



CHAPTER TWO

THE HISTORICAL CONTEXT DESCRIBED

A key criterion of the success of policing change in South Africa was the legitimization of the police, who had once oppressed the majority of the country's citizens.

(Shaw 2002:120)

2.1 INTRODUCTION

Before entering into conversation with my co-researchers, there was a lot of information that I already knew, having participated in the new structures from the early stages of its development. This information formed the background context to the discussions I had with my co-researchers and others. There are essentially three reasons why I have included this chapter.

Firstly, I recognise that other readers may not be familiar with the information I would regard as “taken-for-granted” knowledge. The information may help readers understand what is said in the various conversations and the themes that emerge.

Secondly, if I have to be honest with myself, this chapter was included because of my own anxiety. I was initially unsure about how many elements would be included in the conversations with my co-researchers. In order to put my mind at ease and focus fully on what my co-researchers wanted to discuss, I recorded the historical context of changes in South African policing. As it turned out, my fears were unwarranted because they had more than enough issues to discuss.

Then thirdly, and most importantly, my research methodology provided the structure requiring this chapter. The first of the seven movements (describing the context) necessitates this chapter. For my co-researchers it was a comparison between how things used to function and how new developments were unfolding. This chapter will outline some of the necessary changes in structures under a new constitution.



2.2 PRIOR TO 1994

Prior to 1994, police officers experienced a great deal of power in South Africa. This resulted in a history of abuses within the policing structures. The abuse of power by police was closely linked to upholding apartheid laws, which led to tremendous community distrust of the police, particularly amongst marginalized people. Mark Shaw wrote:

Crime control under apartheid was indistinguishable from political control, as the police sought to prevent crime largely through controlling the movement of black people, the putative perpetrators, into white areas. Harshness, brutality and racism were hallmarks of apartheid era ‘law enforcement.’

(Shaw 2002:xi)

Many of these abuses have been recorded by various writers and in the findings of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC). The TRC was established to hear the stories of South Africans who suffered under Apartheid laws. Other authors have also written extensively on the history of police brutality and covert operations in maintaining White minority rule. These authors include those from a wide range of disciplines. One such writer is Gavin Cawthra who says that, even during the F.W. De Klerk era, they were “seeking to destabilise the ANC and its allies to weaken their position at the negotiating table” (Cawthra 1994:5). Details of those abuses fall outside the scope of this thesis because they are already being documented in various forms. Yet, for this thesis, it is important to remember that the history of the police in South Africa has meant that future challenges become more complicated.

As South Africa moves further in its new democracy, “the police in the new order must achieve two apparently competing goals – to abandon their authoritarian past and to repel the crime wave” (Shaw 2002:xi). In terms of revamping the police Cawthra acknowledged that:

Action is needed on many fronts: within the police force, in the external environment in which they operate, and in communities

themselves. Democrats broadly agree that the main aim is to restore public confidence and involvement in policing so that a genuine partnership between police and community can emerge, in which consensus rather than coercion is the norm.

(Cawthra 1994:161)

In seeking to address these challenges, there have been structural changes that have affected the way policing needs to be done. As stated in Chapter One: after the 1994 elections, the South African government realised the need to change community perceptions regarding the police. These changes have not been done overnight, as this chapter will further illustrate.

2.3 A BRIEF HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

Amongst the tasks that needed to be done was the joining of eleven law-enforcement agencies into one; the process of writing a policy framework for policing; introducing name changes to shift people's perceptions of the police into more positive ones; altering the leadership structures; community police forums and other accountability structures to curtail the abuse of power and to refocus police attention onto fighting the ever-increasing levels of crime.

2.3.1 Amalgamating eleven agencies into one

In what is referred to as "the old South Africa" (prior to 1994), eleven different law-enforcement agencies were operating. These were the law-enforcement agencies in the TBVC States (Transkei, Bophuthatswana, Venda & Ciskei), the Self-governing Territories (Gazankulu, Kangwane, Kwandebele, Kwazulu, Lebowa & Qwaqwa) and South Africa. Each had different uniforms, rank structures and worked under different laws. The first task was to incorporate all these agencies into one unified structure. One of the political problems was that two of the main forces were the SAP (the old South African Police Force) and the Kwazulu Police (essentially an armed wing of the Inkatha Freedom Party). Both had been in violent opposition to the ANC. Members of the armed wing of the ANC joined to the South African Defence Force (which



became the South African National Defence Force) and thus did not have many candidates for leadership and rank-and-file positions in the SAPS. Those who were willing to go into the SAPS had no “significant hands-on experience with public order policing, classic detective work, or crime prevention” (Laufer 2001:16). Other problems included those of illiteracy, previous (often inferior) training, different rank structures and how many years of service people had. All these problems had to be ironed out.

As part of my research question of how policemen are adapting to a new situation in South Africa, the question for me here was whether past relationships of antagonism were overcome? And how did the police personnel experience this amalgamation of other agencies and even previously opposed forces?

2.3.2 Green and White Papers

Along with that integration, a whole new policy on safety and security needed to be drafted. The new government’s policy on safety and security was twofold: firstly, to re-orientate the police towards becoming protectors of the communities they serve; and secondly, to mobilise people to participate in the provision of safety and security. The initial policy was outlined in the 1994 Green Paper, which emphasised democratic control, police accountability and community participation. The Draft White Paper was released in May 1998 for public consultation and the final White Paper was presented in September 1998. This then informed national legislation on safety and security.

2.3.3 Name changes

Regarding the re-orientation of police work, a number of changes in names occurred. This was an attempt to change the perceptions from a militaristic structure to a government service provider.

Firstly, the government department in charge of the police changed its name from the “Department of Law and Order” to the “Department of Safety and Security,” and during 2006 changed to the “Department of Community Safety and Liaison.” Also



during 1995/6 the South African Police Force became the South African Police Service (with a new logo and uniform). What was referred to as the “Charge Office,” became the “Community Service Centre” (or CSC). This also formed part of the later “Batho Pele” White Paper. “Batho Pele” means “People First” and was formulated to say that all government departments must provide good service to all South Africans through consultation, better service standards, courtesy, information, accessibility, openness and transparency, and giving value for money. In order to facilitate this, the SAPS management was divided into tiers, namely national offices, provincial offices, area offices and, at the lowest level, local police stations.

Along with these changes, the police rank structures also changed, with fewer ranks amongst the personnel and, amongst the higher ranks, titles such as “Superintendent,” “Senior Superintendent,” “Director” and “Commissioner.” These senior ranks replaced the military rank names of “Colonel,” “Brigadier,” and “General.”

With all these name changes, I wondered whether they were just changing the label of what is essentially the same product. In other words, were the police going to go about their business as usual, or would the new names influence their behaviour in any significant way? Would it make them better policeman in fighting crime or would it result in the deterioration of discipline? And, in terms of their original intention, would the new names help bridge the gap between the community and the police?

2.3.4 Moving towards new leadership and complimentary institutions

According to Stephen Laufer, the newly elected ANC (African National Congress) government had the “fear of an organised white backlash led by security forces against the young democracy” (Laufer 2001:14). As a result, according to Jonny Steinberg: “The new government stressed continuity, appointing George Fivaz, a white policeman from the ranks of the old order, to lead the police force into democracy” (Steinberg: 2001:9). Actually, Nelson Mandela’s first minister of the police, Sydney Mufamadi, first had to ease General Johann van der Merwe, the national commissioner of police (who had Security Branch experience), into retirement on the 31st March 1995, before appointing Fivaz (who did not have Security Branch experience) into the position on 29th January 1995. Many other

experienced members left around this time too. It was then that the Community Police Forums (see 2.3.5) gathered momentum in line with the National Crime Prevention Strategy (see 2.3.6) that was developed.

In August 1997, Meyer Kahn, the executive chairman of South African Breweries was appointed as the police chief executive officer, to work alongside Commissioner George Fivaz. Fivaz remained in charge of policing and Kahn was tasked to use his “business skills in reorganising major SAPS assets, personnel, and resources” (Laufer 2001:19). This, according to Laufer, was a plan that failed and faded into obscurity.

As the problem of crime gained greater prominence, other institutions were formed in order to fight crime. One was a single National Prosecution Authority, which was created in terms of Section 179 of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa. Bulelani Thandabantu Ngcuka was drawn in as the National Director of Public Prosecutions, thus heading up the NPA. Their office was established on the 1st August 1998 that was comprised of seven core business units:

- National Prosecution Services (NPS) remaining with the court prosecutors;
- Asset Forfeiture Unit (AFU – established in May 1999) headed by a retired judge, Willie Hofmeyr, who worked within the Prevention of Organised Crime Act 121 of 1998. Confiscated assets of criminals were used to resource the fight against crime;
- Directorate of Special Operations (DSO, better known as the Scorpions, which started on 1st September 1999, although legally gazetted on 12th January 2001 – No. 21976). Initially, it was headed by Frank Dutton and later by Advocate Leonard McCarthy;
- Sexual Offences and Community Affairs (established in October 1999);
- Specialised Commercial Crime Unit (SCCU);
- Witness Protection Unit (WPU); and
- Priority Crimes Litigation Unit (PCLU, established on 23rd March 2003, focussing on issues like war crimes, genocide, terrorism etc.).

Applicants for some of these units, notably the Scorpions, came from prosecutors, investigators and detectives (many with roots in the Office for Serious Economic Offences established in 1992). They tended to investigate high profile criminal cases.



(<http://www.npa.gov.za> 18 July 2007). In addition to those sorts of units, there was the Special Investigating Unit (SIU) investigating civil cases (where the NPA and Scorpions deal with criminal investigations) such as fraud, corruption and mal-administration in state departments. Judge Willem Heath headed this Unit from 1996 until 2001 when the Constitutional Court ruled that a judge could not be in charge of the SIU. President Thabo Mbeki re-established the Unit later in 2001 with Willie Hofmeyr as its head. Initially, there were problems of litigation, but there seems to be a growing success rate each year in the courts. Then, too, the media reported some antagonism between some of these units and the SAPS. The extent to which this is true in my co-researchers' experience remains to be seen.

All these developments happened in conjunction with tough political talk against crime. Steve Tshwete (a former Umkhonto we Sizwe commander – the armed wing of the ruling ANC) who was the national Minister of Safety and Security (after Sydney Mufamadi) adopted a tough talk image against crime. Jacob Sello (better known as Jackie) Selebi was appointed the national police commissioner in October 1999 (as Fivaz's term of office ended in January 2000), a surprise appointment because he had no previous policing experience. Initially, these were seen as appointments in crisis management. But over time, they were intended to change public perceptions that major crime was being dealt with. I will elaborate more on this tough talk image in 3.2.4 b.

Obviously, leadership has changed since then. For example, Bulelani Ngcuka was replaced by Advocate Vusumzi Patrick Pikoli, incidentally after Ngcuka exposed corruption in the government. It was after my interview period that Pikoli was replaced by Advocate Mokotedi Mpshe on 23 September 2007, also due to political interference. Charles Nqakula replaced Steve Tshwete who died on 26th April 2002. And Jackie Selebi remained the national police commissioner until December 2007.

