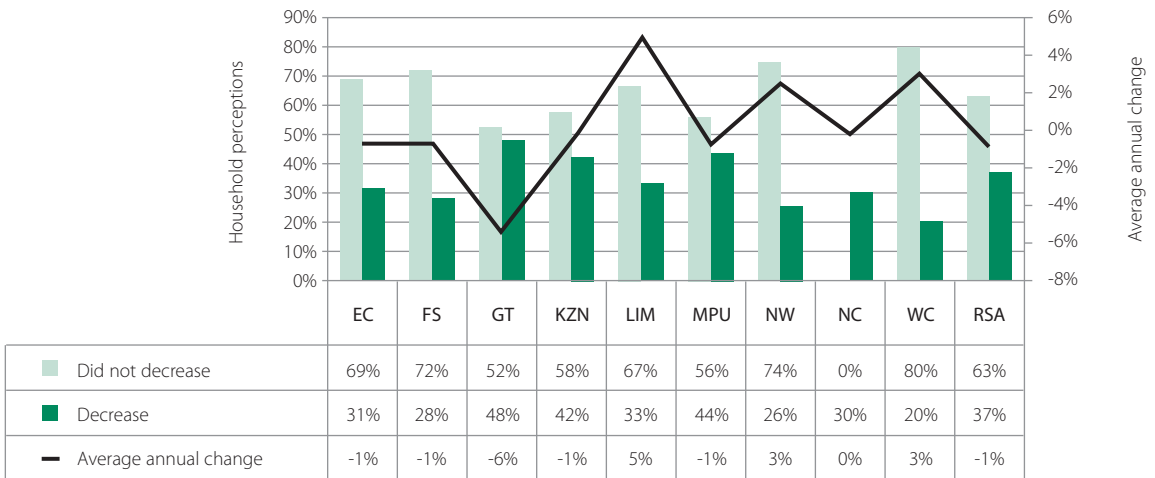
The perception of property crime can be interpreted in various ways, as was shown in relation to violent crime. According to the VOCS,

Figure 7: Households' perceptions of property crime



Source: Addendum to the 2011/12 SAPS Annual Report. VOCS. Author's own calculation.

Figure 8: Households feeling that property crime ‘did not decrease’



Source: Addendum to the 2011/12 SAPS Annual Report. VOCS. Author’s own calculation.

most households felt that property crime ‘did not decrease’, as illustrated in Figure 8 above.

While the crime statistics reveal an average annual decrease of 1% in property crime, most households (63%) felt that property crime ‘did not decrease’. This finding is consistent across all provinces.

Similarly, it can be demonstrated that most households felt that property crime ‘did not increase’ (Figure 9).

It can be observed from Figure 9 below that 65% of households felt that property crime ‘did not

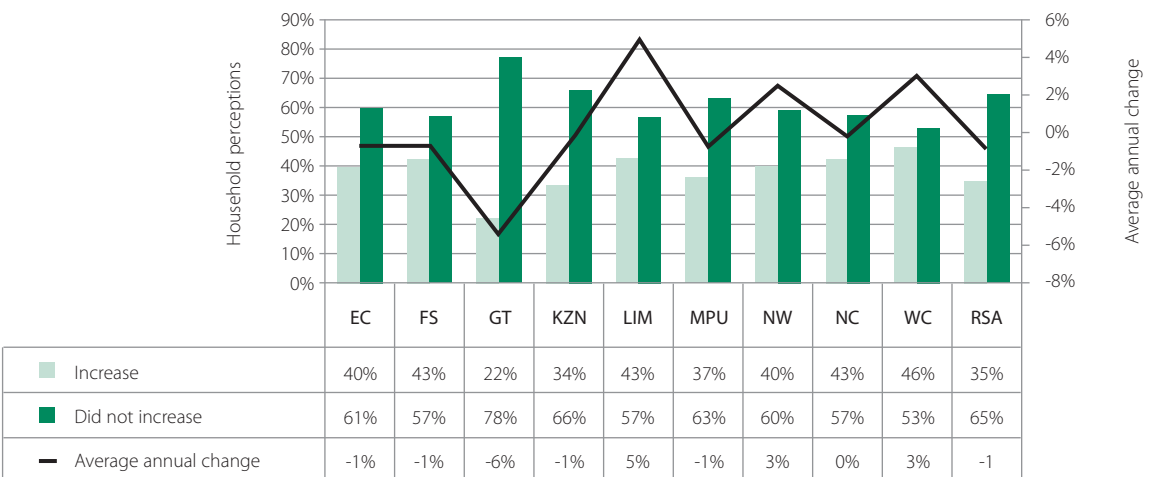
increase’. Similarly, perceptions of crime not increasing, relative to it in reality not increasing, is consistent across all provinces.

