



CHAPTER ONE

BACKGROUND INTRODUCTION AND PARADIGM POSITION

While apartheid did end in 1994, its effects will be felt for many years to come, and the memory of it will not easily disappear from the country's consciousness – and, I hope, it never does.

(Van Wyk 2003:6)

1.1 INTRODUCTION

A new democracy in South Africa, with a new constitution, has led to new forms of policing. This research project explores how police officers are adapting to work within a new constitution. While there have been many achievements and improved relationships between the police and the communities they serve, there are still many challenges that lie before us. My desire is that some of these will be acknowledged and explored creatively in this research. Before recording my research, this chapter will describe the background motivation for this research, what areas of research are focussed upon, my own paradigm position I have worked within, and my research procedure. Included will also be the limitations of this research and how I have sought to maintain ethical standards.

1.2 A NEW ERA IN SOUTH AFRICAN POLICING

1.2.1 The changing South African context

On the 2nd February 1990, President F.W. de Klerk, in an historic speech at the opening of Parliament, announced the un-banning of liberation movements in South Africa and the release of political prisoners including Nelson Mandela. This paved the way towards negotiations between different political players and a new constitution in South Africa. Following the national elections in April 1994, the new Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, Act 108 of 1996, was enacted by the new Parliament, replacing the interim Constitution of 1993. This new constitution, after a process of



public consultation and amendments, was signed by President Nelson Mandela on 10th December 1996 at Sharpeville and came into effect on 4th February 1997. In a booklet edited by Juta's Statutes Editors entitled "The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa" it is written:

The choice of Sharpeville, where apartheid police had opened fire on an unarmed crowd of pass-law protestors in March 1960, was both a symbolic gesture to the memories of the 69 people killed on that day and a statement of the country's determination to turn its back on a past marked by racism and the gross violation of human rights.

(Juta 2004:xv)

This quote appropriately connects the turning away from abusive policing patterns in the past (or at least the intention to do so) to the adoption of a new constitution as South Africa moves towards a new future. I view this connection as being consistent with the focus of this research project as well.

In keeping with that constitution, policing has had to undergo changes from its past practices. As William Fox, Belinda van Wyk and Marius Fourie pointed out: "...a whole new conception of how a police service should function within a democratic society had to be developed and learned" (Fox, van Wyk & Fourie 1998:i). This necessitated policy and structural changes within the police force.

1.2.2 Structural changes in the police

Structural changes within the police were primarily aimed at adapting them to be more congruent with the new constitution. F. Sydney Mufamadi, the minister of Safety and Security in the early years of South African democracy, was quoted from a media release on 25th May 1994 saying: "South Africa now has a democratically-elected and representative Government and the time has come to formulate a policing vision in keeping with both the letter and spirit of our Constitution" (Van Rooyen 1995:ii). For example, a name change occurred from being called the "South African Police Force" to the "South African Police Services."



But changes within the Police went beyond a name change. In his book on community policing, Jan Van Rooyen outlines the necessity of changes from the “para-military model” implemented in 1829 by Sir Robert Peel in the London Metropolitan Police, which was adopted by most Western police institutions including South Africa, towards a more community based policing structure. Van Rooyen argues that policing in the Western world has to change in order to address community needs and demands. He further acknowledges that: “While significant stumbling blocks exist for change and arguments can be made for the maintenance of outdated strategies, enough evidence exists that a process of change is absolutely essential and inevitable” (Van Rooyen 1995:8).

For many years there has been an acknowledgement for a need to change the police towards an institution that is more accountable for its actions to the community. All agreed that this would be a major challenge. Since then we have seen police powers, and the abuse thereof, being curtailed through accountability structures such as Community Police Forums (see 2.3.5) and the Independent Complaints Directorate (see 2.3.7). However, even before my research began, I was aware that there has been some debate on whether these new structures have brought about their intended aims or not. My impression was that there has been a mixture of successes and places that have been less successful. As a result, structural changes are continually occurring, making this research an ongoing challenge.

Chapter Two will outline what some of these developments were before and during the time of this research project. I have had personal experience in some of these changes (see 1.3.2). I have seen the implications of those changes that are still being experienced and the problems that are gradually being addressed. Other researchers have written extensively on this, so my account on that history will be brief. The question now is about where this research project is heading.



1.3 THE FIELD OF RESEARCH

1.3.1 The Research question

Within the above context, I was curious about what effects these changes have had upon South African police officers. Some of the changes may have a positive effect, while others may be experienced negatively or as a future challenge.

This research focuses specifically on White, middle-management police officers in the Kwazulu-Natal Midlands. The reason for this is not simply because of their willingness, but because this category of policemen was once central in the structures and are now more marginalized. White policemen once held all the positions of power in the police, but that is no longer the situation. Many top positions are being held by those of other races and White policemen are becoming marginalized in the police because of their past association with upholding apartheid laws. Narrative researchers (a position I will elaborate on in 1.6.2) are interested in the marginalized stories of people (the stories that people do not give much attention to in their lives) and the stories of marginalized people (people who have been sidelined by society structures or circumstances). I wanted them to be able to speak about their experiences and how those experiences affected their lives. Later we would explore whether their stories were unique within the broader experience of police officers.

While having my own questions of curiosity, I wanted to be open-ended enough with my research question. In each conversation, I allowed each participant to describe their experiences in their own words and what they felt the most important issues were. This is because I agree with Elliot Mishler who states: “We are more likely to find stories reported in studies using relatively unstructured interviews where respondents are invited to speak in their own voices, allowed to control the introduction and flow of topics, and encouraged to extend their responses” (Mishler 1986:69). The process I followed is explained further in 1.7.

A secondary question centred upon whether there are helpful and unhelpful ways of dealing with policing under a new constitution. My hope was that, as people spoke about their experiences and engaged with a wider audience’s response later in the



process, that they would see those experiences in a new and preferable light – something Michael White refers to as a “unique outcome” (see 1.6.5). Not only would this have therapeutic value for the participants in the research, but might help other police officers deal with their working environment. This would be consistent with a narrative approach in research as Elmarie Kotzé and Dirk Kotzé put forward:

Research too often becomes an intellectual activity with researchers obtaining degrees on or receiving acknowledgement based on the suffering of others – with the latter most likely not to benefit from the research. We are committed... to participatory action research that will primarily be to the advantage of the participants.

(Kotzé & Kotzé 2001:9)

While these questions are central to my research, I also need to acknowledge my own personal reasons for choosing this pathway. This is so that I can be as transparent as possible and recognise the fact that I am not a total outsider who is absolutely neutral in this research.

1.3.2 Personal reasons for choosing this field

As an ordained minister in the Methodist Church of Southern Africa, I became interested in working with the police through the Community Police Forum (hereafter referred to as the CPF) since 1996. Prior to 1994, when abuse amongst police officers was notorious, I had no desire towards such a partnership. But, as the political landscape in South Africa changed and new challenges of policing emerged, my thinking began to change. I was deeply challenged by the words of Gordon MacDonald as he wrote about his own “...renewed challenge of insisting that my life of following Christ be absolutely nose to nose with what is going on in the ‘streets’ where people live and work” (MacDonald 1989:10). Consequently, I became involved in the Meyerton CPF where I lived.