With regards to leadership, I was interested to hear how my co-researchers dealt with their own role in leadership (as they were all in middle management) and the leadership exercised over them. But I was also interested in how the police worked with other institutions, especially since they were entirely separate government departments. Before 1994 it seemed to me that they worked entirely independent of



one another, but are now having to have a closer relationship. Furthermore, there needed to be a closer working relationship with the community and these institutions.

2.3.5 Community Police Forums

Regarding community participation, the idea of Community Police Forums was formulated. Community Policing was implemented for approximately 3 years under the SAPS Interim Regulations for Community Police Forums and Boards. The Station Commander at each police station was meant to ensure the establishment of a Community Police Forum. At the end of 1994, the Change Management Team of the police established a Technical Team on Community Policing. This team commenced their work in January 1995 to draft a national policy on Community Policing that was contained in the Green Paper. It was done by consolidating successes and dealing with specific problems encountered in the embryonic stages through a questionnaire. A discussion document was compiled based on the feedback. The Green and White Papers then promoted and institutionalised community policing, seeking to ensure the support of all levels of the police.

The formal establishment of Community Police Forums was incorporated into chapter 7 (18-23) of The South African Police Service Act No. 68 of 1995 (otherwise known as The Police Service Act of 1995). This Act, as well as Section 12 of The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa Act No. 108 of 1996, formed the legal framework for setting up Community Police Forums. The practical implementation thereof was elaborated on in numerous other documents, such as the Community Police Forum Tool Kit issued to all local CPF structures.

These CPFs were set up with the aim of greater police accountability to the community they serve and to build a partnership between the police and community in combating crime. Later, Section V of the White Paper said of this:

Initially, CPFs were established at police stations across the country to ensure that station commissioners were more accountable to those they served. This was done primarily to build trust and legitimacy, particularly in those areas in which the relationship between the police and the community had been characterised by mistrust and



conflict. Many CPFs function effectively and sound relationships have been built.

(White Paper 1998 Section V:26)

While I acknowledge that this has been more successful in some places than in others, this has been an important development in South African policing practices. Personally, I can remember the initial stages of building a partnership as being difficult, especially in the light of their practices during the apartheid years. In my opinion, establishing a partnership has, in itself, been a noble accomplishment. Whether my co-researchers would agree with that remained to be seen.

At the outset of this research, I did not know the extent of my co-researchers' involvement during the initial stages of CPFs. However, I was curious about their early perceptions of such a forum and whether they changed over the years of its development. I certainly wanted to listen for any stories they had in this regard.

2.3.6 National Crime Prevention Strategy

In May 1996, the government adopted the National Crime Prevention Strategy (NCPS), which outlined a multi-dimensional approach to crime prevention, looking at crime control and crime prevention. It recognised that crime prevention is not only the task of the police and the courts, but includes all sectors of society. This document officially brought together the problems related to crime and what I have outlined in 2.3.4 and 2.3.5.

The NCPS recognises that crime is caused by a number of factors, requiring a multi-dimensional approach to combating crime. Regarding the causes of crime, the NCPS identified, among others, the following causes: gender inequality; vigilantism; inadequate support to victims of crime; proliferation of arms; social-psychological factors; youth marginalisation; poverty and unemployment; institutionalised violence; and international criminal groups (White Paper 1998 Section I:8).



As a result, the response needs both law enforcement and crime prevention strategies. Law enforcement initiatives are the reactionary elements such as improving criminal investigations, visible policing and service to victims. Crime prevention has to do with addressing social issues such as poverty, housing, education and recreation. Crime prevention would also include educating the community in terms of what the law is about (e.g. explaining the Domestic Violence Act to people, warning against alcohol abuse and tips on lowering your risk of becoming a victim of crime). Community Police Forums would play an important role here through representing various organisations and developing projects to prevent crime and assist those in need.

While the NCPS affirmed that greater cooperation between the community and the police, it has not been easy to implement. Wilfried Schärf, who speaks about the need to improve communication between different police specialised units, says:

Although the National Crime Prevention Strategy urges state departments to work together in order to accomplish a multiplier effect towards a common goal, the reality is usually far removed from it. It is still one of the really big challenges facing the criminal justice system to get its systems speaking to each other and their staff seeing each other as partners.

(Schärf 2001:63)

In terms of this research, I was again interested in how this document has been viewed and implemented (or not) from their perspective.

2.3.7 Independent Complaints Directorate

Where authoritarian, paramilitary policing did not have many accountability systems towards the community in place, the new democracy required them. The Independent Complaints Directorate (ICD) was formed in April 1997. According to Section IV of the White Paper on Safety and Security, the ICD “functions independently of the Department of Safety and Security and reports directly to the minister of Safety and

Security” (White Paper 1998 Section IV:22). Operating in terms of Section 53(2) of the South African Police Service Act, it was tasked to do the following functions:

- Investigating police misconduct or any offence allegedly committed by a member of the SAPS, whether it be criminal activities, poor service, or failure to assist or protect victims of domestic violence.
- Investigating any death in police custody or as a result of police action.
- Investigating any matter referred to it by the Minister or MEC [Member of the Executive Council] for Safety and Security.

When one looks at their annual reports, available on <http://www.icd.gov.za>, it is clear that the ICD has a lot of work on its hands, receiving many complaints against the police, with few human resources. According to Shaw, “The ICD itself has a difficult task, operating in an environment where it can expect little support from the police” (Shaw 2002:39). As a result, I was curious about how my co-researchers and, for that matter, police officers across a broader spectrum than middle management, viewed the work done by the ICD from their personal perspectives.

2.3.8 Section 49 of the Criminal Procedure Act amendment

Section 49 of the Criminal Procedure Act 51 of 1977 has to do with the use of force by a police officer when carrying out an arrest, including lethal force. An amendment to this legislation was proposed in 1998 on the use of firearms, which would allow for lethal force only in self-defence or if a third party is under threat or if there is the risk of future harm being done by the suspect. This amendment evoked sharp reaction. Many police officers felt that power was taken away from them and that they would be targets for criminals who would use this law to their advantage, shooting first before the police could return fire.

Criticism of this amendment came from various quarters. I recall a policeman saying to me, “We might as well hand in our weapons, because we won’t be able to use them when we’ve already been shot dead.” Traggy Maepa from the Institute of Security Studies also warned that: “The violent nature of South African criminal activity brings members of the SAPS into situations where the use of lethal force is often needed”



(Maepa 2002:12). Newspapers throughout the country reported such frustrations from the police and public alike. These kinds of laws added fuel to (or as we would say in narrative research, “thickened the story”) to the perceived rights of criminals being protected at the expense of police officers and law-abiding victims. Within a Constitution that is based upon human rights, this issue can become highly contentious. It goes without saying that there was a lot of initial confusion regarding its implementation that needed to be overcome. This also had an impact on public perceptions on the police and justice system’s ability to combat crime.

2.4 PERCEPTIONS ON CRIME-FIGHTING ABILITY

While the arena of perceptions on the State’s crime-fighting ability is not a structural change that has happened since 1994, these perceptions arise from questioning the effectiveness of those structures. It centres around the goals Shaw mentioned (see 2.2) about how well the SAPS have abandoned their authoritarian past and their ability to repel the crime wave.

Regarding the SAPS abusing their powers, it would be naïve to think that it has been eradicated. Stories of torture, of corruption and manipulating their statistics (and even having a period where no statistics were revealed in the media) are heard all the time. Such behaviour perpetuates doubt and suspicion amongst the public. There seems to be considerable police incompetence and extensive weaknesses in the criminal justice system. When listening to conversations at social gatherings, it is clear that public opinion on the topic is low. Some blame the police who do not respond timeously to calls, gathering insufficient evidence and compromising crime scenes, not to mention bribery, corruption and even criminal involvement by SAPS members. Others blame the courts that let dangerous criminals out on bail, only to have them committing their next crime within a matter of minutes of being released. The researcher, Antony Albeker, does not paint a rosy picture of the state of crime in our country, pointing out the government’s denial through understating the seriousness of crime, and the weaknesses of the police and criminal justice system. As he states: “High levels of crime inevitably erode confidence in government.... [T]he fear of vicious, potentially lethal violence must always leave lingering in people’s minds a suspicion that the state is somehow deficient, that something about it is rotten” (Altbeker 2007:65).



But that's not the only story. There are many stories, including my own, that testify of exceptional professionalism and success. These stories need to be balanced with the negative pictures and perceptions as well. All the above, of course, makes policing in a new era all the more challenging. Since 1994, as crime levels have increased (as opposed to political violence), many have left the country, and those who remain regard crime as a major challenge South Africa faces. And there is little point in having new structures and policies unless they significantly reduce crime.

2.5 SUMMARY

The first movement of research in the postfoundationalist model of Müller (2004:300) calls for the specific context to be described (see 1.7.1). In this chapter I have sought to give some background information on the context. This movement is important in order to understand the content of the conversations that are to be recorded in the next chapter. Not only have I described some of the changes that have occurred since 1994, but also some of my resultant areas of curiosity. Despite those areas of concern, I had to put aside those biases and listen to what my co-researchers felt were the areas of importance for them. It is to the narratives of three Captains, Jody, Leon and Pieter in the Kwazulu-Natal Midlands that we now turn in Chapter Three.



CHAPTER THREE

DISCOVERIES THROUGH OUR CONVERSATIONS

If stories come to you, care for them. And learn to give them away where they are needed. Sometimes a person needs a story more than food to stay alive. That is why we put these stories in each other's memory.... Never forget these obligations.

The Badger (Lopez 1990:48)

3.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, as I stated in Chapter One, I am exploring the conversations I had with my co-researchers. In terms of the seven movements of research from a postfoundationalist view, this chapter focuses on movement three where interpretations of experiences are made, described and developed in collaboration with my co-researchers. For any who may be interested, transcripts of the conversations (which form part of movement two's listening process) are included as an Appendix to this thesis. Once the initial conversations had taken place, I organised the emerging topics that I saw into separate headings. In order to be consistent with the values of social constructionism, I returned to them with these themes and altered them into the fashion they felt necessary. This chapter presents them as we jointly decided upon. Additionally, we felt it necessary to note that these conversations took place in 2006 and so acknowledge that their situations will have changed by the time this document is presented. In order to place them in a specific context, my co-researchers and I have used articles from the media as well, which will give a fuller description of the stories conveyed and, in narrative terms, "thicken" their stories.

3.2 EMERGING THEMES

From our discussions and later agreement, these were considered some of the most important issues for my co-researchers at the time. Some of them contain numerous aspects to them, which I have recorded systematically for the sake of the reader.