Employing the same reasoning, it can be inferred that households’ perception of property crime is that it ‘did not stay the same’ between 2009 and 2011.

It can be observed in Figure 10 that 72% of households felt that property crime ‘did not stay the same’.

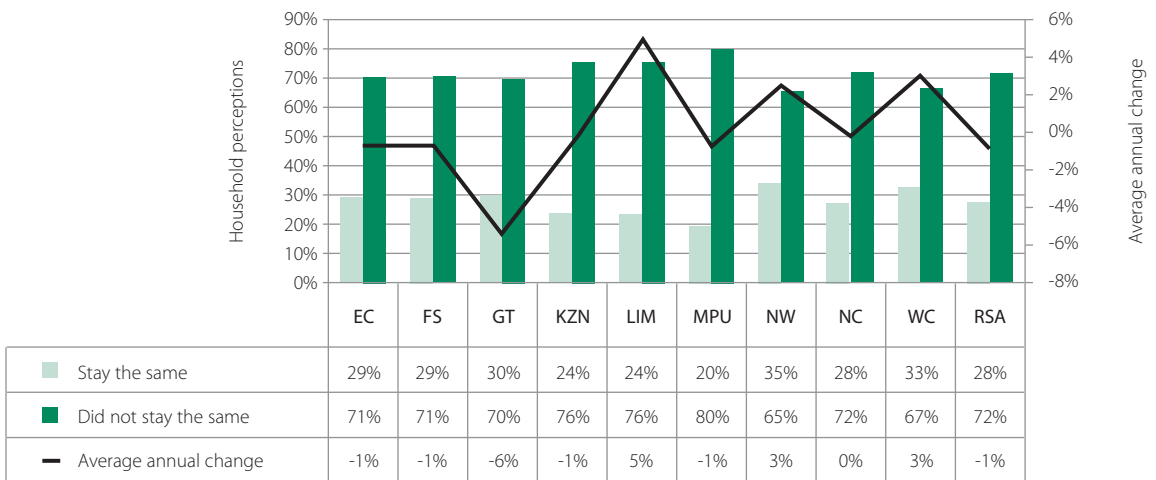
Analogous to the perception of violent crime, the analysis of the perception of property crime paradoxically indicates that:

Figure 9: Households feeling that property crime ‘did not increase’



Source: Addendum to the 2011/12 SAPS Annual Report. VOCS. Author’s own calculation.

Figure 10: Households feeling that property crime ‘did not stay the same’



Source: Addendum to the 2011/12 SAPS Annual Report. VOCS. Author's own calculation.

- Most households felt that property crime ‘did not increase’
- Most households felt that property crime ‘did not decrease’ (if an analysis of dual categories of responses is done)
- Most households felt that property crime ‘did not stay the same’ (if an analysis of dual categories of responses is done)

DISCUSSION

While crime victimisation surveys are not a substitute for actual crime statistics, they are an important instrument to gauge whether perceptions of crime are aligned with crime statistics. They serve as a valuable complement to the official crime statistics since they can be utilised to estimate the ‘dark figure’ of crime, that is, those incidents of crime that are not officially recorded.¹⁸ Consequently, the information garnered from the surveys can assist authorities to formulate crime prevention policies and strategies as well as educate the public. Nonetheless, victimisation surveys do have limitations, such as the following:¹⁹