During my participation there, I learned about the multi-faceted tasks facing members of the SAPS under a new constitution. As Peter Stevens and Dianna Yach put it: “a service model which values the omnicompetent generalist who plays a multiplicity



of roles – diplomat, negotiator, investigator, peacekeeper, crime fighter, enforcer of law, coach and counsellor” (Stevens & Yach 1995:89). Conversations with policemen led me to appreciate and seriously consider the issues facing them. My curiosity gathered momentum through watching actuality programmes on television and reading newspaper articles. Continuous stories of frustrations and stresses in their lives compelled me to respond. I then embarked upon a Masters course at the University of Pretoria, where I learnt about a narrative approach to research and I focussed on the effects of violent crime upon their lives. At that time, I was stationed in Camperdown and Richmond in Kwazulu-Natal. Again, I was involved in the local Community Police Forum and met police officers willing to share their stories with me. Two of them, along with a new participant, become my co-researchers (a term explained in 1.6.6) in this project as well. In Chapter Three the names of these participants are recorded as Jody, Pieter and Leon. They are the people whose stories I listened to first.

One of the emerging themes from my previous research was that of policing within the boundaries of a new constitution. This, with the resultant changes in policing practices, became something these policemen and I wanted to explore further. Alongside the research question I have outlined in 1.3.1, my personal aim that I needed to acknowledge was twofold. Firstly, it was to discover a pastoral response from my perspective as a minister in the church. This would possibly help other pastors and caregivers who share a similar interest in this field. And secondly, I would hope that this benefits these policemen in their work environment, particularly in expressing their stories and concerns as well as helping them grow as individuals as a result of such reflection. These aims stem from my own passion in the area of Practical Theology, the subject that opened me to these opportunities in the first place.

1.4 MY JOURNEY IN PRACTICAL THEOLOGY

Coming from a background of Practical Theology, I need to acknowledge the influence of many scholars in my journey. There are too many to mention by name and the history of Practical Theology is beyond the scope of this thesis. However, my supervisor and I felt that it was important to mention some of them for at least three reasons. Firstly, everything in this research, including the methodology, does not



emerge in a vacuum. There is a history of valuable contributions that has led us to our approach. Secondly, this thesis is done within the subject of Practical Theology, which affects the evaluation of the discourses and conclusions that emerge. In other words, I am not doing this research as a Criminologist or a Social Worker etc, but as a Practical Theologian. And thirdly, we felt that it is also consistent with my thesis when it comes to evaluating the discussions with my co-researchers. This is because the thoughts and opinions of the police officers have a particular history to them that need to be explored. After discussing these historical influences, I will position myself in terms of the paradigm I chose to work within. But first, let us focus on some of the contributions through my journey in Practical Theology.

1.4.1 Early historical developments

Practical Theology is a subject that has been forced to justify its existence as a separate discipline within theology as well as a credible scientific discipline. From biblical times, theology has sought to be both practical and theoretical, but practical theology as an autonomous subject received varying degrees of recognition throughout church history. For the most part, practical theology was seen as the application of a theoretical theology. However, during the Enlightenment, practical theology increased its influence as an autonomous discipline. The Roman Catholic, F.S. Rautenstrauch (who proposed practical theology as a theological subject at the University of Vienna, which was accepted in 1774) and the Protestant, Friedrich E. Schleiermacher, were instrumental in making practical theology an accepted discipline, albeit applied dogmatics (Wolfaardt 1978). This was taken further in the Twentieth Century in a way that relates directly to research in Practical Theology.

1.4.2 20th Century developments

In terms of practical theology becoming a source of information that contributes to theology (rather than the other way around), the 20th Century contributions of scholars such as Seward Hiltner became significant. Hiltner was a student of Anton Boisen, a hospital chaplain and founder of Clinical Pastoral Education in the U.S.A. According to John Patton, Boisen “understood both patient and chaplain to be learners from the crisis experience” (Patton 2000:51) and so “contributed to the breaking down of the



rigid barriers between patient and pastor” (Patton 2000:51). I immediately liked the idea of breaking down barriers and learning together, which has become an important value for me and helped me embrace a “not-knowing position” later (see 1.6.4). Hiltner took this further by lifting practical theology out of a mere technique and give it a more scientific footing, whereby its practice could contribute to the development of theory through reflection upon our experience. As Hiltner himself said:

Pastoral theology is defined here as that branch or field of theological knowledge and inquiry that brings the shepherding perspective to bear upon all the operations and functions of the church and the minister, and then draws conclusions of a theological order from reflection on these observations.

(Hiltner 1958:20)

The influence of psychology upon practical theology was also part of the work of those like Hiltner, Paul E. Johnson, Carroll A. Wise and Wayne E. Oates (Lapsley 1969:37). Their contribution to the subject of practical theology, and especially its relationship to other disciplines, still has a significant role in this thesis insofar as interdisciplinary relationships have developed, which is the focus in Chapter 5. John Patton, however, points out one of the weaknesses as being too individualistic in its psychological bias. It was up to practical theologians to rise to the growing challenges of ethics, hermeneutics (interpreting situations) and contextual issues such as race, gender, class and power (Patton 2000:49).

Don Browning, one of Hiltner’s students, recognised the pressures of pluralism and contributed towards Practical Theology in terms of ethical considerations. He correctly saw secular psychology, for example, as seeking to be neutral in terms of values. But he said, “there are good reasons for believing that modern psychologies, rather than being neutral, have simply introduced alternative religio-ethical visions, some of which are compatible and some incompatible with various expressions of the Western religious tradition” (Browning 1990:364). While we make use of other disciplines, we do not accept their views uncritically. It means that when we deal with situations, there are ethical considerations (both personal and within the community) from our Judeo-Christian tradition that are part of the encounter. We cannot remain



neutral in our encounters with others, not even within research (see 1.6.2.2 and 1.7.5). In addition to bringing theological ethics and social sciences together in this way, Browning argues that in practical theology: “Morals, meanings, and ideals should shape a vision of humanity and the kinds of activity that help to work towards this vision” (Woodward & Pattison 2000:89). Within a pluralistic and interdisciplinary context, those ethical and visioning considerations mean that the practical theologian has a valuable contribution to make while working alongside other disciplines. The ethics involved not only include ethics on an individual level with the people I work with but seek to benefit the wider community as well. I also value the idea of working towards a new vision for the individuals and the community. My hope is that this research will contribute towards this new vision.

Howard Clinebell has been another important influence in shaping my understanding in practical theology. Speaking about pastoral care, he says that: “The image of the *life saving station* must be put alongside the image of a *garden* where persons’ growth is nurtured...” (Clinebell 1984:28). In other words, pastoral care is not only about ministering to people during times of crisis, but also to enable people to grow into their full potential and “be agents of wholeness in the lives of other people and in society” (Clinebell 1984:28). I think that this not only applies to pastoral care, but is applicable in my research in practical theology. This idea has helped me embrace the view that this research can be beneficial in the growth of the people I work with, rather than only seeing help in terms of therapeutic value. As people engage on a growth journey, their lives take on new meaning and their potential can be actualised. Thus, this research is not just about my growth but also the growth of the policemen I had conversations with.