However, it must be remembered that people's stories are not always neatly compartmentalised as this record may imply. Many issues are inter-related and overlap with one another. In summary, we have looked at narratives on the following:

- Low quality of work
- Relations between Police members
- Further training and promotions
- Top structures and politics
- Community involvement
- Human Rights and Abuses
- The effects on their family life

3.2.1 Low quality of work

Very early in the discussions with my co-researchers, the topic about having to deal with a low quality of work emerged. While each co-researcher had their own stories to tell and were not together when this subject was spoken about, I was surprised at how quickly it came to the fore. This took the form of a general evaluation of how police officers do or don't do their work (their work ethic that has diminished) and the issue of corruption in the police. I also record in this section how my co-researchers have dealt with the situations in this regard.

3.2.1.1 A diminished work ethic

a) Jody's story of the "Robot System"

Jody opened his discussion with one of the methods implemented to measure police effectiveness in their work, namely the "robot system." This system used the statistics of the police station's previous year as the target figures for improvement in the current year. If there were fewer crimes reported in the current year than the previous year, the station's statistics were recorded as green; more cases would be red; and the same amount as yellow. While its aim was to improve the quality of policing, creating healthy competitiveness between stations, there were obvious weaknesses to the system. It did not evaluate response times to crime scenes, nor conviction rates and it

was easily manipulated. Jody described it as “every station commander’s nightmare.” His reason was that it is impossible to maintain a number one position, because crime will never be eradicated and “one event throws your figures out” and the station looks as if it is failing in its targets. This then means that: “some policemen are reluctant to open cases.... Or they will open the case under another charge.” In other words, statistics are manipulated so that the station will not look bad. It was after this discussion with Jody that I realised why Camperdown’s previous station commander (now retired) had always rejected the “robot system” whenever our CPF Chairperson raised it at meetings. It is not surprising that this system was scrapped in March 2006. It was not an effective way of measuring what actually happens at station level policing. It added to a diminished work ethic by de-motivating police officers and in manipulating statistics. I will say more about this under the heading of statistics later on (3.2.5.3).

b) Leon’s story of uncaring detectives

Leon opened his conversation with his frustration that most policemen “don’t want to work.” He made it clear that: “They don’t care about whether they are doing their work or not, as long as they get their salary.” When his wife, Estelle, said, “There are some who work hard,” he partially agreed but emphasised that “the *majority* do not.” When I asked Leon for examples of such stories, he was able to give many. But we thought it would be best to focus on one particular story. The story was about a poor statement taken by detectives from a surviving victim who was shot by a gang of 5 people. Two things bothered Leon in this case. Firstly, he saw that the way in which the detectives dealt with the victim was uncaring. They did not show any compassion towards the victim, as Leon said he would have, “even though they live in the same community.” And secondly, because poor statement taking would not be able to stand the scrutiny of the court, he requested them to re-take the statement, which they did not do. Instead, they told Leon that they had tried but could not get hold of the man. They said that he was a suspect in another case and so would avoid them when they visited his house. Upon personal enquiry, Leon discovered from the victim’s father that this was not the situation and that no detectives had been there at all. Now, not only did the detectives fail to do their work, they had also lied to Leon. In the end, those detectives were investigated by the Independent Complaints Directorate and



were sentenced. The effect of this sort of thing left Leon very frustrated. In his frustration, Leon told me he thinks of them as “defectives” rather than “detectives” (a comment I will return to in terms of relations between police members in 3.2.2.3). Not caring about their work (no compassion, poor statement taking and not informing witnesses of the court dates) means that cases have to be withdrawn from court. As Leon put it: “Batho pele is totally non-existent.” He went on to compare this to “the old days” where they regularly recovered stolen goods and “we were proud of what we achieved.”

c) Pieter’s story of poor station management

Pieter directed his attention immediately to the station commander at the station he worked at. The relationship between him as branch commander of crime prevention and the new station commander (superintendent) was very tense. He told me that the new superintendent had “upset a lot of people at the station.” Not only had he made the racist remark that “the station is too White,” even though the station reflects a proportionate balance of all race groups, but the way in which he treated members at the station was de-motivating. Pieter cited how the vehicle given to him for his work had been taken away and given to junior members “who are now busy wrecking it” and who “have nothing to show for all their travelling” in terms of making arrests. The quality of his own work is also being compromised as a result. Without a vehicle he is now unable to get to his informers regarding information about crime and to build relationships with the community. He further thickened his story by referring to incidents involving other personnel at the station. For example, a competent Indian Inspector in charge of the Community Policing had his job description removed and it was given to a Black member “who has not attended a CPF. Even after he was tasked with the job, he’s not been there.” When another member had to get her child to a specialist for medical treatment, he refused to let her take time off. He changed arrangements with the students without consulting the Inspector in charge of them. Thus, Pieter experienced the low quality of work in terms of management skills he saw lacking in the Superintendent and, for himself, being prohibited from doing his job well through the removal of his vehicle. This, in turn, affected the quality of work in the rest of the station. In order to cope, some members, including civilian clerical staff, had resigned or asked for transfers to other stations. Other members “shrug their



shoulders and keep quiet.” The Indian Inspector “just does what he’s told to do now and no more.” But Pieter said that he is dealing with it differently: “I refuse to keep quiet.” He chose to record every incident and build a case against the Superintendent. I couldn’t help wondering whether this tension was exacerbated due to Pieter having been a station commander before at another station, and now experiencing poor management from someone promoted by affirmative action. And I wondered whether this was due to a lack of training in managerial skills as opposed to a hierarchical, military-type training. It was also impossible to determine the outcome of this situation at the time of this interview.

d) Stories in the media

Further a-field, similar sentiments have been expressed through the press. An example of a diminished work ethic has been in the Chatsworth Police Station. Since early in 2006, the *Sunday Tribune Herald* has written many articles in regard to this station. The issues were summarised in an article on page 4 of the 17th September 2006 edition entitled “The thin blue line.” In it Ronnie Govender (Secretary of the Kharwastan Safety and Security Forum) summarised the situation there:

Corruption in a small sector of the police force (*sic*), inefficiency and an apparent lack of proper training in investigative techniques had resulted in shoddy case preparation.... Complaints include the slowness of police to respond when summoned to crime scenes, an inability to reach the station by telephone (despite assurances of better systems in place), and a lack of visible policing and feedback on progress made in investigations.

(Sunday Tribune Herald, p 4)

Another example of the SAPS not doing their work was featured on page 3 of *The Witness* on the 24th October 2006 headed “Police ‘wouldn’t help man.’” A man was stabbed opposite the Alexandra Road police station in Pietermaritzburg and, naturally traumatised and hysterical, went to the police for help. Instead of assisting the man, police members began shouting back at him and he had to ask a nearby market stall owner for help (The Witness, p 3).



Personally (and fortunately), I have never been on the receiving end of this sort of behaviour by police members. But I have to acknowledge the reality of a low quality of work that is based on the stories my co-researchers and the media have shared. Along with these incidents is the increasingly prominent story of corruption.

3.2.1.2 Corruption

a) Media reports

The awkward area of corruption in the police was also discussed in our conversations. Corruption seems to be as much a part of police practice as is found in the rest of society. Almost every day, newspapers have reports of corruption involving government, businesses and individuals. Here are some examples that provides some background to this overall culture of corruption.

At a government level, what became known as the “Travelgate scandal,” rocked the government, with officials misusing travel allowances for their personal benefit. Then the Deputy President was suspended due to rape and corruption charges against him. As a result of these sorts of investigations into government officials by the Scorpions, the ruling ANC [African National Congress] have sought to close down this unit. But even the National Prosecuting Authority (NPA) did not escape scrutiny.

The NPA was exposed in the *Sunday Times* whose headline on the 23rd April 2006 read: “NPA in corruption scandal” regarding the irregular awarding of tenders and appointments to posts that were not advertised (*Sunday Times*, p 1). And the list seems to go on endlessly.

As I engaged my co-researchers on this subject, there was one major aspect I was always aware of – that of “the blue code of silence” referred to in the *Sunday Tribune* article on 2nd April 2006: “Bent cops are a sticky issue” by Jani Meyer. It refers to police (who wear blue uniforms) sticking together and never betraying each other in the face of opposition. This would include not giving evidence when a fellow policeman is implicated in wrongdoing. Otherwise known as “Blue glue,” this is

“unwritten, but embedded in police culture, and is found at all levels of its infrastructure” (Sunday Tribune, p 12). On the 16th October 2006, *The Star* headlines gave an example by reporting that the Independent Complaints Directorate faced police members covering up for rape charges of their colleagues entitled “Cops cover up rapes.” The ICD made the point that their task of investigation was made more difficult as police officers were uncooperative (The Star, p 1). While this news report was in line with what I quoted Shaw stating in 2.3.7 about expecting little police support for the ICD, it was not congruent with page 3 of the ICD’s Annual Report of 2005/06. There the Acting Executive Director, Leslie Xinwa wrote that, “The level of co-operation with the police... has been sterling” (<http://www.icd.gov.za>). In the light of this, I wondered how much information I would receive on this subject and the levels of honesty. But I found that everyone spoke frankly with me. That does not mean their stories cannot be challenged, but I could only record them as they were told.

b) Jody’s story of a vehicle theft investigation

As Jody and I spoke about corruption, I expressed my view of the tension police officials possibly face between reporting corruption that one is aware of and of that being perceived as a betrayal of trust with people who might deliberately let you down in dangerous situations. That was my understanding of the “Blue glue” mentioned in (a) already. But he shared a story with me where he said it becomes difficult to prove. It was the story of a vehicle theft suspect who was caught and who was willing to point police to where other stolen vehicles were. But he was not prepared to share this information with the police at Jody’s station because some of them were friends of the other gang members. Jody was on a course at the time and so asked the station commander of a nearby police station to deal with the case. However, when that station commander went, another detective had taken things into his own hands and had not done a proper job. Hence, the case was withdrawn in court because the process was not done properly. An unanswered question is whether that was done deliberately or not by the detective. At the time of the interview, it was too early to tell, but Jody said he was keeping a document on the incident, which may be useful if there are further developments in the vehicle theft cases. Through this, he hinted that the truth has a way of eventually emerging.



3.2.1.3 How my co-researchers deal with these influences

I realised in my research that the SAPS must be aware of these issues and must have tried putting things into place that address them. In 1996 an Anti-Corruption Unit was formed but was closed in 2002. The Independent Complaints Directorate, as explained in Chapter 2, was tasked with investigating the SAPS. But in our conversations, my co-researchers did not mention much about these institutions, except Leon who said that the two detectives who neglected to do their work were investigated by the ICD and sentenced. The question I posed to my co-researchers with regards to the low quality of work they experienced steered the conversation in a different direction. Instead of discussing institutionalised solutions, we spoke about what keeps them going. As a result, the subject of incentives emerged.

a) Stories of incentives

The idea behind giving incentives to police officers is to motivate them to do their work well. It is a financial reward that is given to them for excellence. While the idea is good and there are those who get what they deserve, it is not without its problems.