- Memory failure
- Inability or unwillingness of victims to talk about their crime experiences
- Recording events that are not defined as crime

- Sample loss (the part of the population not interviewed may be different from those who are)
- Telescoping (the effect of recalling the event as more recent than it actually was), resulting in:
 - over- and under-estimating of crime

The surveys usually do not question the experiences of businesses and organisations, leading to under-estimations of crime. Most surveys ignore the victimisation of children and do not cover certain types of victimisation such as murder, since there is no living victim.²⁰ Victimisation surveys exclude residents of hospitals, prisons and old-age homes, who are often victimised and are not counted in the surveys.²¹ The surveys often exclude foreigners and illegal immigrants whose experiences in many instances go unreported.²²

Sometimes the respondent may not perceive an incident as a crime. For example, domestic violence in a relationship may not be perceived as a criminal offence and may appear as ‘normal’, under-estimating crime.²³ Moreover, victims may be unwilling to report or discuss experiences of crime such as rape, especially if it occurred within the household.²⁴

In contrast, offences and incidents that fall outside the domain of the definition of a crime

are reported as crimes, resulting in an over-reporting of crime. The failure to include victimisations that occurred in the reference period results in an under-estimation, while the inclusion of victimisation that did not occur within the timeframe produces an over-estimation of victimisation.²⁵

Notwithstanding their shortcomings, victimisation surveys provide important information to the public and the authorities. It is therefore critical that the questions posed in these surveys are aligned with the objectives of the survey and, more importantly, that the responses are reflective of participants' perceptions of crime in the relevant period.

There are three types of questions that can be asked in a survey: open-ended (e.g. What do you think of the level of crime in your area?), closed-ended (Do you think that crime has increased, decreased or stayed the same?) or scale response (On a scale from 1 to 5 please rate the level of service at your local police station).

Open-ended questions allow the researcher to attain more information by exploring in detail issues that may arise in the interview. It is, however, more time-consuming and arduous to analyse the responses provided. This challenge is overcome by utilising close-ended questions, since they offer limited choices and, more importantly, are easy to replicate.

The VOCS primarily employs close-ended questions in the survey, which restricts the respondents to choosing from a set of options for each question. The restriction to a set of limited options for the particular question underpins the contradictions in the perceptions of crime. Most surveys contain a mix of open- and closed-ended questions, but a good rule of thumb for quantitative surveys is to make closed-ended questions the default.²⁶

The analysis in this article reveals that the same perceptions of crime can be interpreted in various ways to validate and justify a particular stance on crime. This paradox is dependent on the way the

questions are framed and the manner in which the results are analysed and presented. The three options; increase, decrease and stay the same will precipitate such results as long as no single category exceeds 50% and the choices are not explicitly explained to respondents.

Even a result of more than 50% for a particular category can foment ambiguity. A scenario where 60% of households indicate that crime increased, 30% felt it decreased and 10% felt it stay the same, would indicate that perceived crime had increased, since only 40% would have believed it had not increased. But these figures also reveal that 70% of people did not think that crime decreased; which could mean that it increased or stayed the same. Similarly, 90% of respondents did not think that crime had not stayed the same; which could mean it either increased or decreased.

Rephrasing the question asked would yield similar results, and create much confusion among the respondents. For example, the questionnaire can be formulated as follows:

- Did you feel that crime increased, and did not decrease or stay the same?
- Did you feel that crime decreased, and did not increase or stay the same?
- Did you feel that crime stayed the same, and did not increase or decrease?

Such confusions would generate misunderstanding among the respondents as well as the interviewer. The analysis of such options would be more complicated, generating further obfuscations of the perceptions of crime.