Charles Gerkin based his pastoral theology on hermeneutical principles. This means that the pastor and congregation member interpret their situation and seek to recover religious meaning in their life, albeit with the limitations of language. The interpretation of situations is done with reference to our biblical heritage, seeking to interpret biblical metaphors of God’s relationship to people and seek metaphors for today’s world. Hence, other disciplines and cultural considerations are not simply received uncritically by the Practical Theologian or pastoral counsellor. This position helped me correct possible imbalances brought about through adopting other

disciplines' methods uncritically. A similar contribution to my thinking occurred in my exposure to liberation and feminist theology.

1.4.3 Liberation and Feminist Theology

The issues of the wider context, which were brought to the fore by feminist theologians and liberation theology, have also influenced my approach. The approach of liberation theology was to examine the broader context in which people lived and to challenge those ideas that contribute towards the abuse of power. Hence it tended to side with the poor and oppressed whose stories were marginalized by those in power and the dominant culture. Liberation theology questioned these dominant powers and the way in which society was structured. Because of that, it can be noted that liberation theology was viewed negatively by the State in South Africa during the apartheid era. This theology also used the concept of “drinking from our own well” or taking as one’s starting point, your lived experience. Susan Rakoczy, writing about feminist theology, a branch of liberation theology, says: “Feminist theology has two tasks: to deconstruct and critique the male cultural paradigms in theological thought and to construct and formulate new perspectives” (Rakoczy 2004:17). In terms of practical theology, we utilise the lived experience of people as a source of information to shape theology further. Liberation theology has also given us tools to critique or deconstruct the discourses and ways of thinking we have taken for granted in our various cultures and experiences. Questioning our experiences and the wider societal and cultural influences, particularly the way in which those things have sidelined certain groups (namely the poor), is an important contribution that liberation and feminist theology have made. Some, however, may feel that liberation theology has over-emphasised the context and neglected the theoretical considerations of our heritage. Nevertheless, liberation and feminist theology have forced practical theology to wrestle with the relationship between theory and practice, especially within the broader cultural context, in critiquing and deconstructing it.

1.4.4 My positioning on the theory-practice relationship

So where does this history leave me positioned in terms of Practical Theology? There are considerations from each of the above that I have valued and contributed to my



paradigm positioning. With Alastair Campbell, I would be against a purely *inductive* method as Hiltner uses (practice contributing to theory) and a purely *deductive* method as Eduard Thurneysen uses (practice as merely applied theory). I agree with Campbell when he says that bringing theory and concrete situations together “is more an exercise in creative imagination, the interplay of idea and action, with all the ambiguity and inconclusiveness which this implies” (Campbell 2000:85). In other words, concrete situations are reflected upon theologically, shaping and being shaped by theology (and other disciplines) all the time.

In this research, I begin with the concrete situations that police officers find themselves in. But I do so with the awareness that there is already a theology and way of thinking mixed in with their opinions and coping mechanisms. I also know that there is still reflective work that needs to be done as we move towards a new future. There we use tools of various other disciplines, including theology and revelation (the bible and historical traditions), to assist and enrich our understanding.

The works of Browning and Gerkin have forced me to ask questions in my research about God and ethics in the lives of my co-researchers. This has not been in conflict at all with the narrative approach, which opens doors to the stories of God in our lives as well. I have sought to do this reflective and interpretative work together with the police officers throughout my research process, so that we can learn together. This aspect of the research is recorded mainly in Chapter Four. The policemen I work with in this research is, in my opinion, an emerging sidelined group, whose stories need to be heard so that they may discover a positive vision for the future in their lives.

1.5 PARADIGMATIC POSITIONING

With the above influences in my life and continuously being exposed to new ones, I needed to place myself within a scientific paradigm in which to operate as a practical theologian. Through my years of training I have journeyed through a modern and postmodern paradigm and now find myself in a postfoundationalist worldview. This section will describe each of these shifts and its effect on my methodology.



1.5.1 The Modern (foundationalist) paradigm

My early training in practical theology had a distinctly modernist flavour. The modernist view was that there are universally true foundations that are applicable for all times and situations. When one knows those foundations, one becomes an expert in that field and enables one to be totally objective in every situation. Wentzel van Huyssteen describes modernism (a foundationalist paradigm) when he says that:

[I]t is the belief that scientific progress and true discoveries are the result of adhering to a universally accepted, value-free, and objective methodology. This not only implies that truth results from an adherence to objectivity, but also reveals the foundationalist assumption that all true knowledge rests on a few unquestionable beliefs.

(Van Huyssteen 1999:29)

The effect that this paradigm and subsequent training had upon my ministry is that people viewed me as an expert in my field and would seek me out to sort out their problems. In many cases this approach worked, but this created a certain level of dependency upon “expert knowledge” rather than people discovering their own resourcefulness. This is despite the contribution Boisen had made regarding the partnership of learning between the patient and pastor. Another dynamic I discovered was that police personnel were reluctant to go for formal counselling with an outside expert, but would share their stories during informal discussions with me. This is confirmed by what Evelyn Slaght, a Social Work professor, discovered when she wrote: “not all officers are comfortable with sharing individual and family issues with ‘outsiders’” (Slaght 2002:34). By “outsiders” she was referring to “expert” professionals. From a pastoral and research point of view, this “expert” approach was not satisfactory for me.

As far as research was concerned, the researcher was viewed as the expert with privileged knowledge and the subjects being distantly researched and making universal conclusions. Mats Alvesson describes this as being: “eager to establish a context-free truth about reality ‘out there’ through following a research protocol and

getting responses to it, minimizing researcher influence and other sources of bias” (Alvesson 2003:15). Julian Müller captured something of my own dissatisfaction with this approach and its claim to universal truths when referring to a report by the Reformed Ecumenical Council on HIV/AIDS in Africa. The report had a typically modernistic style in giving an overview of the situation, the theological principles involved and some applications for caring. He says of this:

Although the last few pages of the publication seem to provide good “theories for praxis”, the publication still leaves the reader with a feeling of frustration and even hopelessness, the reason for it being the lack of integration achieved between context and principles from the gospel. The application part is detached from the descriptive part. It is as if all contexts are the same. Africa could have been Iceland for that matter.

(Müller 2004:293)

While my early training in counselling and research had been distinctly modernist, I was excited by new possibilities in a postmodern worldview. The postmodern view may have many variances in terms of how it is understood and applied. Therefore, the next section describes the way in which I understood and utilised it in my further development.