When I spoke to Pieter about incentives, I was thinking about the broader issue of motivation. He, however, answered in terms of the police understanding of incentives. He told me “incentives are given out. But I won’t get any. The Superintendent does not like me and so he will never approve an incentive for me.” From a narrative researcher’s “not knowing position” I should have asked him to explain, but my fear of revealing my ignorance got in the way. Instead, when I interviewed Jody, I asked him to explain what the system of incentives was all about. As he explained, each police member who applies for an incentive (a bonus) needs to “sell him/herself,” justifying why they feel they deserve it. The station commander then approves up to a maximum of 33% of the staff in each branch (e.g. Detectives, Crime Prevention) for those incentives, which get approved by the Area Commissioner. I then understood how the strained relationship between Pieter and his station commander meant that he would never get recognition for the work he does at the station. As far as their own



work goes, my co-researchers said that it is important to keep their own slate clean and to provide a public service to the best of their ability.

b) Leon's story of exceptions

In my discussion with Leon, I was taken aback by his reference to "Batho Pele" (2.3.3) as being "totally non-existent" because there would surely be exceptions. But Leon in his initial frustration was adamant about the extent of incompetence. However, as the interview progressed, he conceded to exceptions. His wife, Estelle's comment that there are police officers that work hard got him to speak of perhaps 4 out of the 15 detectives worked well. He then spoke about how he tries to do his work with compassion, saying: "I really do feel for the suffering of the victim and their family." And later on he spoke about the achievements of the station commander saying: "He has managed to bring most crimes statistics down since 1998. We used to have about 30 murders a month. Now there are only 3 or 4 a month." So, while there was a story described in extremely frustrating terms, there were elements of hope that emerged as the conversation continued. This is an example of social constructionism, where our reality gets shaped and re-shaped as we enter conversation with others.

Hearing of incidents of a low quality of work amongst police members does not encourage a hopeful picture for the future. Perhaps that is why the temptation to take matters into their own hands (such as vigilantism, which I cover in 3.2.5.4) is so strong. But there are also stories that are different from an almost hopeless one of low quality in police work. For example, in their 5th October 2006 edition, *The Mercury* reported on cocaine worth R45million and 2 British nationals being seized in Tongaat (*The Mercury*, p 2). In the same newspaper, 24 cash-in-transit heist gangsters were arrested in the early hours on the 3rd October at the Mvoti Toll Plaza near Kwa-Dukuza (*The Mercury*, p 3). So while a low quality of work was an early theme in our conversation, the presence of alternative stories of successes and compassion means that the low quality of work can be challenged.



3.2.2 Relations between Police members

There is the idea that the police are like a family on their own, covering up for each other for crimes committed. Certainly there is a lot of evidence for this, such as the news coverage regarding corruption. Another incident was that of the devotion displayed where four policemen were killed by robbers on the 25th June 2006 in Jeppestown. A reporter, Alex Eliseev, wrote on the 2nd July 2006 that he asked one of the policemen surrounding the house where the robbers were: “Have you got a negotiator here?” The policeman replied, “Policemen have died. There’s nothing to talk about!” (Sunday Tribune, p 5). But I discovered that stories of police officers’ devotion to each other are not the only story. Closely connected to the low quality of work were stories of how it affected relationships between police officers. While there are stories of strong relationships, issues such as the lack of trust and respect, racism and affirmative action were also prominent.

3.2.2.1 A story I had witnessed of tensions

After Jody shared the story of probable corruption, I recalled a similar incident I had witnessed many years ago where a White policeman had made an arrest, but later could not find his prisoner in the cells. The only explanation was that one or both Black policemen in the Community Service Centre (then called the Charge Office) had accepted a bribe and released the man. As furious as this policeman was, he could not prove which one of them (or both) had allowed the prisoner to escape. And Jody and I agreed that corruption leads to tensions between police officials who want to do their work well and those who don’t. Further spin-offs include a lack of trust and a lack of respect for other policemen.

3.2.2.2 Jody’s story of a lack of respect for ranks

But another factor Jody spoke about was the lack of respect due to fewer ranks. With some ranks being removed, it created less of a difference, for example, between an Inspector (not an officer) and a Captain (an officer), as there is no Lieutenant in between anymore. As a result, “the respect lessens between them.” The problem of a lack of respect was made worse by the presence of Unions. Jody said that, “In the

past, the commanding officer could compel a policeman to do something or work extra to close a case. Now there are unions to deal with. So now you have to ask the policeman if he would do whatever, even if he has a lower rank. You can't compel him to do anything." When I asked him how he dealt with it, he said that he invited the Unions to attend management meetings and Community Police Forum (CPF) meetings so that they are part of the decision-making process, and notes their absence in the minutes.

There were also other examples Jody spoke about which were conducive to a lack of respect. One was of an Inspector who was unable to make an OB (Occurrence Book) entry because he was illiterate, while a Constable could. Another was of people being transferred on promotion to other units without training or experience in those specialised units. That also led to a lack of respect that was unfair on all parties concerned.

3.2.2.3 Leon's story of racism

Leon, who spoke about policemen who don't care about their work, said that it definitely caused tensions between those who want to work and those who don't. His referral to some detectives as "defectives" has been interpreted as racist, even though Leon said he calls any incompetence defective, no matter what their race. The issue of most of the detectives (who are predominantly Black) not doing their work properly was turned around to try blame White policemen at the station for poor investigations. Leon spoke about a march that was organised by some members and a meeting with top brass of the Midlands Area and from the National offices. It was a deliberate effort by certain Black members of the station to get rid of White members, especially the White station commander. Leon commented that he wished the detectives would do their police work with the same amount of effort that they had put into advertising the march. Both events turned out to be a defeat for those members (hardly anybody attended) because the community, a Black residential area, support the White policemen. The community have seen White policemen taking initiative in fighting crime in the area. In terms of these tensions, I asked Leon what kept him going. He mentioned his retirement and his station commander who told him he must always stay positive.



An incident happened at Leon's station after our conversation, which highlighted tensions between police officers. In this case it was between two Black policemen. *The Witness* reported on it on the 24th October 2006 under the heading: "Families baffled at death of cops who shot each other." Apparently, they had an argument with each other a few days before, but now after coming off night duty with each other, they shot each other dead (The Witness, p 3). The real reason behind this remains a mystery because these two policemen had been friends for many years. However, this incident does reveal that tense relationships between police officers are not simply along racial lines.

3.2.2.4 Pieter's story of undermining management

Pieter spoke about his station commander whose management style negatively affected the morale of the whole station. Poor management skills led to low morale at the station and a strained relationship between officers who should be on the same side fighting crime, not each other. I wondered whether this was from a lack of training in management skills (as opposed to a previous military type training). Pieter was quick to point out that the station commander had less years of experience and, because of affirmative action, received a rank for which he only later went on a course to qualify for. This I will explore further in 3.2.3 when I look at further training. But there was another issue that caught my attention.

Pieter spoke about the station commander taking away his vehicle, thus inhibiting his work. For one thing, Pieter had to ask permission from a policeman of lower rank whenever he needed a vehicle. This was something that Pieter refused to do. And I couldn't help thinking about what Jody had spoken of regarding ranks. It seemed that policemen have tried to make a move from a para-military police *force* with orders coming down the rank structure towards a police *service* that is less authoritarian. Later, I discovered that it was not an issue about lower or higher ranks, but about the way he was being treated by his commanding officer who undermined Pieter's rank at the station. Pieter did not appreciate higher ranks being undermined in front of junior ranks. This seems to be a common complaint, as I discovered when reading about



National Commissioner, Jackie Selebi, which I will come to in 3.2.4.3 that looks at police management.

3.2.2.5 Pieter's story of distrust

Also related to the vehicle issue, Pieter mentioned that he could not get to his informers. Again, his station commander instructed him to give the names of those informers to the detectives at the station. This was something Pieter refused to do because he said they were his informers – there was a relationship with them stretching over many years. Pieter's concern was that if the detectives made a mess of the information they received from these informers, the informers would never trust Pieter again. Just the fact that Pieter did not trust all the detectives in the station spoke volumes to me of little trust between policemen.

Pieter also reminded me of a story he shared in my previous research with him about the first person he shot and killed as a young policeman. Other policemen who were investigating this case told him openly that they were going to do all in their power to have Pieter prosecuted. His "crew" (a slang term for a Black partner) did not make any attempt to help him apprehend the suspect (a mental patient attacking Pieter), but had locked himself in the back of the police van. It was only through the testimony of a civilian witness that the magistrate ruled in Pieter's favour as acting in self-defence. Thus, Pieter knew that he could not even trust his partner for help during dangerous situations or to support his story of such incidents.

3.2.2.6 Dealing with these tensions

When I asked Pieter how he deals with these tensions he mentioned a number of things. Firstly, he tries to get away from the station as much as possible. This includes going on courses, taking leave or taking "time due" (when he has worked additional hours to those stipulated in labour laws). He said he never used to take "time due" until now, because he loves his job but can't work with his station commander. Secondly, he tries to do his job as well as he can to show that he is a better policeman, and tries never to lose his cool (lose his self-control) when the station commander does things to provoke Pieter. Thirdly, he was building a case by documenting all his



grievances and taking them to the Union, mainly because the top management have not paid much attention to him without the Union. His wife, Marian, who was an admin clerk at the station, chose to transfer to another station, but Pieter, while open to other possibilities, does not want to move away from the community in which he has lived and served for a long time. Building a case of grievances was Pieter's way of confronting the situation where others may choose to avoid it.

Strained relationships threaten the effectiveness of police work, as I have discovered. These can become racially stereotyped in nature regarding the quality of work delivered and in terms of affirmative action promotions (which I discuss in 3.2.3). Within these relationships, the station commanders have a lot of power. They can help police members work well, as Leon's does, but can also make things very difficult, such as in the station Pieter works in. Jody, whose wife still works in the same station as Pieter as a civilian administration clerk, made mention of this too. He had warned those in Pieter's station not to complain when they had privileges because, as they discovered, it is worse when they have been taken away. According to Jody, the station commander there was doing everything within his power to legally make life difficult for the personnel. The strained relationships can also be personality clashes where the officers cannot find their way through an impasse.

These stories have certainly gone against my early perceptions of a closed organisation where each police officer looked out for the interests of other members and everyone was on the same side fighting crime. Working at odds with one another will not help anyone in doing the main task of combating crime.

3.2.3 Further training and promotions

Without a doubt, crime is becoming more sophisticated and more criminals seem to execute their deeds with calculated precision. As a result, better training and equipment is needed to deal with this growing challenge of fighting crime. And then, once training has been provided and experience accumulated, it should translate into promotions. In business terms, that would seem to be the logical way to proceed, but again, I discovered a different reality in my conversations with my co-researchers. All



three of my co-researchers told me they had been Captains for many years and, because they are White, in Jody's words: "there is very little chance of promotion."