The misperceptions can be mitigated if reports are qualified. For example, in the case of violent crime above, it can be stated that the perception of violent crime as having increased is relative to it having decreased and having stayed the same, although this too may add to the confusion. These shortcomings can also be moderated if all the categories of responses to the questions posed on crime perception are simultaneously reported. While it may appear redundant to do so, it will

provide clarity to all stakeholders and eschew biases that fester.

CONCLUSION

The reduction of crime is a stated imperative of the government and clearly articulated in government policy. Intensifying the fight against crime and corruption is one of the strategic priorities emanating from the Medium Term Strategic Framework.²⁷ This was subsequently transformed into Outcome 3: 'All people in South Africa are and feel safe', which is the responsibility of the Justice Crime Prevention Safety and Security Cluster. Accordingly, the state has initiated numerous strategies (e.g. increasing police personnel) to reduce crime rates.

The official crime statistics released annually by the SAPS seem to show that crime rates are decreasing over extended time periods. Furthermore, VOCS reveal that households' perceive violent crime and property crime to be decreasing. Yet, the reporting on these findings can be manipulated to suggest that crime is perceived to not be decreasing.

It is therefore important to qualify the increase relative to a decrease and staying the same; as an omission of such a proviso can lead to a different interpretation of the same data. Similar provisions need to be stipulated if the crime rates decrease or stay the same. The reporting of crime perception can also be ameliorated by reporting the results of all categories, especially if no category is greater than 50%. If not, the reporting of people's perception of crime can be presented to legitimise and justify any policy position.

It is further recommended that Statistics South Africa seeks to align the VOCS reporting period with the SAPS crime statistics reporting period, to enable comparisons between the two sets of data.



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ON THE RECORD ...

with Olly Owen and
Andrew Faull

Olly Owen is a junior research fellow in the Department of International Development at the University of Oxford. In 2012 he completed his doctorate in Social and Cultural Anthropology at Oxford. This involved an ethnographic study of, and fieldwork with, the Nigerian Police Force. Andrew Faull is a doctoral research student at the Centre for Criminology, University of Oxford. His research also involves an ethnographic study of police, the South African Police Service. He completed nine months of fieldwork with the SAPS in April 2013.

In this frank exchange Olly and Andrew discuss their observations relating to performance management in the respective agencies.

Andrew Faull (AF): Olly, we know performance measurement and performance management are important issues for public services, and as such for the police. During my fieldwork I was often struck by a sense that the SAPS was lying to itself. The data the organisation was generating and communicating to itself was not always entirely honest (as discussed in detail below). How do Nigerian police officers understand performance measurement and how does it play itself out in police practice?

Olly Owen (OO): One of the main issues in measuring police performance in Nigeria is that all performance measurement, like policing policy in general, tends to be reactive. Statistical measurement of crime, or cases, is extremely loose and variable in quality and in what it captures, so that it is not a realistic basis for examining performance. This has been shown through recent donor-supported attempts to bring in measurement culture. Currently, cases are often registered (documented) retrospectively, after an appropriate settlement or solution has been found, so as not to create a 'problematic' paper trail of unresolved incidents. In cases of petty crime, formally documenting cases can itself be a threat, made to suspects who refuse to reach informal compensation arrangements with complainants.

That is, if they refuse the option of resolution, their offence will be made a matter of record, and thus irrevocable, triggering – or at least making more likely – certain state processes. But in cases of more serious crime, there are also some incentives for officers not to create cases that cannot be resolved and would thus reflect badly on them and their superiors.

In the places where statistical measurement is used as a performance indicator,¹ divisional police officers (DPOs, precinct managers) tend to respond only to the varying rates of headline-grabbing crime such as murder and armed robbery. In such busy precincts, there is a tendency to assume that if the rates of these serious crimes are managed, all is well. These are also in general – along with car-snatching (vehicle theft and/or hijacking) – the only crimes that superior officers will query lower-level managers about. So within policing circles there is talk of incidents where officers have recorded bodies found on roads, or even with parts missing, as 'sudden and unnatural death', with only a cursory preliminary investigation into other possible explanations. This is primarily due to police officers being aware of the risk of listing a homicide case with no obvious suspect – doing so will simply create more unsolved cases, which make the officer and his unit look bad.