1.5.2 The Postmodern (nonfoundationalist) paradigm

During my Masters studies, I was introduced to the scientific paradigm of postmodernism. Regarding postmodernism, Kotzé and Kotzé assert that: “It is generally accepted that we are in a process of an important paradigm shift, moving from a modern to a postmodern society” (Kotzé & Kotzé 1997:28). The postmodern epistemology emerged in reaction to the claims of certainty made by modernism and the accompanying confidence in objective truth. Furthermore, they state that: “Postmodern discourses... seek to distance us from and make us sceptical about beliefs concerning truths, knowledge, power, the self, and language that are often taken for granted...” (Kotzé & Kotzé 1997:40). Van Huyssteen, who uses the terms “nonfoundationalism” or “anti-foundationalism” (a rejection of the foundationalist

position of universal truths) and sees it as “one of the most important philosophical roots of postmodernism” (Van Huyssteen 1999:11), says something similar when he says:

...postmodern science and postmodern philosophy of science have moved away quite dramatically from positivist and technocentric conceptions of scientific rationality with its closely aligned beliefs in linear progress, guaranteed success, deterministic predictability, absolute truths, and some uniform, standardized form of knowledge.

(Van Huyssteen 1999:6)

This paradigm opposes the idea of an outside, objective observer or researcher who is unaffected by the research data. This, in turn, paves the way towards a social constructionist position of co-researching (see 1.6.1), rather than an “expert” objectively researching various participants who are passive. I have been encouraged to take a respectful look at people’s lives and allow them to tell their story in their own words, as already stated in 1.3.1. I will say more about this later when dealing with the narrative approach to research in 1.6.

There have been some concerns regarding postmodernism that have been raised by other theologians. Two examples are Michael Cassidy and Klaus Nürnberger. Cassidy describes his understanding of postmodernism as follows:

...Postmoderns see truth as that which basically is located within the individual communities in which we were raised and conditioned. So they reject the Enlightenment search for a universal, supra-cultural and timeless truth. Rather do they see truth as that which is simply the expression of how a specific community sees things.... So truth is no longer universal but rather local in nature. There is not one truth, but many different truths. This plurality of truths can exist alongside one another and in juxtaposition to each other and even in contradiction to each other. This introduces a species of radical relativism and pluralism.

(Cassidy 2005:160)



He says that everyone has their own, equally valid opinions (Cassidy 2005:161) and concludes that: “All this leaves people swimming or even drowning in a sea of moral, philosophical and intellectual relativism” (Cassidy 2005:163).

Another example of a South African theologian who has concerns about postmodernism is Klaus Nürnberger. Certainly, Nürnberger appreciates aspects of postmodernism, for example, “that it appreciates variety and respects the right of others to be different” (Nürnberger 2007:222), rather than the “the dogged determination of modernity to get everything under control, force everybody into a system, or achieve pre-determined goals” (Nürnberger 2007:223). However, his argument is that we need foundations or guidelines to determine our values and relationships. Without foundations, we fall prey to what he says “*may suddenly assume a power you may never have suspected*” (Nürnberger 2007:225). He lists many examples such as the tolerance of witchcraft, excessive wealth versus poverty, apartheid and so on, as extreme expressions of appreciating diversity without the criteria of validity and acceptability (Nürnberger 2007:228-229). Thus, he opposes the postmodern notion that there is no need for universal foundations. But he correctly goes on to add that: “What we can learn from postmodernity is that we must become more humble in our claims to be in possession of the truth” (Nürnberger 2007:233).

With these concerns about a postmodern paradigm, the question then becomes: Is there a way to utilize the strengths of both modernistic and postmodern worldviews? The answer to this came during my further studies in the form of postfoundationalism.

1.5.3 The Postfoundational paradigm

Recently, I have been exposed to the work of Wentzel van Huyssteen who introduces a concept called “postfoundationalism.” He has developed a model “to move beyond the epistemological dichotomy of foundationalist objectivism and nonfoundationalist relativism. This option is what I have called *postfoundationalism*” (Van Huyssteen 1999:8). In other words, postfoundationalism moves “beyond the extremes of absolutism and the relativism of extreme forms of pluralism” (Van Huyssteen 2000:430). This is done as we communicate meaningfully with each other and



between different disciplines in an ongoing process of evaluation and assessment together.

One of the aims in postfoundationalism is to see “whether any form of interdisciplinary rationality can be credibly achieved” (Van Huyssteen 1999:3). This is especially so between theology and other sciences. Van Huyssteen utilises the term “transversality,” which “identifies different but equally legitimate ways of looking at issues or disciplines” (Van Huyssteen 2000:429). He speaks strongly against any claims of certain sciences being a superior form of knowledge to others and against any universal statements of knowledge. Rather, he argues that each discipline has its own contribution to make where there are points of meeting one another and points of differences. Knowledge is also found in the local situation rather than making the claim to being universally true. Thus, he says that:

...while we always come to our cross-disciplinary conversations with strong beliefs, commitments, and even prejudices, epistemological postfoundationalism enables us to identify the shared resources of human rationality in different modes of knowledge and then to reach beyond the boundaries of our own traditional communities in cross-disciplinary conversation.

(Van Huyssteen 2000:430)

As I work with multiple disciplines such as theology and criminology, this approach has been helpful in my research “to identify possible points of consonance, but also possible points of difference between widely divergent reasoning strategies” (Van Huyssteen 1999:7). His term “transversality” where different disciplines can speak respectfully to one another, finding points of common ground, is applicable here. While this approach does not force us all to agree with one another, it does help us appreciate each discipline, including our own, in order learn from one another and to gain a greater understanding of the issues facing us.

In their article, Karlijn Demasure and Julian Müller argue in favour of a similarity between postfoundationalism and social constructionism (1.6.1), and thus compatible with the narrative research approach. The article argues for a link between the

hermeneutics of Paul Ricoeur's prefiguration (the knowledge, prejudices and feelings we bring with us into a situation), configuration (encountering the situation or event) and refiguration (new interpretations that emerge) with social constructionism (1.6.1) and postfoundationalism. They summarise the common criteria as follows:

Preference for stories in stead [*sic*] of concepts and arguments

Locally contextual

Socially constructed stories and identities

In dialogue with the tradition

Exploring interdisciplinary meaning

(Demasure & Müller 2006:419)

With this paradigm position in mind, I believe it affects my understanding of narrative research (1.6) and my methodology (1.7).

1.6 NARRATIVE RESEARCH CONCEPTS

Through reading and group discussions in my studies, I saw the connection between our paradigmatic position and a narrative approach to therapy and research. Being different to my previous studies, I had to learn new terminology used in a narrative approach. Concepts such as "social constructionism," "narrative," "discourses," "a not-knowing position," "unique outcomes," and "co-researchers" were all new to me. Here is a brief explanation of these terms and their consequences for this research.

1.6.1 Social constructionism

The narrative approach positions itself within the paradigm of social constructionism. As Jill Freedman and Gene Combs discovered: "As we read and studied more widely about the stream of ideas from which David Epston, Cheryl White, and Michael White had taken the narrative metaphor, we found that another important current in the same stream was that of *social constructionism*" (Freedman & Combs 1996:16). Julian Müller, Wilhelm van Deventer and Lourens Human confirm this when they write: "As narrative therapists, pastors and researchers, we position ourselves within

the social-constructionist (some would say: postmodern) paradigm” (Müller, van Deventer & Human 2001:77).