3.2.3.1 Jody's story and unexpected outcome

In Jody's situation, the higher authorities had sent him to a troubled police station for two weeks. Nine years later he is still there! But, despite having sorted all the problems out, it "does not count for anything. And then you get a Black policeman who is your junior in terms of experience, getting promoted." In my own past experience in the Vaal Triangle, I knew a policeman who became a Senior Superintendent and yet had not passed his Sergeant's exams years before. Our present national commissioner of police, Jackie Selebi, does not have any police experience. And so Jody admitted that people have been promoted without the necessary training or experience, which can sometimes make it hard for policemen to respect them. A surprising twist to Jody's situation came a short while after my conversation with him. He was the only White policeman in Kwazulu-Natal to receive a promotion to Superintendent in July 2006. So in his case, his patience and hard work *did* count for something.

3.2.3.2 Leon's stories of contentment and of pointless courses

Leon's frustration was slightly different when it came to training and promotions. With regards to his own promotion, he had resigned himself to the fact that he won't get promoted. That no longer concerned him, as he will be retiring soon. According to other policemen I spoke to, Leon would have to sign on for further years of service if he got promoted – something Leon admitted he would definitely not consider. He intends taking his retirement and told me he is satisfied with what he has. He said he knew Pieter was fighting for a promotion and said: "Good luck to Pieter." Instead, Leon's frustration was about his detectives who are supposed to be the "cleverer" police members. He said that they attend courses but that does not necessarily mean they pay attention in lectures. And if they do, they return to the station with the same attitude of not caring.



3.2.3.3 Pieter's use of Unions amidst Affirmative Action

Pieter made the point that he has more experience than the station commander who, because of affirmative action, is where he is. The fact that he owns a farm next to another top brass policeman at the Head office makes the station commander a well-supported candidate for the post. The station commander only attended the relevant officer's course after being given the post he now fills. When I asked Pieter whether a managerial course would help the superintendent (station commander), he said that the superintendent had told him he does not need to go on courses. A little later, I picked up on the issue of people getting promotions ahead of others. His reply was that he could appreciate the powers that be that want to redress previous inequalities and have better representation throughout the structures. But at the same time, it has been more than 10 years and "they should start promoting people again based on their experience and performance."

He then told me his own story of struggling to get a promotion. Last year he heard of other Captains in Gauteng who were in a similar position going to the CCMA [Commission for Conciliation, Mediation and Arbitration of South Africa], an organisation specialising in mediation and arbitration especially with labour issues. In the second half of 2006 he filled in an official application, which was not without problems. The station commander deliberately delayed signing his application form, just to frustrate Pieter. Fortunately Pieter had established contact with the Union before and brought this to their attention as well. Rather than losing his temper, which would simply give ammunition to the station commander, he has gone the route of documenting these incidents and only attends meetings with a representative of the Union.

3.2.3.4 Promotions amongst other races

With regards to promotions, it seems that White policemen are not the only ones struggling to get promoted. On the 15th October 2006, page 1 of the *Sunday Tribune Herald* ran an article: "Call to probe Indian cop saga." It reported that the South African Human Rights Commission was going to investigate an e-mail sent from



National Assistant Commissioner NNH Mazibuko to provincial heads of Kwazulu-Natal. The newspaper reported that:

128 African, 65 coloured, 57 white and no Indian males be promoted in the province. It further recommended that 197 African, 38 coloured, 14 white and, again, no Indian policewomen be promoted. [Human Rights] Commission chairperson Jody Kollapen stated that promotions must be on the performance of the employee, otherwise it was considered unconstitutional and an unfair labour practice. Even though they are guidelines, it shows the thinking of the high ranks of the police.

(Sunday Tribune Herald, p 1)

Certainly, the Indian policeman (an Inspector) I worked closely with in community projects, who was part of my audience, was amongst those who were very angry about these reports. Antony Albeker relayed a similar story of a Black policeman with the pseudonym Inspector Solomon Makaye. Although he had many years of service from the time of the old police force, he had never been considered for promotion. As a result, he was still doing patrol work and was very bitter. As Albeker put it, democracy had come too late for these ageing, embittered Black policemen, who had been regarded as sell-outs in the 1980s and were still unappreciated in a new democracy (Altbeker 2005:209).

While the reason given for such promotion policies are to eventually reflect the demographics of society, many members across all racial groups experienced it as being unfair practice.

3.2.3.5 Pieter's story of further training and technology

In another part of the conversation, Pieter and I focused on other training offered in terms of fighting crime. We spoke about the SAPS Automated Fingerprint Identification System (AFIS), a national database of fingerprints, and Morpho Touch (provincial). These instruments take the fingerprints of a person and, within minutes, can link that person to crimes they have committed. With changing laws, such as

those around the use and sale of alcohol, one needs to be kept up-to-date. Competency or “Street Survival” tests are also being done on police officials to evaluate whether they are fit and able to carry out their duties (such as chasing a suspect and in the use of firearms).

In a contrasting story we also spoke about one of the best detectives in the station who has a Masters degree in forensics who has just resigned to join an insurance company. His salary is far higher than he would ever earn in the SAPS and he’s using his knowledge to save the insurance company millions of Rand in fraudulent claims. He was someone to whom the station commander had said, “Why are you bothering with forensics? The police will never use you in that.” It is that kind of attitude that made him resign and we have lost an excellent policeman.

It comes as no surprise, then, when the *Sunday Times* headlines on the 1st October 2006 read “Why criminals are walking free: Police forensics is a mess, with R100m machines to test DNA gathering dust.” It was a report about 2 state-of-the-art machines bought to process thousands of DNA samples a day and combat staff shortages were gathering dust (Sunday Times, p 1). The technology is there and yet magistrates and judges continue to see long delays and postponements. Judge G.A. Hattingh was reported on the 3rd September 2006 as one who spoke harsh words referring to Selebi who wasn’t doing his job (Rapport, p 4). The same newspaper further reported that the SAPS have also acquired a helicopter with an infrared camera that can find criminals even at night through heat sensors. This will come into operation from early in 2007 (Rapport, p 6). It would seem to the public that there is the capability to fight crime but there is something missing, something that has to be addressed from the top. The question is: will they?

3.2.4 Top structures and politics

Before 1994, the South African Police Force was considered the enforcer of the Nationalist Party’s apartheid policies. And now they were forced to work with a government they had once opposed. My initial curiosity was about how my co-researchers were dealing with this change (as I mentioned in 2.3.1). And yes, each of them had something to say about those in positions of influence within the political



sphere – speaking broadly about Labour Unions [POPCRU is the Police and Prisons Civil Rights Union and SAPU is the South African Police Union] and Government officials and top police management. But their stories led me to different conclusions to my stereotyped picture of police officers.

3.2.4.1 Unions – two sides of a coin

According to Wilfried Schärf, “...‘unions’ is the dirtiest six-letter word among the police. It is perceived by most white managers and by many white members as an evil, a betrayal, and as an excuse to get away with poor performance on the part of (mainly black and ‘under-skilled’) union members” (Schärf 2001:60). My discovery was that there are actually two sides of the coin as far as Unions go.

Regarding the Unions, Jody spoke about Union involvement contributing to the lack of respect for higher ranks. “In the past,” he said, “the commanding officer could compel a policeman to do something... Now there are unions to deal with... You have to ask the policeman... even if he has a lower rank.” Leon expressed similar sentiments by saying: “Whenever you want to try reprimand policemen, they come back [with the Unions] and want to lay a complaint against you.” As I have noted in 3.2.2, Jody involves the unions in all his meetings so that: “They can’t come back to me when I implement those decisions.”

Pieter’s story, on the other hand, is one of turning to the Union for assistance. He has sought their assistance in both his case against the station commander and in his application for promotion. He had tried taking his grievances to the top management, but he felt as if he wasn’t getting anywhere with them. Unions are there for the purpose of helping workers to get their voices heard and so, as a final resort, turned to them for assistance. Now he tells me that he does not attend any meeting without a Union representative. That representative keeps Pieter calm during tense moments and makes sure that others don’t try to intimidate or provoke Pieter.

3.2.4.2 Politicians

a) Our stories

When we spoke about politicians, Leon and Jody were not enthusiastic about their involvement. Jody mentioned that, “some political people who get voted on [to the CPF] soon lose interest and fade away.” I shared my experience and resultant perceptions with Jody saying that, when I was involved in Meyerton in the Vaal Triangle and democracy was still new, politicians were using CPF meetings to gain political points. They would come to the Annual General Meeting (AGM) to be voted onto the executive, but after another meeting or two, we would never see them again.

At the station where Pieter works, there are one or two local council politicians involved because the CPF chairperson has worked hard at involving them. However, having worked alongside him, I know he insists that the CPF must be a-political as it is written in the CPF constitutions of each station.

Leon made it clear that he has never had time for politics. He told me that, even in the days of political violence in Kwazulu-Natal when people were being slaughtered, he was not impressed by politicians “coming with their big Mercedes cars” and “stand in your face and ask you what you are doing about it.” He just goes about trying to find out who the culprits are. I tried to push him on the way politics and police work have been intertwined and he agreed that within the CPF politicians “tried to get involved and sway things for their own benefit.” He went on to say that, “fortunately we have managed to address that and people are getting on with fighting crime rather than just getting political leverage.”

Each of my co-researchers and I then agreed that the rumours of the CPF structure shifting away from the Department of Safety and Security to the municipality would not be beneficial. Community Police Forums must be a-political and inclusive of as many stakeholders as possible. I will return to the topic of CPFs in 3.2.5.1.

b) The media's version of political involvement

Within the media, the government has come under heavy criticism in the way it deals (or does not deal) with crime. Since the releasing of crime statistics for the 2005/6 financial year, there have been numerous articles criticising the government's inability to combat crime. For example, the editorial comment on the first page of the *Sunday Times* on the 1st October 2006, said that "the government's response to crime amounts to a gross dereliction of duty." Later it made the scathing remark that: "This newspaper would like to suggest that, in-between the mandatory back-stabbing sessions at this weekend's gathering, the ANC's high-ups reserve some time for an in-depth discussion on this crisis [of crime]. If they do not do so, it will confirm our worst fears: that they do not care" (Sunday Times, p 1). This comes in spite of promises by the National Commissioner to deal effectively with criminals, which was the headline of *The Mercury* on the 12th September 2006 "Nqakula pledges assault on crime" (The Mercury, p 1). Earlier in the year, Gauteng's MEC for Community Safety and Liaison, Firoz Cachia was quoted in *The Star* headlines on the 12th July 2006 that he would resign if he felt he wasn't doing his job in fighting crime in his 6-month plan (The Star, p 1). Bheki Cele, the MEC for Community Safety and Liaison for Kwazulu-Natal had made similar promises in an article entitled "We shall win the fight against crime, promises Cele" on the 27th July 2006. He said, "The promise I make is that, working together, we shall overcome crime. The city will be safer, the province will be safer and that is our plan" (The Mercury, p 12).