Also, there are no baseline data to measure police performance against, except a general public sentiment or institutional memory of how conditions and performance have been historically.

A non-governmental organisation (NGO), the CLEEN Foundation, has for several years collected criminal victimisation data through a national victims of crime survey, but the results are not well-known or well-used at the level of localised policing. Besides, their funder has recently redirected this funding to other areas.

Beyond that, since policing policy at both local and national level is reactive – there is no strategic policing plan, either at national level or in any of the 36 states – there are no targets against which to measure performance. And since the NPF is centralised, and upwardly accountable, there is no easy and direct way for localised publics to voice opinions over police performance. Some more progressive officers take care to communicate well with local citizens and create forums for their input, but this is not a required or regularised system. Police Community Relations committees do exist, but function very unevenly, well in some places, badly or not at all in others. And the system for complaints is likewise not uniformly functional nor is it valued within the force as a performance indicator. Often it is viewed as a threat.

This means that often the most powerful forms of communication and accountability between police and public are informal – expressed via social and political networks, or in public protest action – and thus unpredictable, creating a high sense of risk among officers wary of public moods, in circumstances where officers' actions may suddenly spark public protest, complaints, or worse.

How powerful would you say is informal accountability and feedback of sentiment about police performance in shaping officers' behaviour in South Africa?

AF: I see a number of similarities but also clear differences between what you're saying about the NPF and what I've seen in the SAPS.

Firstly, the SAPS has quite a well-established formal performance measurement system. Each year a strategic plan lists baselines, and targets are set across a range of performance areas. These are made available to the public through hard and soft copy publications so that, in theory, the SAPS can be held to account. The SAPS also has an always-on and nationally networked Crime Administration System (CAS), in effect an online crime database. This allows managers to draw data from the system and respond to reported crime with every 12-hour shift change. At the two city stations where I worked this seemed to be the norm. In morning meetings detectives would discuss all reported crime from the previous 24 hours, and patrol commanders could post patrols based on the geographic spread of recent activity (though in practice patrollers often ignored or failed to listen to this information during parades, I believe). At the rural station I worked at crime was so rare that it wasn't necessarily to pull stats, everyone knew if something had been reported.

It is also mandatory that all SAPS stations establish community policing forums (CPFs) comprising local residents and business people, and that these meet regularly. However, like the civilian oversight you describe in Nigeria, these vary in size, strength and impact across the country. At the rural station I was impressed that, despite having to provide transport to members from across the expansive precinct, police managed to maintain relatively good relationships with their CPF as well as other community groups.

In recent years there have been concerns, both from within the SAPS and civil society, that the SAPS places too much importance on reported crime as a measure of police success. This is exemplified in the ritual of releasing the national crime statistics from the previous financial year each September, with great ceremony and fanfare, followed by public debate about what the data mean for the country and the SAPS. I forget who said it but there's a great quote that goes something like, 'The problem with taking credit when crime goes down, is that you're also responsible when it goes back up.' If there's one

thing we know it's that police have a limited impact on most types of crime.

You mentioned that police officers in Nigeria try to not record certain types of crime. Because of the importance placed on recorded crime in South Africa we've seen instances in which the media have reported that police have neglected to record crimes on the CAS to 'stay in the green'; in other words to keep the number of crime incidents within the designated target. The targets tend to be set lower than the number of crimes recorded in the same month of the previous year. During meetings and briefings there's a lot of talk of being 'in the green' or 'in the red', depending on how many crimes have been recorded for the month thus far. A notable change in recent years has been an emphasis on 'crimes reliant on police action', such as arrests for drunk driving. In my experience police are generally able to 'stay in the green' when it comes to these categories, and so play them up in the media.