Social constructionism emphasises that reality and knowledge are socially constructed. Our knowledge does not emerge in a vacuum. It comes from a history of other stories that are found in our cultures, our society and as we interact with other people. Our opinions or interpretations of events are formed together with other people and institutions various disciplines. Freedman and Combs state that “...its main premise is that the beliefs, values, institutions, customs, labels, laws, divisions of labor [*sic*], and the like that make up our social realities are constructed by members of a culture as they interact with one another from generation to generation and day to day” (Freedman & Combs 1996:16). Julian Müller connects social constructionism with postfoundationalism when he writes: “Van Huyssteen does not use the terminology of social-constructionism, but clearly uses a similar line of thought when arguing for postfoundationalist rationality” (Müller 2004:299) and goes on to say that, in social-constructionism and postfoundationalism, there is “a deep-rooted belief that we, with our rationality, are socially constructed” (Müller 2004:299).

There is thus an interrelationship between people themselves, their culture, beliefs, etc. that help people interpret their world. As such, their worlds are continually changing as this interaction continues. It is for this reason that I used a number of different sources in my research, such as newspapers, documentaries, other people working in a related field, etc. Each form part of how we interpret our world. As we read and interact with these sources, encountering them often on a daily basis, our opinions are shaped, challenged or reinforced. These stories from other sources were present during the research process and needed to be taken in account when listening to my co-researchers. As with our experiences, these need to be deconstructed or critiqued as well, so that their opinions are not simply adopted wholeheartedly into our beliefs and worldview.

Language and imagining also form part of social constructionism. Modernists would view language as a way to describe an objective reality, but postmodernists “focus on how the language that we use *constitutes* our world and belief” (Freedman & Combs 1996:28). Likewise, Kotzé and Kotzé write the way in which meaning is created

through conversations with one another and go on to say that: “Life is experienced within language and how we experience is given meaning to within the parameters of our language. The language we grow up and live in within a specific culture, specifies or constitutes the experiences we have” (Kotzé & Kotzé 1997:32). Finding new ways of imagining and speaking about our reality can open the way towards preferred ways of living. For this reason, I was interested in the way my co-researchers worded their stories and I have included transcripts as an appendix.

1.6.2 Narrative

1.6.2.1 What is a narrative approach?

A narrative approach emerges out of the social constructionist paradigm. It seeks to listen to various “stories” including those of the person, the society and the culture. By listening in a respectful, non-blaming way, it “centres people as the experts in their own lives.... and assumes people have many skills, competencies, beliefs, values, commitments and abilities that will assist them to reduce the influence of problems in their lives” (Morgan 2000:2). As a result, each story is unique because no person experiences the same variables of circumstance, beliefs and interactions with people. This sets the tone for the distinctiveness of a narrative approach to research.

Popular methods of doing research include qualitative, quantitative, literary and structural approaches. A narrative approach, while using elements from these approaches due to its social constructionist framework, is distinct from them. In order to outline the distinctiveness, I will briefly compare a narrative approach to some of the other methods.

1.6.2.2 The distinctiveness in narrative research

The closest association to a narrative approach would be that of a qualitative nature. This is because it explores people’s stories as one would with case studies, seeking to describe and understand the context and meaning of their stories. According to John Florell: “In the case study method, an in-depth analysis of a single individual using qualitative terms and concepts is frequently used. The research question may highlight



an unusual problem, or demonstrate how to work with a particular individual” (Florell 1990:354). This method is not foreign to the police as they take detailed statements of people’s stories that must be thorough enough to withstand the scrutiny of a court. The narrative approach, however, differs from the case study research method in that it does not take an outsider, objective position, but “strives for participatory interaction” (Müller, Van Deventer & Human 2001:78). My co-researchers did not only give me data but were involved in the interpretation process as far as possible.

If one did research in a quantitative manner, one would utilise statistical data. This is a popular method used within the SAPS in analysing and reporting crime. Comparing figures help them with strategic planning and performance ratings. However, the results are often generalised, placing people and events in categories. Antoinette Louw from the Institute of Security Studies simply states that: “Crime statistics are, and always will be, a source of debate” (Louw 2001:1). Elliot Mishler says that the “awareness of the contextual grounds of meaning is suppressed... and excluded from the interpretation of findings” (Mishler 1986:5). I would not want to discard this method of research entirely, simply because statistics also influence people’s stories and perceptions. The use of statistical data can be used within a narrative approach as one story amongst many others.

Another popular method of research is turning to literature, reading critically and processing the information into our own words. According to J.J. Kritzinger: “The discovery of *something new* is only a minor issue here” (Kritzinger 2001:15). This method, on its own, may become lifeless and produce an “expert” in that field. One can manipulate this approach by choosing one’s authors and manipulating information. Despite its limits, this can be valuable for narrative research because it brings our stories into dialogue with other opinions, forming a new story. As Müller put it: “Jy as leser is nie op die oomblik net besig om my as skrywer se boek te lees en onbevange my storie te ontvang nie. Jy is besig om jou eie verhaal en hierdie nuwe verhaal wat jy lees, gelyktydig te gebruik in *storymaking*” (Müller 2000:18). [As a reader, you are not reading my book in a detached way. You are simultaneously using your own story and the story you are reading together in *storymaking*]. As narrative researchers, we deconstruct the literature, examining its biases, and in effect, become co-authors in creating a new story.

Another approach to research uses structured questions. These questions tend to limit responses to a restricted choice of answers. It elicits information out of people's story that will be useful to the researcher. Mishler describes this interviewing practice as: "where respondents' stories are suppressed in that their responses are limited to 'relevant' answers to narrowly specified questions" (Mishler 1986:68). A narrative approach, however, listens to the story as told in the person's own words and "the meaning that members attribute to events..." (White & Epston 1990:3). This I found both quite difficult and fulfilling because I had to keep checking whether I understood the meaning that each co-researcher wanted to convey, or whether I was filtering the information for my own purposes. One of the things I found helpful was to examine the discourses that lay behind each story that was shared.

1.6.3 Discourses

Narrative researchers listen for discourses that have shaped people's perceptions and behaviour. Vivien Burr defines discourses as "a set of meanings, metaphors, representations, images, stories, statements and so on that in some way together produce a particular version of events" (Burr 1995:48). He goes on to say: "For each of us, then, a multitude of discourses is constantly at work constructing and producing our identity" (Burr 1995:53). An example of a discourse would be that of our picture of God. Trevor Hudson, for example, writes that: "...the way we live is profoundly shaped by our picture of God" (Hudson 1995:19). Some would use their picture to justify harsh penalties such as the death penalty. Others would emphasise the call for forgiveness. In this thesis, some of the discourses shaping the lives of police officers become clearer in the themes that emerge from our discussions. We then explored these further in Chapters Four and Five where, within the narrative approach, we deconstruct these discourses, viewing them critically to see where they come from and whether they are still appropriate for us today.

1.6.4 Not-knowing position

A "not-knowing position" does not mean that the researcher has no knowledge or expertise regarding the conversation, but rather to "...empower the companion to take

on the role of being the actual expert” (Müller 1999:10). The “not-knowing position” means “turning our backs on ‘expert’ filters” and “not asking questions from a position of pre-understanding” (Freedman & Combs 1996:44). Freedman and Combs go on to say that: “We are curious about people’s unique answers and we encourage people to develop them more fully” (Freedman & Combs 1996:45). I would prefer to use the phrase “not all-knowing” because when we enter a conversation with someone, we usually have some knowledge of the subject, but could never claim to know everything, nor draw universal conclusions regarding the topic. Certainly, over the years of working within the Community Police Forum, some ideas have taken shape in my mind, including my own biases and prejudices. But within a narrative approach, I sincerely attempt to open myself to new stories that are shared by my co-researchers.