One such plan was to disband specialised units, redeploying those police officers to station level with the intention that stations would benefit from their expertise. However, newspapers such as the *Rapport* on the 8th October 2006 reported that some of them found no furniture provided for them at stations and officers complained that they now don't know who to refer serious cases to anymore (Rapport, p 1). The breaking up of specialised units, according to an article on 1st October 2006 in the "Insight & Opinion" section of the *Sunday Times* ("Top cop casts fearful shadow over force"), interrupts development and honing skills and focuses on the short-term, but does not understand the long-term effects (Sunday Times Insight & Opinion, p 19). Another plan proposed by a meeting between Business Against Crime and the government in Pretoria on the 4th October 2006 (reported by *The Mercury* on the 5th



October) was to bring back ex-police officers who have experience to tackle violent crime in the light of a 74% increase in cash-in-transit heists (The Mercury, p 1). But the *Rapport* headline article on the 8th October 2006 reported that these ideas were rejected by many police officers, saying they would never come back (Rapport, p 1). It would seem then that all these promises by government are just words at this stage. The question is whether they are realistically going to be implemented.

3.2.4.3 Top police management

a) My co-researchers' perspective

Leon spoke briefly about the top structures of the police, saying: "Their attitude is clear: You have been posted to that particular station. So you must sort out your own problems. The police at Area [the province was divided into various areas that had oversight over local police stations, but these demarcations were later done away with in favour of smaller clusters of stations] say they have enough problems of their own and don't need our problems too. So, no, there is no support from the top structures." Jody put it slightly differently when he said that station commanders have a lot of power and can make things easy or difficult for those under their command. It means that those in higher ranks have placed a lot of control in the hands commanding officers of local stations and will only intervene in desperate situations. Obviously, there are orders or instructions that come from the National offices through to the Provincial offices that have to be complied with and auditing that takes place from Area offices, but much is left to those at station level.

In Pieter's situation, I asked him whether there was anyone at the top who might be on his side. Certainly, I had heard comments that Pieter's approach could be detrimental to his prospects of promotion – the approach of listing and submitting pages of grievances. He said that he had spoken to a Senior Superintendent for whom he had a lot of respect, and asked his advice. This person, he felt, would support him in both issues of tension with his station commander and the issue of his promotion. And then, too, he felt that there might be one or two others at the Area office who could see his point of view. The problem, possibly, was that they needed to play a political game and so could not openly support the promotion of a White policeman.



b) The media on the national commissioner

The person who was the National Commissioner at the time of writing this dissertation, was Jackie Selebi. There was article on him in the *Sunday Times: Insight and Opinion* section on 1st October 2006 entitled “Top cop casts fearful shadow over force”. In it nobody interviewed would offer a full endorsement nor a complete condemnation of his work. Coming from a civilian background with no policing experience, the report said he was doing a better job than his predecessor and has “been useful in the transformation of the old apartheid-era police force into a new police service better equipped to serve an emerging democracy.” However, he had a “Lack of overall strategy and analysis of the character of crime” and did not try to find out what police on the frontline actually need. Some in top management gave examples of how he had “humiliated senior officers – black and white – in front of their juniors and in which he had publicly berated civilians, often with profanities that many find offensive.” As one person said, “On the one hand, he is operationally sound and committed to getting the job done, but on the other he destroys much that he has built in the way he treats people.” One example was of calling an African policewoman a “chimpanzee” on the eve of assuming command (*Sunday Times Insight & Opinion*, p 19). This attitude, as I have stated, bears a strong similarity with Pieter’s comments referred to in 3.2.2 on how police officers treat and humiliate each other even in the presence of junior ranks. Part of my audience from Head Office confirmed these sentiments. They added that if Selebi does not like someone, he calls them “Chief.” Thus, a title reserved for showing respect is turned into sarcasm.

In a democratic society, there have been many changes and police have had to learn to work with a new attitude of transparency without relying on just “giving orders.” In terms of management style there seems to be a tension between respecting higher ranks and treating those right down to the lowest ranks with courtesy and consideration. This includes the way politicians deal with the issue of crime and the promises they make. It seems to me that those who are able to make that shift in their approach are going to be the ones who survive and, hopefully even prosper in the long term.

3.2.5 Community involvement

The mantra that is played repeatedly in the media makes the point that fighting crime is not the sole responsibility of the police, but that all sectors of the community should play a role. Government (such as political and welfare roles), businesses, religious organisations, education institutions and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) all have a contribution to make. This is something I found to be true in the conversations I had with my co-researchers. In terms of my conversations, this community involvement included topics such as the Community Police Forum and its projects, transparency issues such as an open door policy and speaking about crime trends, security companies and vigilantes, the role of informers, developing partnerships with the courts, and the role of the church.

3.2.5.1 The Community Police Forum

a) Jody's experience

When I asked Jody about Community Police Forums, he told me that, initially, they were difficult. I could also remember how police members sat on one side of the room and the community on the other side, our body language reflecting very little relationship between the two groups. Certainly, there have been the threats of political manipulation, of criminal infiltration and meetings degenerating into police-bashing sessions of unlimited community complaints. But Jody and I were able to celebrate together on how well the community and police worked together. One of the projects Jody spoke about was an awareness program in the local schools. As a result, schoolgirls have had the courage to come forward and report cases of rape by the taxi owners who transport them to school. Before this project, they might not have opened these cases and so, for Jody, it meant that a greater trust in the police was slowly developing.

b) Leon's experience

Leon was not very involved in the CPF, but he did recall how the community would treat the police badly when they went into an area to investigate a crime. This would



be through throwing stones at them or showing the police a “brown eye” (pulling down their pants and showing the police their bums). He spoke about how, when CPFs started, “they were the local complaints forum, where complaints formed the major portion of the agenda.” A deliberate effort had to be made for people to rather approach the station commander with complaints and only if that was unsuccessful, should they bring it to the CPF meeting. That seems to be the general practice these days in areas where the CPF structures are working well. While Leon did not speak about community projects, saying that that was the domain of the crime prevention branch, not the detectives, his story involving the failed march (referred to in 3.2.2.3) was an indication that the community supported the White policemen who the community viewed as doing their work.

c) Pieter’s experience

One of the projects Pieter spoke about was that of working in the schools in the area. Awareness projects were held in the local Primary Schools where various presentations would be made. The Dog Unit, Organised Crime (drug) Unit, the Rape Unit, the Traffic Department, and myself on Domestic Violence would each do a short presentation for the children. Through it, the children were informed of the work that the police do, the dangers facing them and their rights as victims of crime. Judging from the response and thank-you letters, these projects were very successful. As Pieter said, “Even if just one child who was thinking about drugs or whatever and has changed his or her mind, it will be worth it.”

d) What others have experienced

Bheki Cele, in his promises to fight crime (reported on 27 July 2006), spoke about how communities need to talk about crime in their area; deny criminals shelter and a market to sell their stolen goods; and for parents and churches to talk about the ills of crime. In the article he relayed a story: “We recently faced a very embarrassing scene when we had to arrest a woman, fully clad in a church uniform, for having been dropped at the churchyard in a stolen vehicle. She probably knew that her son could not afford the vehicle that she was being driven in.” He also spoke about the contribution big businesses had, especially in funding crime-fighting plans; and of



using the youth who know the locals well to work under a policeman to increase visibility (The Mercury, p 12).

I have found that it is wonderful to talk about community involvement, but a comment from Sammy Sayed, Area Board Chairperson of South Durban [each area had an Area Board comprising the CPF chairpersons, who elected an Area Executive], rang true as quoted in the *Sunday Tribune Herald* on 17th September 2006: “Resourcing and funding have been the greatest hurdle facing the community police forums. While there are legal mandates for the creation and functioning of community police forums, there is no legislation dealing with financing them” (Sunday Tribune Herald, p 4). In my own experience within Kwazulu-Natal, in December 2005, there was still R1,8 million for CPF projects sitting at Bheki Cele’s office that needed to be spent by March 2006. Despite the Area Boards throughout the province having approved various projects in the province, no funding had been passed on to them to distribute. A huge function with all CPF chairpersons and SAPS coordinators of each station was held in prime holiday season (December) in Durban with hotel accommodation to spend most of this budget. I could not help feeling this was an absolute waste of resources that could have been spent on constructive projects.

Another example in Kwazulu-Natal where CPFs have experienced problems has been in Chatsworth. Over the year, the *Sunday Tribune Herald* has reported on tensions that have been deepening between the community and the police. Even though the *Sunday Tribune Herald* reported on the front page on the 2nd April 2006 that 190 additional police officers were moving into the area, these tensions continued to grow. In the 17th September 2006 edition of the *Sunday Tribune Herald* it seemed that frustrations between the community and the police were still present. There was a feud between “Chatsworth and District Against Crime” (Cadac) and the Chatsworth CPF. Cadac deputy president, Visvin Reddy, was quoted as saying: “Our problem lies with the dysfunctional and ineffective police forum in Chatsworth, which has failed to identify with the plight of victims of crime and address the concerns of the community” (Sunday Tribune Herald, p 4). Needless to say, the Area Board of the CPF has had to step in to help resolve the issue as Cadac had also met with vigilante groups in the area. But community involvement does not always have to deteriorate into vigilantism (a topic I will deal with under 3.2.5.4 d).

As a result of the above considerations, my co-researchers and I came to a mixed conclusion about Community Police Forums. While there are stories of success, where it works very well, there are also places where it has not worked at all. We agreed that criticism of their effectiveness should not be based on a one-sided view, but recognise that some CPFs have worked better far more quickly in some situations than in others.

3.2.5.2 An Open Door policy

Transparency at local police stations is ultimately ensured through the Community Police Forum. Any complaint regarding the quality of service can be discussed at CPF meetings. However, in order to ensure the smooth running of a meeting without the agenda being consumed by individual complaints, the station commanders have adopted an “open door policy.” That means that most matters are dealt directly with the station commander and solutions can be found.

a) Leon’s station commander

Leon spoke about his station commander who managed to get this right in his station. Most people in that community use that route to get immediate satisfaction, rather than waiting for the monthly CPF meeting. But, as Leon added, “That’s if they haven’t shrugged their shoulders at the incompetence of the SAPS.” Fortunately, his station commander is popular and, according to Leon, his open door policy has resulted in “the people love him.”

b) Pieter and Jody’s stories

Pieter had also adopted the same policy when he was station commander at another station previously. Jody expressed that there are definite benefits to such an approach. One of the benefits is that immediate solutions can be administered, leading to client satisfaction, without wasting other people’s time at a community meeting. I experienced the openness of both Pieter and Jody when visiting their stations. Pieter was station commander at another police station when I was busy with my Master’s

degree. And shortly after my interview with Jody, I visited him at his station. On both occasions, I had to wait (pleasantly so) for them because they were attending to a member of the public, in line with their open-door policy.