During my recent fieldwork I became aware, for the first time, of the SAPS recording data I had not previously seen recorded. For instance, the commander of a 'crime prevention' unit would open a spreadsheet on a station computer and record the number of people stopped for the evening, the number of cars stopped and searched, the number of taverns visited, the number drugs confiscated, and so forth. What is important about this, however, is that the data would always be captured mid-shift. In other words they were estimates based on the number of actions and seizures the commander hoped that his members would carry out. In a sense he was helping to build an imaginary narrative, part fiction, part fact, which would travel up the national hierarchy, not only guiding future management decisions, but eventually, making its way into the annual reports.

I noted something similar during VCPs (Vehicle Check Points) at one of the stations. Shifts would regularly be charged with conducting up to five or six different VCPs across their precinct during a single shift. This involved setting up a roadblock, stopping passing cars, checking licence

details and searching for illegal substances, weapons and so forth. These have become a regular feature of South African policing and are something the SAPS proudly reports on each year. However, while at times we established formal VCPs and stopped traffic, most of the time VCP reports were forged. The officials I was with would record the physical description and licence plate information of passing cars, and enter a fictitious name and driver's licence number to accompany it. This would serve as evidence of a car having been stopped when nothing of the sort had happened. We would always be sure to gather this information in the area in which the VCP was meant to have taken place, so that the car's AVL (Automatic Vehicle Location system) would show that we had been in the correct area at the right time. We would usually complete one pro-forma sheet over a 20-minute period before heading on. However, as one official said to me, if police officials ran their VCPs for an hour, as they are meant to, they would fill many more pages. Because this never happens, and police tend to only run a VCP (or fake VCP) until one page's worth of details have been captured, management must know they are being deceived. And yet it didn't seem to matter. As long as the next person up the hierarchy was receiving data that he or she could report to his or her superior, everyone seemed happy. This is what I meant when I said I've decided that in many respects, the SAPS is an organisation that is lying to itself.

Of course it is important to have data and the SAPS has good recording systems. However, it is problematic that an agency which, in popular culture at least, is meant to be truth centred and justice focused, appears to be feeding itself fraudulent performance data.

Am I to assume, from your description of Nigeria, that systems there have yet to become widely computerised or centralised? As Africa's second wealthiest country, this surprises me. Perhaps this explains your question regarding informal accountability. In South Africa, following apartheid, there has been a great emphasis on building formal accountability structures. I think these have played an important role in shaping

police performance, though they have not always functioned fully or optimally, and are always evolving. At a local level I think some CPFs are quite active and capable of encouraging certain types of police performance, though these are not always technically legal (like offering free drinks or food to on-duty cops in order to ensure their presence in an area). South Africa is fortunate to have a range of state and non-state generators of sentiment data about police, including regular surveys. However, I don't think many police are aware of these surveys and anyway, your question was about informal sentiment, not formal. Here I would remind you of my article 'Fighting for Respect' (SACQ 44) in which I suggested that, in certain areas at least, I think many police feel underappreciated and disrespected by the communities in which they work. I think that citizens who complain informally about police performance risk irking police and encouraging police backlash. On the other hand, police are very receptive to the free food and drinks many residents and business people offer them, seeing it as recognition of 'good relations'. So perhaps unsurprisingly, informal praise of police performance is welcomed while complaints are not.

OO: As you rightly assumed, there is currently no effective centralised or computerised system to record crime in Nigeria. Where South Africa has post-apartheid, Nigeria has post-military government, but the effects have been quite different. The civilianisation of politics has put the police centre stage in dealing with national legal and security crises. As a consequence the politics of policing have been more often concerned with the 'high policing'² political functions than their 'low policing' everyday crime control functions. Where the two interests have not coincided, political interest has usually taken precedence. This has included watering down policing on occasions when it might have restrained militancy or other lawbreaking that served certain political interests, further inhibiting ordinary officers' confidence in various potentially sensitive situations.

Data-led policy making often takes a back seat when institutions feel the need to react quickly,

especially given the hierarchical and paramilitary police management culture and structures, which are primarily concerned with issuing and executing orders, rather than holistic planning.