1.6.5 Unique outcomes

Because each story is dynamic and ever changing, it can produce insights that have not been predicted. Michael White coined the term “unique outcomes” to refer to such instances. Within narrative therapy, it refers to “...‘facts’ or events that contradict the problem’s effects in their lives and in their relationships” (White & Epston 1990:56). These are also referred to as “sparkling events” (Freedman & Combs 1996:89). Part of my research involves listening for such instances in how police officers deal positively with their work under a new constitution. One cannot predict whether these moments will occur. As Müller, Van Deventer and Human put it: “A narrative researcher is patient and interested and curious. He or she doesn’t know beforehand what the solutions are or should be” (Müller, Van Deventer & Human 2001:84). But when these moments arise, they are inspirational for everyone in the discussion.

1.6.6 Co-researchers

Within a narrative approach to research, the term “co-researchers” is used. This is because I as a researcher writing this thesis do not take an outsider, objective position. Instead, I want to remain consistent with a social constructionist position. As such, a narrative approach “strives for participatory interaction” (Müller, Van Deventer & Human 2001:78). In doing such research “we would choose not to use language such

as ‘research objects’, or ‘research population’, but rather refer to them as *research participants* or *co-researchers*” (Müller, Van Deventer & Human 2001:77). As a result, Dirk Kotzé writes that: “The participants are the co-owners of the research and cannot be left out at any stage” (Kotzé, Myburg, Roux & Associates 2002:28). I have tried as far as possible to involve my co-researchers in the entire process of research. This process is the topic to which I now turn to.

1.7 RESEARCH PROCEDURE

An article on postfoundationalism by Müller helped me connect my paradigm position to my research procedure. In it Müller quotes a definition of postfoundationalist theology by Van Huyssteen (1997:4) and develops a seven movement process of research. The quote he uses is:

... a postfoundationalist theology wants to make two moves. Firstly, it fully acknowledges contextuality, the epistemically crucial role of interpreted experience, and the way that tradition shapes the epistemic and nonepistemic values that inform our reflection about God and what some of us believe to be God’s presence in this world. At the same time, however, a postfoundationalist notion of rationality in theological reflection claims to point creatively beyond the confines of the local community, group, or culture towards a plausible form of interdisciplinary conversation.

(Müller 2004:300; see Van Huyssteen 1997:4)

From that quote, Müller developed the following 7 movements:

The context and interpreted experience.

1. A specific context is described.
2. In-context experiences are listened to and described.
3. Interpretations of experiences are made, described and developed in collaboration with “co-researchers.”

Traditions of interpretation.

4. A description of experiences as it is continually informed by traditions of interpretation.

God's presence.

5. A reflection on God's presence, as it is understood and experienced in a specific situation.

Thickening through interdisciplinary investigation.

6. A description of experience, thickened through interdisciplinary investigation.

Point beyond the local community.

7. The development of alternative interpretations that point beyond the local community.

(Müller 2004:300)

I have used these seven movements to guide me through my research procedure. This is so that my paradigm position and my research methodology would be congruent. The following is an overview of how I went about doing my research. Some of the movements overlapped with one another as I implemented them, but were useful in giving me direction in my continuing conversations.

1.7.1 Movement One

A specific context is described.

For the first movement, where a specific context is described, I have given a brief outline at the beginning of this chapter (1.1 – 1.3) of the context the police work within. Furthermore, I will outline of some important contextual considerations in Chapter Two, particularly regarding the structural changes that have taken place. Because I have been involved in this arena for many years, much of that information may be “taken for granted” knowledge. But for others who may be unfamiliar with it, I felt it was necessary to give that background information in order to place the conversations I had with my co-researchers within the wider context.

I also needed to describe my own context to my co-researchers, particularly those who had never worked with me before. Once I had approached members of the South African Police Services who lived and worked in the same area as myself (namely,

the Kwazulu-Natal Midlands), I explained the narrative approach to my research both verbally and with an information sheet (Appendix 1). During the explanation I assured them of my ethical considerations (see 1.9), I asked for their willingness to participate and they signed a consent form (Appendix 2).

The members who were willing to participate (namely Jody, Pieter and Leon) were White middle-management Police officers (holding the rank of Captain), working at various stations in the area. This was my chosen focus as stated in 1.3.1. Each of them had experience in being the Station Commander and Branch Commanders at nearby police stations or presently work in such a position. Although they all know each other, none of them work at the same police station. They are all married men, with grown up children.

In this movement, I acknowledge having some knowledge of the issues facing the police and am clear about my methodology. However, during these initial stages, I allowed my co-researchers to discern what topic we would explore, namely policing under a new constitution. That decision had an impact upon the specific context that needed to be described from both their side (the topic) as well as from mine (my methodology).

1.7.2 Movement Two

In-context experiences are listened to and described.

Julian Müller and Kobus Schoeman made the important point that: “Stories need to be listened to and to be heard in their intentional meaning” (Müller & Schoeman 2004:8). They went on to say that: “The very first requirement for entering into a respectful relationship, is to make a movement towards the other instead of expecting the other to move towards you” (Müller & Schoeman 2004:8). By that they mean going to the people in their context to listen to their stories. This I tried to do by firstly meeting with my co-researchers in their homes for the interview and also by visiting them at their place of work. Their workplace gave me a visual picture of the things my co-researchers described, and going to their homes had a number of advantages.



My first formal interview with each of my co-researchers was done in their own homes. This was done, firstly, so that they would be the ones who felt in control of the discussion in terms of the time we met and the content and flow of the discussion. I wanted to counteract the perception of my “power position” as a clergy / researcher / expert as much as possible because of our postmodern sensitivity to the “power imbalances between participants” (Kotzé, Myburg, Roux & Associates 2002:18). This is because I agree when Dirk Kotzé says: “Those who have a voice and power have an ethical obligation to use the privilege of their knowledge/power to ensure participation with the marginalized and silenced, to listen *to* them, but not to decide *for* them, and to engage in participatory solidarity *with* them” (Kotzé, Myburg, Roux & Associates 2002:18). Going to the homes of my co-researchers was one way of shifting the “power” of the interview process onto them, rather than onto me had it been done in my church office.

The second reason I went to their homes individually was because I did not want to deal with the problems related to trying to get a whole group together at once. This is difficult when people work at different times with various other commitments. As Jo Viljoen discovered in her research: “All the participants were not always present at the group meetings, as work pressure, stress leave, vacations and personal crises did not always allow for their presence” (Viljoen 2001:18). This conversation was an extensive interview, covering the stories that my co-researchers felt were the most relevant for them within the scope of our agreed topic. And I wanted to give each participant as much opportunity to share their individual story in the time and space that was most convenient for them. Apart from the logistics of hosting a big group, I did not want the conversations to be interrupted by too many inputs at once. Also, I did not want to limit what was said by having my co-researchers self-editing themselves in front of other colleagues for whatever reason.