3.2.5.3 Statistics and crime trends

Along with the theme of openness and transparency with the community has been the issue of crime statistics. Since 1994, crime statistics have increasingly become an issue of much debate and controversy, especially with greater community participation and accountability structures. At one stage, the government came under severe criticism for its moratorium on crime statistics. National crime statistics for the 2005-6 year were released in September 2006 and received much media attention. While the media criticised statistics only being released once a year, the reality is that local CPFs are kept up-to-date and discuss crime in their area once a month. Having said that, there are other dynamics at work in the compilation of statistics.

One of the dynamics is the one mentioned in 3.2.1.1 by Jody, where policemen are reluctant to open cases or will open them under a different charge. That is fundamentally manipulating the statistics so that the station does not look bad. Joan van Niekerk, co-ordinator of Childline South Africa, went so far as to say in the *Sunday Times* on the 1st October 2006 (“Women and children bear the brunt”) that: “What we have experienced in the past nine months is victims being turned away from police stations. When they go to report crime, they are literally, physically being turned away. It could be that the officers are under enormous pressure to reduce their crime statistics” (Sunday Times, p 4).

Another dynamic is that people do not always have confidence in the SAPS ability to apprehend the culprit and the justice system to convict them. It may also be that the crime is considered minor, either by the police or by the victim, for example, when a minor item such as a hosepipe is stolen and nobody was hurt during the theft. As such, the incident goes unreported or unrecorded. The Camperdown CPF chairperson, John de Jesus, is well known for his plea in this regard. He points out that if there are only a few reported crimes at a station, police officers are removed to other stations where there appears to be more crime. The same principle is used when determining the



number of vehicles that a police station needs. Thus the vicious cycle of the lessened ability of the SAPS to apprehend suspects begins again.

3.2.5.4 Law enforcers outside the SAPS

Security companies also play a vital role in the fight against crime. Many people rely on paying security companies to protect their property. With the joining of 11 law enforcement agencies in South Africa, I wondered what kind of relationship the police had with those outside of that merger. I also wondered what sorts of dangers there are to having so many organisations working at maintaining law and order.

a) Pieter's story of good relationships

Pieter spoke about “a good working relationship with the security companies and farm protection units.” He said that: “They often help us in making arrests when there are robberies.” On the day of the Comrades Marathon (16th July 2006) there had been a murder in Camperdown (on the runners' route) and one of the security companies was informed via cell-phone. The security vehicle happened to be driving past the suspect walking in the street and promptly arrested him. Successful operations with Metro Police and the traffic department, who also attended CPF meetings, were mentioned.

b) Media stories of opposition

On the other hand, South Africa has also witnessed tensions between law enforcers. For example, when security guards went on strike on the 23rd March 2006 for the next few months, the police had to intervene when strikers turned into riots, firing rubber bullets at them. For some it looked like what once took place in the apartheid era. But others were looking to the police to protect their property from security guards who had turned into thugs. For me, the irony was in how one day both groups would have worked well together, the next day they are at loggerheads and, once the strike was over, would work together again. I wondered what those incidents do to the long-term relationship between those law-enforcement agencies. My co-researchers did not deal with this question because the security companies in the areas they work in were unaffected by the strike.



Another example of tensions between law-enforcement agencies becomes apparent when reading the newspapers. It becomes clear that, between the SAPS, the NPA, the Scorpions, Metro Police and RTI (Road Traffic Inspectorate / Traffic Department), there are often investigations done by one or more of them on each other. For example, on the 6th August 2006, the front page of the *Sunday Times* read, “Scorpions pair bust at airport” on suspicion of being part of a drug syndicate. They claimed to be working under-cover. The report went on to say: “The arrest of the Scorpions investigators is likely only to inflame the tension that already exists between the two law-enforcement agencies. The police and Scorpions have been engaged in a bitter turf war over the past few years” (Sunday Times, p 1). In another example, *The Mercury* printed an article on the 17th October 2006 entitled “SAPS man takes on Metro Police: Officer sues for R500 000.” It reported that 5 Durban Metro policemen broke into Director Mzikayifani Zondi’s house, and assaulted him and his family, based on information that illegal firearms were there (The Mercury, p 4). Reading this, I wondered about these law-enforcement agencies continually investigating one another’s corruption and low performance levels and what this did to their relationship. My co-researchers claimed they all worked well together, which led me to wonder how much of this tension is just media hype.

One of those policemen in my audience, however, mentioned something similar to Wilfried Schärf about specialized units depending on the work down by stations and then closing the cases and taking all the credit for the work (Schärf 2001:53). This policeman also said that when members had been recruited to these units, notably the Scorpions, they burnt their bridges with the old units they were involved with.

Going back to my co-researchers about this, they felt it was partially true, although it is a generalised statement to make. According to them, they still worked very well with units such as the Organised Crime Unit and the Serious and Violent Crimes Unit.

c) Leon and vigilantes

One danger I encountered of other enforcers of the law is that of vigilantes. This is something Leon spoke about, where people became frustrated with the low quality of



policing and took matters into their own hands. Leon told me a story of something that happened a few days before our conversation. He witnessed a mob killing a suspect who had been caught by the community. Before this, he had always arrived at the scene after the deed had been done, but this time he was there when the community burnt this suspect to death. And there was nothing he could say or do to stop it. Even his wife, Estelle, who admitted that Leon doesn't talk about his work at home, said that the incident "affected Leon badly."

d) Increasing cases of vigilantism

Similarly, on the 27th October 2006, *The Witness* had a front-page article entitled "Terrorised people stone rapists to death." It relayed the story of the castration, assault and killing of a serial rapist and his accomplice (part of a gang of 4) who had terrorised residents in KwaMashu. On the 26th October, the police took two suspects to a victim for identification, when an angry mob recognised the men as those who had victimised over 12 families in that street and dragged them out of the vehicle and mutilated them to death. The police tried unsuccessfully to stop the crowd from meting out street justice. Bheki Cele said he understood that the people were angry but the community only had the right to arrest people and hand them over to the police. While a few community members expressed shock, most were jubilant over their deaths (*The Witness*, p 1). The speculations of my co-researchers and I, although not condoning these actions, agree that the attitudes and actions of this community are partially informed by the low quality of work in 3.2.1. People have become frustrated, not only with the police, but also with the court system of bail and long delays as well as the early release of offenders from prison. Suspects are let out on bail at 12 noon, committing their next crime by 2pm, and communities see few viable alternatives.

There are examples where the community has worked well together in combating crime. On the first page of the *Sunday Tribune Herald* on the 17th September 2006, there was an article about a farming community in Bergville who helped save two women farmers who had been held up by two armed men. One of the women had managed to call a neighbour for help and the community eventually trapped the suspects at a nearby river with the police on one side and the community on the other (*Sunday Tribune Herald*, p 1).

e) Bringing in the SANDF?

In the light of the surge in cash-in-transit heists, the *Sunday Times* headline on the 15th October 2006 was “Bring in the army.” Security personnel responsible for transporting large amounts of cash around the country threatened a nationwide strike if nothing was done to improve their safety. The argument was that the South African National Defence Force (SANDF) would be able to equal the firepower of gangsters. The article stated that: “Armed troops were last seen on South Africa’s streets in the dying days of apartheid when the National Party government was battling to keep a lid on township violence. The South African government is known to be cautious about deploying troops to do police work as this would militarise society and create a siege mentality” (Sunday Times, p 1). This, in my experience, is not entirely true. For example, in the mid-1990s, when the N2 freeway between Somerset West and Cape Town was a gauntlet of Black criminals randomly throwing rocks at passing motorists, the SANDF was deployed to patrol the freeway and the problem was solved. Similarly, when I was in Meyerton as the CPF Chairperson, we regularly had joint projects involving the SAPS and SANDF. Nevertheless, a meeting was held between National Commissioner Jackie Selebi and Emily Fourie, spokesperson of the Motor Transport Workers Union on the 16th October 2006 and measures to combat this sort of crime have been put in place without using the SANDF, according to *The Mercury* on the 17th October 2006 (The Mercury, p 3).

3.2.5.5 Informers

Leon and Pieter were clear about the importance of informers. Without them the police could not do their job effectively. Prior to 1994, these informers were mainly used to give information to the Security Police about those undermining apartheid. It was candidly said that one could not sneeze in a Black township without the police knowing you had sneezed. People suspected (even with no proof) of being informers in the townships were “necklaced” by the community, through tying them up, placing a petrol-filled car tyre around their neck and setting it alight until the person burnt to death. Although informers were well paid, it was undesirable to be accused of being one. I was one who had also been approached by the Security Police in 1990 to work

for them while at Rhodes University – I declined. And there were those who applied for amnesty in front of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission for having been informers.

After 1994, this network of informers ceased to exist, which left a gap in the police structure as their primary focus shifted to crime. With Leon being involved with the detective branch, informers form an integral part of his work. However, he made the comment that he had not seen any of his detectives fill out an application for reward money to any informers, meaning that they did not have any informers (or “sources” as they are now called).

Trust is an important quality in the relationship between the police and the informer. Pieter spoke about a relationship of trust that must be established between the police member and the informer. That is something nurtured carefully over time. For that reason, he admitted that he would not reveal his informers to the detectives for fear of them bundling a case and losing their trust in him. The chairperson of the Camperdown CPF also told me a story of informers who came to him with information about a crime. He took them to the police station, but when the informers saw certain policemen in the Community Service Centre, they refused to give their information. As the station commander was new to the area, they did not know him and so could not trust him either. The chairperson had to refer them to the Organised Crime Unit in Pietermaritzburg instead.

3.2.5.6 Partnership with the courts

Once again, Pieter spoke about a good relationship with the local courts. He said, “They tell us when they need more information... and we get it to them even before it goes to court.” The prosecutors help them oppose bail in relevant cases “as long as we do our side properly.” Admittedly, some of the police don’t do their part properly “when they are not well led” by the branch commander.

Leon expressed his own frustration with the court system “especially if you’ve put in many hours, a lot of sweat” and the person is released on technicalities or inexperienced prosecutors. He acknowledged that police are sometimes at fault too,



referring back to the low quality of their work, even on basic things like taking proper statements.

When Jody spoke about the robot system, mentioned that it did not reflect conviction rates – the problem being that it took very long before cases were finalised in court or through the withdrawal of cases during that long process and postponements. Those cases reported and where arrests were made would only be reflected many years later.

3.2.5.7 Church involvement

Prior to 1994, the involvement of the church in the police force was through chaplains. At the same time there were churches fighting against apartheid and, as such, found themselves in regular confrontation with the police. My conviction in the years since 1994 has been that, while the church must still speak against things like racism, corruption and so on, the political landscape has changed and so has the role of the church.