What you say about the strategic use of free drinks supplied by the public to the police also puts a different gloss on what in Nigeria is usually portrayed as a more extractive practice.

In my question to you about informal accountability I was wondering where the police fear to tread, and the possibilities of political backlash for incidents born of everyday policing. Is that a part of performance measurement and accountability in the crude sense?

AF: I think a common and accurate perception in South Africa is that the poor bear the brunt of the police gaze. So I was surprised, at one of the stations at which I was based, to find that middle-class people, even tourists from the developed North, were relatively regularly arrested. I suspect this might surprise many South Africans. However, for every such arrest there were at least 20 arrests of poorer South Africans and Africans from elsewhere on the continent.

Regarding 'high policing' and the political arena, I think this is an area that is rapidly unravelling to reveal all sorts of complex ties and alliances between senior police and politicians in the country. You might have heard of a former investigative agency in the country known as the 'Scorpions', located outside the SAPS. It was largely seen as fearless (or biased) in its investigations but was closed down through political manoeuvring. The 'Hawks', its SAPS-based replacement, has taken on some big cases but has been far less courageous than its predecessor in tackling cases involving people holding power in the state. But in terms of everyday policing, I think that many cops are just out to cover their backs and ensure they hold onto their jobs. As such, there are many who would not seek to ruffle political feathers if they know their actions might result in this. Can we measure such inaction at a performance level? I'm not sure.

OO: In Nigeria it is also noticeable that one of the ways in which the public measure police performance, is by comparison. The comparisons invoked are usually between the performance of the NPF today, and the same or other forces in imagining the past, future, or elsewhere. Thus today's police are unfavourably compared with the folk memory of the colonial police, or the localised Native Authority Police Forces, which existed prior to the 1966-70 civil war. Or the NPF will be compared negatively with the standard of policing elsewhere, with favoured comparisons being the US, UK and Ghana. These comparisons are not always based on actual experience, though given the commonplace nature of trans-nationality in today's Africa they may be. More often they seem to be informed by media representations, such that the powers and performance attributed to police forces in the developed world may seem to render them omniscient and omnipotent.

When Lagos gubernatorial aspirant Funso Williams was assassinated some years ago, a major national paper ran a front-page story reporting that experts from London's Metropolitan Police would examine his retinas on which they would find recorded the last thing he saw.

Interestingly, this powerful transnational myth has been enhanced by the deliberate promotion of British police involvement in Nigeria over recent decades – using innovative forensic techniques to identify a boy victim of ritual killing in London, or dogged pursuit of high-profile corrupt politicians such as Delta State's ex-Governor James Ibori, for example. So this reinforces the myth of omniscience, against which an NPF that lacks even the ability to conduct fingerprint analysis, can only compare extremely badly.

Likewise, the Ghana comparison is not based on analysis of Ghanaian police performance, but is instead part of a kind of masochistic public rhetoric, in which Nigeria is compared negatively with its smaller West African neighbour.

I also mentioned the future. Advocates of autonomous state police forces also point to the accountability and performance benefits they expect from an alternative system as a critique of the status quo.

And in addition to these, there are some real institutions to compare with the NPF, in the form both of alternative policing providers such as vigilante groups and youth vanguard-turned security outfits, and of the specialised policing agencies that were split from the NPF under military rule, such as the SSS (State Security Service – a mix of surveillance, intelligence and anti-crime agency), the EFCC (Economic and Financial Crimes Commission, the elite anti-fraud unit) and the NSCDC (National Security and Civil Defence Corps – a state guarding agency that likes to contest police competences).