These conversations were recorded and checked with the person involved giving an opportunity to make corrections and additions or withdraw certain statements. If through further discussions they came to a new point of view, the original view would be recorded as such, with any new insight being recorded later as a possible unique outcome. The discussion topics are recorded in Chapter 3 alongside the third movement of the interpretations we made together.

1.7.3 Movement Three

Interpretations of experiences are made, described and developed in collaboration with “co-researchers.”

From that first interview, I gathered the themes I observed. I then checked with my co-researchers whether they were accurate and if they wanted to add any information. Here they were exposed to issues others had raised and could comment on it too. For example, if one police officer raised a particular topic, I could raise it with the other co-researchers for their comments, without betraying confidentiality, although I suspect they knew each other well enough to know who had said what. Events in the community regarding policing and reported by the media also added flavour to the conversation and “thickened the story.”

Chapter 3 of this thesis thus contains movements two and three under relevant headings and are therefore the descriptions of our conversations and interpretations made together. Through this process, I have tried to listen as carefully as I can to the intention of their stories and placing them within their historical context.

1.7.4 Movement Four

A description of experiences as it is continually informed by traditions of interpretation.

The fourth part of my interviewing process was to try to discover where these thoughts stem from. This has to do with the discourses (1.6.3) that lie behind our ideas. Just as my own approach in narrative theology and research developed from my growth in Practical Theology, so did the ideas of the policemen I interviewed. In terms of a narrative approach, this where we explore the discourses that lie behind our behaviour and attitudes, and leads into the deconstruction stage of my research. Admittedly, this was a difficult aspect of the research because people do not always think along these lines. Many ideas are “taken-for-granted.” But, with the encouragement of my supervisor, I went ahead with this process so as not to make



those deductions myself. My supervisor correctly pointed out that this project would be far richer if I spoke to my original co-researchers about this.

In order to help me in this process, I included discussions with an outside “audience.” These would be people such as police officers of other race groups and retired policemen. I was also privileged to have a conversation with some police personnel at provincial level as well, which helped clarify and verify some of the conversations I had before. Of course, their views could also differ from the ones I had been exposed to initially. So these conversations became a catalyst for deconstructing the various discourses we worked with. The content thereof is contained in Chapter 4 alongside the next movement.

1.7.5 Movement Five

A reflection on God’s presence, as it is understood and experienced in a specific situation.

The second section of Chapter 4 has to do with God’s presence. I have undertaken this research as a practical theologian and pastor for reasons already mentioned in 1.3.2. As a practical theologian, I am working under the direction of the Department of Practical Theology at the University of Pretoria. Thus I write from the perspective of a practical theologian as distinct from, for example, a criminologist or psychologist. A reflection on God and faith is therefore an important part of this research. Because each of my co-researchers knows me as a pastor in the community and CPF structures, I was comfortable with introducing a reflection on God and faith in the conversations. As a pastor, I believe that our perception of God’s nature and God’s presence influences us. And so I was curious about how these policemen’s faith and work influenced each other, if at all. In my conversations with them I looked for clues that could be followed up on at a later stage. That later stage is what Movement Five is all about. With my co-researchers knowing where I was coming from, I was confident that their reflection of God’s presence would emerge.



1.7.6 Movement Six

A description of experience, thickened through interdisciplinary investigation.

Various disciplines were used to enhance our understanding of the situation police officers were in. Criminologists, authors, those involved in organisations such as the Institute of Security Studies (ISS), business and political commentators, and those in the social sciences formed part of this movement. They formed an external story for us, commenting on these themes or discourses in terms of their research. These comments would be through books, articles and television documentaries. Their comments would form part of Chapter 5.

Once these had been incorporated into the thesis itself, I then returned to my initial co-researchers who could verify or disagree with the conclusions reached. This would give them the final word to say as well as giving them other perspectives to think about in their line of work. Thus, the opinions of other disciplines would not be adopted uncritically. Hopefully, we would all benefit from this process of reflection and discover ways of dealing constructively with the future with a renewed sense of hope. These discoveries then contributed to the final chapter containing the last movement in this research process.

1.7.7 Movement Seven

The development of alternative interpretations that point beyond the local community.

The final stage of this research is to take it into the wider community. It does not mean that our conclusions can be generalised and applicable to everyone, everywhere. However, I hope to enrich the further development of thought around these issues.

The wider community would include police management, Community Police Forums and organisations dealing with various aspects of policing. I am aware that much has been written about policing by other disciplines. Some of it has been well received and implemented by the police structures. Other material has been perceived as over-critical comments made by those who do not understand the dynamics police



personnel are faced with at station level – whether they are written from outside bodies or police management at such high levels that they have lost touch with the ground level. While I have no idea where this research will leave them, it forms part of a wider body of information for debate.

But, being a pastor, this wider community would include the church as well. My experience, certainly of the Methodist Church of Southern Africa, is that they have been silent on the issue of crime and policing since the changes in the political climate of South Africa. The first time this issue has received some attention was in the 2006 Yearbook (sometimes referred to as the Minutes of Conference). On page 295, item 3.3.2.2 speaks vaguely about crime and calls upon its members to uphold values of the Kingdom by observing the Law of God; involvement in rehabilitation of criminals and participation in crime prevention structures such as Community Police Forums. This research can have an impact within the life of the local church in working alongside police officers in a way that is prophetic, pastoral and constructive.

1.8 LIMITATIONS OF THE RESEARCH

Limitations to this research project involve conversational dynamics as well as localised issues. In this section I will try to explain what some of these were.

1.8.1 The localised scope of this research

This research is limited to the Kwazulu-Natal Midlands region where I work. It focuses more specifically upon the experiences of White, male police officers who are in middle management positions. Writing about case study methods, Florell confirms this limitation stating: “One problem with this approach is its lack of generalizability to other populations or individuals” (Florell 1990:354). Therefore, this cannot be viewed as applicable to all police personnel. In order to balance opinions and move away from a one-sided view, I included others, such as other members of the SAPS, including those of other racial groups, chaplains, and others related to this field such as criminologists and psychologists (my outside audience, see 1.7.4 and 1.7.6) to critically assess whether they agree or not with the emerging themes and issues arising. This consultation examines literature and relevant media reports, because they



all contribute towards formulating our ideas and discourses. But even if there is disagreement between my research and theirs, this project will contribute further towards growing our understanding. My hope is that, through this, anyone wishing to pursue this topic further will benefit from the procedure I used as well as the information elicited.

There is also the localisation of time in this research. It must be noted that these interviews took place in 2006 and there were certain issues that were prominent at the time. However, as with any story, circumstances change and new issues arise. Thus the information contained in this document is localised in terms of time as well as geography. For example, as I wrote up my process, there was discussion in the media about new ways of running Community Police Forums, changing them to Community Safety Forums that have different powers. I am still convinced, though, that the process of research and much of its content still has relevance further a-field, which I will highlight in the conclusion.