Jody was able to tell the story of what happened in Richmond. Before 1994, there had been political turmoil in the area that extended well beyond the birth of a new democracy. Violence was a continuous problem, as well as having a police service that seemed ineffective. The higher authorities eventually removed all the police members in Richmond and replaced them with personnel from around the country. One of them was Jody who was made station commander. Initially he was sent there for two weeks, which actually became 9 years. During this time, the churches prayed earnestly for Richmond and would go everyday to pray for the policemen going on duty. When the situation finally stabilised after the assassination of Nkabinde, a political leader in the area, this prayer time changed. One of the elderly members of the Methodist Church still goes twice a week to share a Scripture reading and prayer with the police.

In my situation in Camperdown I was invited to do something similar. Once a week I went to do a Scripture reading, a short meditation and prayer at the local police station. However, I was always curious about how this time was received by the members. I asked Jody what his experience was in Richmond and he told me that



most appreciated it. He said that one or two were clearly disinterested, but that was their own choice. But on the whole, people appreciated that someone took the time and effort to come to them. Pieter expressed something similar to me when he told me how meaningful my visits and sermons were to him. While I have no reason to doubt his comment, I was still unsure how widespread it would be. This was particularly because in a new democracy there has been a new respect for other religions, where before Christianity was the religion pushed into prominence. It has only been in the last couple of months that police members have started opening up to me more freely. They have expressed their appreciation for the messages of encouragement and challenge in a way that has not forced one religion or denomination onto anyone. As Pieter put it, when there is a message that people can relate to in their pressurised job, it becomes meaningful and people can receive it.

Leon spoke a little about his experience of chaplains in the police and how his faith helps him. The chaplains, he said, were under pressure to get to too many people and so would rush from place to place, never having time to build relationships. However, his personal devotions and church attendance helped him deal with his work pressure. He finds that calms him down from the tensions he faces from both criminals and colleagues alike.

The context in which members of the SAPS work makes it necessary for the church to have an effective ministry to them. They are exposed to continuous stress, both from within the organisation as well as from criminal elements they deal with. There are the community's, often unrealistic, expectations of them, requiring of them some superhuman courage and expertise. When police officers are killed, there is the need for that trauma to be dealt with. And the list goes on. Yes, there are still chaplains doing magnificent work and social services who do counselling, but the wider community and the church play a vital role as well. It saddened me that my denomination, the Methodists, was so slow in their response. However, I was encouraged by a recent meeting of clergy from 24 major Christian denominations and organisations in Kempton Park, convened by Dr. Coenie Burger (Dutch Reformed Church) and chaired by Rev. Ivan Abrahams (Methodist Church). This meeting obtained headlines of the *Sunday Tribune* on the 22nd October 2006: "Churches tackle crime." In that meeting: "The church leaders agreed that neither the government nor

the police alone could solve the crime problem.... This was why they wished to create a broad, civil society initiative including church, business and schools.... They recognised the church had a huge responsibility.” Amongst other things they “challenge churches countrywide to take responsibility for changing hearts and minds, including more involvement with the SA police services” (Sunday Tribune, p 1).

Where the community and the police work well together, the relationship can be beneficial and enriching for both parties. Unfortunately, there are places where this is not so and lots of effort still needs to be invested in this relationship. I am convinced, though, that frustrations can be overcome and crime and corruption can be significantly reduced.

3.2.6 Human Rights and Abuses

3.2.6.1 Treatment of suspects

It was only Pieter who told me a personal story where he was involved in human rights abuses. It was the story of him torturing a suspect in a criminal case where he knew this person had information but refused to give it. In order to try to extract valuable information to apprehend others, he hit this man with a hosepipe. While doing so, another policeman came into the room and later reported Pieter. As a result, Pieter was charged and sentenced. Although this happened many years ago, it did teach Pieter a valuable lesson. As Pieter put it: “Actually, that policeman did me a favour.” It taught him that violent ways of extracting information and dealing with policing matters is not the only way. Other tactics of interviews with suspects and letting the pen do the talking in relationships of conflict can be effective as well.

The newspapers have also given many examples of suspects being treated badly by the police, despite a new era of democracy and human rights. *The Star* on the 28th July 2006 reported on the way police raided a block of flats – albeit a problem building – using rubber bullets; breaking down doors; forcing people to lie on the ground in the cold; and beating anyone who spoke. Senior Superintendent Chris Wilkin responded saying that the police had a warrant, “but we will not tolerate the behaviour of some officers, and people are entitled to open cases,” which they did at the Booyens police



station (The Star, p 6). In another incident, reported in the *Saturday Star* on the 2nd September 2006, Phillip Nyathi, a gardener was arrested twice on suspicion of being an illegal immigrant. His identity document was taken and police refused to give it back until he paid them a bribe. He was only released from the infamous Lindela Repatriation Centre when his girlfriend paid a R600 bribe. The second time he was asked for a R500 bribe and only released when his employer brought his passport (Saturday Star, p 5).

I went back to Pieter regarding human rights and the treatment of suspects to find out why abuses continue taking place. I wanted to know whether human rights was seen as a soft approach by policemen towards criminals, or if there were other factors. On the one hand, we agreed that there was a lot of carelessness on the part of police officials. They made hasty arrests to appease a community, only to discover that their investigations were not thorough enough, resulting in wrongful arrests. But perhaps the main reason was that of the horrific nature of crimes witnessed by police officers. Once a police officer has seen the intimate places of people's lives having been violated in house robberies and the like, there is no way they are unaffected. So when they catch a suspect, who is usually not cooperative to a police officer's invitation into custody, the natural inclination is to mete out immediate justice. However tempting that option may be, we agreed that the anger we feel toward the criminal, must be redirected constructively and intelligently to ensure a successful prosecution.

3.2.6.2 The use of firearms

Section 49 of the Criminal Procedure Act (Act No. 51 of 1977) amendment has to do with the use of weapons by both civilians and police officers. Initially, as stated in 2.3.8, this was met with a lot of resistance. Many felt that they would be unprotected in dangerous situations, which in the South African context is a frequent occurrence. However, political leaders like Charles Nqakula, Bheki Cele and others have stated that policemen must shoot suspects when their lives are in danger.

Jody pointed me to a ruling made by the Constitutional Court on the 21st May 2002. The Constitutional Court delivered its judgment on Case CCT 28/01 between the State versus Edward Joseph Walters and Marvin Edward Walters. They had shot at a



fleeing suspect. It declared that Section 49(2) of the Criminal Procedure Act (allowing an arresting officer to shoot a fleeing suspect if the likelihood exists that they will harm any person in the future) is unconstitutional. This does not affect principles related to private defence and the defence of any other person. Hence, if there is no reasonable way to remove such a threat on one's own or another person's life, the use of a firearm is permitted. In a letter to all police stations (dated 2002-05-24), National Commissioner Selebi wrote in bold: "The right – and indeed the duty – of police officers to protect their lives and personal safety and those of others is clearly endorsed and in no respect diminished."

As far as the Section 49 legislation goes, my co-researchers told me that it has not affected the way they do their police work. Pieter spoke a little about his own past as a young policeman where he had shot suspects. When he was young he earned himself the nickname "Piet-skiet." He does things differently now because of his conviction for torturing a suspect that I have already recorded.

Interestingly, as far as firearms are concerned, none of my co-researchers spoke about the Firearms Control Act 2000 and the Firearms Control Amendment Bill. These laws require gun-owners to go to an accredited training service provider and then renew their firearm licence at the police station by applying for a competency certificate. The police are then required to conduct a background evaluation and physical inspection of the person's safe before forwarding the training certificate and competency certificate to those issuing the licence. This process received a lot of criticism from legal gun-owners, saying that it is the illegal weapons that should be targeted. Those opposing the amount of weapons on our streets have generally welcomed this law as a long-term plan to reduce the high numbers of weapons amongst civilians. At Camperdown we invited all interested parties to a CPF meeting where all of this was explained and questions addressed – one of our most well attended meetings! But, as I stated, none of my co-researchers mentioned this in our discussions.

3.2.7 Effects on family life

Faced with so many pressures, it does not come as a surprise to read of the destructive effects these have on the family life of police officials. One reads of posttraumatic stress disorder, of family violence and even suicide in their lives. This is understandable given the things they are exposed to in their daily work and not having anywhere they can safely receive counselling. But, again, that is not the story of every police officer. Having interviewed them in their homes, I was able to gather other valuable information from their wives who participated, albeit in the background. Not every family situation has destructive effects from the workplace of policemen.

Jody was glad to say he had managed to put his children through school and he knows he has the security of a reasonable pension. Other policemen who went on early retirement or who took a package are not so lucky, such as the one Jody mentioned who works as a security guard at Macro. He told me he was proud of what he had achieved, which put him in a good position spiritually and mentally. Regarding his family life, he admitted he was away a lot and that his phone is always ringing, even late into the night. But his family understand this, especially his wife, Karen, who works as a clerk in a police station herself. The work pressure she shares about the station commander puts him in an awkward position as a station commander himself because, as he said, “he’s really doing everything he’s his allowed to within his power to do.” When I asked whether he shares what happened in his day with her he said, “No, not really. Work stays at work wherever possible.”

Leon shared a similar sentiment, both in looking forward to a good retirement and in separating work from home life. He spoke about his satisfaction with what he has – a house, car, etc – and his faith. I will return to the issue of faith in Chapter 4. He admitted that he doesn’t speak much about his work, but Estelle can recognise when something has badly affected him, such as the mob burning a suspect to death, and she will ask about it. Estelle told me that even in this interview, it was good to hear him talk about his experiences and thinks that it is healthy for him to do so.

Pieter’s wife gets to hear more about his complaints at work as they worked at the same station until she took a transfer. She told me that she had never seen Pieter in all



the years of policing as frustrated as he was with the new station commander. But Pieter has also tried to separate work from home in that he supports his children's events and takes a keen interest in doing things with his family in order to unwind. For example, they go regularly to picnic spots and watching the children participate in school sports.

3.3 SUMMARY

Each of the above themes has taken place within the context of Kwazulu-Natal, particularly in 2006. There have been some similarities with what has been portrayed in the news over the year. It needs to be remembered that the situations my co-researchers shared with me are context bound and do not take into account ongoing changes in the structures and situations. For instance, the structure of Areas changed to smaller zones as from 23rd October 2006, which had ramifications for the way top management became structured. However, with the ongoing story that continues, there is still the importance of listening as carefully as one can to the stories of people. This I did and then checked my recording of these themes with my co-researchers to eliminate as much incorrect information and as many misunderstandings as possible. The chapter has tried to accurately record the findings of my initial interviews within a wider Kwazulu-Natal (and sometimes South African) context. Having listened to the stories and developed them alongside my co-researchers, I was ready to move on. I was encouraged by my supervisor to find out more about what contributed to the thinking behind those themes and formulate them into the underlying discourses, those "traditions of interpretations" that influence or entrench the views we have (movement 4). With that, I also engaged in a reflection on God's presence (movement 5), the seeds of which I found in those initial conversations. This I did through follow-up interviews and having conversations with an outside audience. These discourses or traditions as well as our reflection on God's involvement are recorded in Chapter Four.