AF: In South Africa the SAPS is often compared to its predecessor, apartheid's South African Police. Comparisons involve perceptions of the former agency being more efficient but also violent, abusive and lacking accountability. I don't think there is an established discourse, either in the SAPS or the population more broadly, of comparing the SAPS to our African neighbours. This probably has something to do with beliefs regarding South African exceptionalism, that our experience is incomparable to the rest of the continent. However, the cop of American or British television dramas, and the fantastical world in which they operate, is far more likely to be held up as the everyday benchmark against which to measure police in South Africa. This is of course dangerous, as it sets police impossible standards, and irrevocably links policing and crime in ways that become hard to challenge in popular and governmental consciousness. What is interesting, I think, is that in recent victim surveys many South Africans report being satisfied with the police in their area. This is in stark contrast to regular, loud complaints about poor police service. I suspect this is in part because, despite lots of complaining, South Africans do empathise with the idea that police are central to tackling the violent crime problem.

OO: The Nigerian public have traditionally had little sympathy for the police, whom they portray as both underperforming and predatorily corrupt. That is only just perhaps beginning to change, as the public becomes conscious of the risks and losses the police have endured in the Boko Haram insurgency – both in bombings and incidents where this and other militant groups have taken the lives of policemen as a kind of currency with which to send a political message to the Abuja government. I think what ties both situations together, however, is the expectations of police performance and how it is achieved. Perhaps this is inevitable, as the ‘thin blue line’ maintains its bluff of superior strength as part of its job – yet policing, along with perhaps medicine, is one of the areas where a profession’s global media myth can be a stronger shaper of public expectation than its actual lived reality. So I find the Comaroffs’³ argument about the way that ‘detective fictions’ are staged to demonstrate potential police power in South Africa an interesting response to those expectations; and in Nigeria, going forward, I will be as deeply interested in how the police shape their own media image through their working practices.

AF: Indeed, the media and mythology angle is a very interesting one. I don’t think there is enough acknowledgement of its power in South Africa, yet the SAPS and government more broadly clearly know how to play the ‘performance management’ game when they need to.

NOTES

1. There is no regularised national system of performance measurement based on the number of recorded/reported cases of crime. Such statistics may be used or not used depending on the importance particular managerial regimes place on it. Using performance management in a more regularised way at station/division level is a part of some donor-supported professional tutelage programmes.
2. The term ‘high policing’ was coined by Jean-Paul Brodeur. Brodeur introduced the term in 1983 to refer to the types of policing carried out by intelligence and other state agents not involved in day-to-day uniformed police work. Rather, ‘high policing’ involves actions intended to protect the state. The concept has gained currency over the past decade, particularly in the wake of the ‘war on terror’. See for example Jean-Paul Brodeur, High and low policing in post-9/11 times, *Policing*, 1(1) (2007), 25-37.
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PREVIOUS ISSUES



Sarah Henkeman follows Bill Dixon in taking on South African criminology. Her article both challenges South African criminologists and offers some thoughts on where we might take our thinking. Clare Herrick and Andrew Charman's article shows that enforcing restrictions on the sale of alcohol in some cases has undermined the ability of shebeen owners to ensure the safety of their customers. David Bruce analyses cases of politically motivated killings since 1994. Karabo Ngidi provides a case note about a Constitutional Court case that confirmed a court order for a house from which alcohol had been sold illegally to be forfeited by the owners. Ngidi argues that the ruling is indicative of a hardened stance towards shebeens. In the on-the-record feature, Savera Kalideen, advocacy manager for Soul City, speaks about the Phuzza Wize campaign and the difficulties facing proponents of a public health approach to violence reduction.

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Andrew Faull reflects on his recent experiences following the daily grind of police work in the Eastern and Western Cape. He concludes that the police use violence in an effort to gain respect and stamp their authority on communities, and this is a reflection of deeply entrenched notions of masculinity. Hema Hargovan assesses a diversion programme offered by a non-governmental organisation and identifies the difficulties associated with assessing their impact. Clare Ballard and Ram Subramanian report on efforts to reduce pre-trial detention in South Africa and ask whether the time is right for the implementation of measures that have been shown to work. We introduce a new feature titled 'Case Notes'. The first case note, contributed by Ann Skelton, considers the findings of courts in two provinces regarding the right to automatic appeal in cases involving child offenders.

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