1.8.2 Levels of honesty

Levels of honesty play an important role in this research. Some participants may have felt they had nothing to lose and may have shared more openly and honestly. Some of them already knew the process and had participated before, thus a level of trust had been established and could be built upon. Others may have been guarded in their words, either to protect a tough image or not to place their careers in jeopardy. Some may have wanted to present the SAPS in a positive light, others more negatively. The daily influences of my co-researcher's work before the interview could also colour their participation (multiple interviews sought to neutralise this as much as possible). I am therefore aware of the warning put by Mats Alvesson when he says:

It is important not to simplify and idealize the interview situation, assuming that the interviewee – given the correct interview technique – primarily is a competent and moral truth teller, acting in the service of science and producing the data needed to reveal his or her “interior” (i.e., experiences, feelings, values) or the “facts” of the organization.

(Alvesson 2003:13)



I am aware that other interests are involved in any research data collection and there is never any guarantee that the results are 100% truthful and that: “Many researchers are aware of problems of trust and limited control over the interviewee responses” (Alvesson 2003:16). Certainly, Antony Altbeker, who spent a year on the streets with the SAPS, makes a similar observation by saying: “... I had never been naïve enough to think that I’d get anything approaching the unvarnished truth from men and women I seldom knew for more than a few days and who worked for one of the most defensive institutions in the country” (Altbeker 2005:205). No method of research can guarantee absolute truth. However, I have tried as far as possible to ensure a high level of truth through using more than one occasion to have conversations, checking with an outside “audience” and the wider social context, and working at building trust between myself and the other participants. Ultimately, however, I have to take their word as their truthful experience.

1.8.3 Racial issues

I need to acknowledge from the outset that I am a White male who, in terms of the Church, is also in middle management. This similarity with my co-researchers has a dynamic of its own. Attitudes of racism, especially within the context of South Africa, need to be faced. At one level there may be a certain amount of trust where views and frustrations can be shared without everything being interpreted as racism. But we also need to be aware that our past “privileged position” as Whites in both the church and the police, who may or may not feel sidelined in a new political landscape, is a factor. As a narrative researcher, I am listening for the marginalized voices – in this case White police officers – which are just as legitimate as other voices. But, in order to help me deconstruct the conversations I conducted, I have deliberately chosen to have outside voices as well.

1.8.4 My own “blind spots”

A further limitation would be my own “blind spots” in the area of analysis. There is, firstly, a large amount of literature on policing issues. Not being a criminologist, I cannot claim to have read them exhaustively and, therefore, may omit other valuable



contributions. I have, however, tried to read as widely as possible through my years of involvement. Secondly, in analysing the conversations, I may overlook some aspects. For that reason, I have included the transcripts of the conversations. Other researchers may identify aspects that were marginalized by my co-researchers and I and utilize them for further research. And thirdly, I need to acknowledge that being a pastor will create blind spots as well. Either it will be through my co-researchers perceptions of what a pastor needs to hear, leaving out the unsavoury or un-Christian aspects. Or it will be through my own theological prejudices and assumptions based on my past experience with the police, both prior to 1994 and thereafter. However, I have tried to be as honest as I can in terms of these biases with the help of my co-researchers, other students and my supervisor.

1.9 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

From the beginning of my research, I have taken ethical factors into consideration. Some of these I have already mentioned earlier in the chapter. But I've summarized these considerations here in terms of recruitment; the initial process explanation; the wide involvement in gathering and recording stories; the benefits of involvement; confidentiality; storage of information and the final document.

As far as recruitment goes and explaining the process, I have already discussed this in 1.7.1. I approached police officers in the Kwazulu-Natal Midlands area and accepted all those who were willing to participate. Some of them have already worked with me before. And, in order to balance the racial issue and other biases, I invited others to be outside voices or commentators (narrative researchers use the term "audience") to participate as far as the emerging discourses were concerned.

Explaining the process of this research project was done with each of the research participants. Initially, it was done verbally but then followed up with a written information sheet and a consent form. There was opportunity throughout the process for participants to ask any questions in this regard.

Participants were involved in the process right from the beginning to the end. They helped me choose a topic that we all felt would be worthwhile. Obviously, my co-



researchers were the ones who told me their stories as my initial data collection. I then worked on emerging themes, which I then took back to them for verification and adjustments for the sake of clarity. Opportunity also existed for them to remove any material they did not want included. These “edited” interviews are the ones in this thesis. Thereafter we tried to elicit some underlying discourses by deconstructing (asking questions about) the themes, asking ourselves where these ideas come from.

Other ways in which risks were minimised were in terms of confidentiality. The use of pseudonyms was an option for each of the co-researchers to protect themselves. Further discussions were then done in terms of themes and underlying discourses, rather than on “who said what.” The audiocassettes were also destroyed after the conversations had been written in a way that was acceptable to my co-researchers.

In terms of who benefits from this whole process, I would hope that everyone involved benefits, albeit in different ways. I could not anticipate how each one would benefit when I embarked on the process. My speculation was that I would eventually receive a doctorate; and my co-researchers would have found the process therapeutic (although research is not therapy, simply telling one’s story can be therapeutic) and, as they deconstruct some of the themes, they would be able to work more constructively within their careers. Perhaps a benefit for them would be in simply contributing meaningfully to a research project as we took a journey of growth together. I would also hope that this research would benefit others in the police and those in helping professions. But, this process may produce benefits that I will never be aware of as well.

My co-researchers also commented upon the final form of this project. This gave them a large degree of participation throughout the process. As a result, they could help determine what would be a helpful contribution to the wider community. Each of them was also aware that this research goes into the university library, making it public knowledge and so it was important to include them in this last stage of the journey. My sincere thanks go to them for all their patience and assistance in this regard.



1.10 SUMMARY

In this chapter I have given an introduction to the research topic and have described some of the reasons for it. The research topic, which was partly determined by my co-researchers, is focused upon the effects of a new constitution upon White, male policemen and their working situation within the new structures that have emerged. I wanted to discover whether there are helpful and unhelpful ways of working constructively and creatively within the new South African Police Services. I have outlined my own background, particularly as a practical theologian working within this field, and the paradigm position I choose to work within. I highlighted the congruence between a postfoundationalist paradigm and a narrative approach to research. More specifically, I explained my process in terms of the seven movements of Van Huyssteen's postfoundationalism proposed by Julian Müller, which guided my research process. This chapter also included the limitations of this research and the ethical considerations I needed to address.

In Chapter 2 I give an overview of some of the structural changes that have taken place within the Police Services since our new constitution. Chapter 3 consists of the interpreted interviews I had with my co-researchers. These need to be read and understood within the context of news items that occurred simultaneously in 2006. That is the reason I included relevant media material in the third chapter. Chapter 4 highlights the fourth and fifth movements of reflecting on those experiences, examining where the ideas come from and God's involvement. Chapter 5 addresses the sixth movement of engaging with contributions from other disciplines. And the final chapter consists of a critical reflection of this research as well as concluding remarks regarding the research's contribution into my life as a pastor; its contribution to my co-researchers and how this is to be conveyed to the wider community.

While this is a shared discovery between my co-researchers and I, I need to take responsibility for the content of this document and the way in which it has been formulated.