CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSIONS AND LOOKING BEYOND

Your hands made me and formed me;
give me understanding to learn Your commands
(Psalm 119:73 NIV)

6.1   INTRODUCTION

In this final chapter I will be writing about the final seventh movement of our research procedure as I draw this document to a conclusion. Essentially it is the conclusions that we, as co-researchers, want to take to the broader community. While the research stems from a specific local situation, namely the Kwazulu-Natal Midlands, it must move towards the wider community. Those who helped me in this research have something to contribute to others and it is my commitment to enable their stories to be heard. The way I have structured this chapter is as follows:

- A summary of the content of this research, starting with an overview of the chapters and then identifying the unique outcomes;
- A brief description on my co-researchers' lives since the research was conducted;
- A critical evaluation of this research, particularly about whether I felt we achieved our aims, questions that remain unanswered, what I could have done differently, and what this whole process did for me;
- And finally, looking at where this research points to next, as I take it back to a wider community.

6.2   A SUMMARY OF THE CONTENT

6.2.1   Overview of the chapters

This research project began by explaining the changing political landscape of South Africa and I defined the primary research question as being how police officers

(specifically White, male Captains in the Kwazulu-Natal Midlands) are dealing with these changes and working within a new constitution (1.1 & 1.3.1). This topic, although jointly decided upon, emerged from my interest in practical theology and my growing involvement in community policing. Personally, I wanted to discover a pastoral response (1.3.2), contributing towards other carers and helping police officers in their own creative growth.

From our primary research question, other secondary questions emerged that formed part of my initial curiosity and helped us explore this topic more thoroughly. These questions included:

- Have the new structures such as CPFs and the ICD achieved their aims in bringing about accountability (1.2.2, 2.3.5 & 2.3.7)?

  Not much was said about the Independent Complaints Directorate, except Leon, who had two detectives investigated (3.2.1.3). But he spoke of it as if it were a matter of natural course rather than as something new in South Africa. Further than that, my co-researchers offered no comment. Even using media and the ICD website on reports on corruption (3.2.1.2) did not elicit any controversial discussion.

  However, the role of the community including CPFs, the open door policy, transparency on crime statistics, vigilantism, church involvement etc. (3.2.5) gathered more than enough material to reflect upon in terms of its supportive and prophetic/critical role.

- How has the relationship between different law-enforcement agencies worked – firstly through amalgamating eleven of them into one (2.3.1), then having other institutions (NPA etc) complimenting them (2.3.4)… or not?

  Problems surrounding the amalgamation were spoken of in terms of those who received a high rank in the new SAPS still being illiterate, while lower ranks may be quite articulate and educated (3.2.2.2). Apart from educating them or sending them on courses, not much else was said on this topic.

  Regarding other institutions, we saw that the media highlighted every hint of tension between different law enforcement agencies and specialised units (3.2.5.4b). While tensions and distrust exist between some police members (3.2.2), and some of those who moved to other units burnt their bridges, there

was (amongst my co-researchers) a view that they all worked well together and relied on each other's expertise.

- Have the policy and name changes (2.3.3) made any real difference in policing, or has it remained "business as usual" with racism and human rights violations (1.2.1 & 2.3.6)?

    We agreed that there was a gap between policy on paper and what actually happened, for example, "batho pele" being non-existent (3.2.1.1b), a new racism against White officers who wanted to do their work well (3.2.2.3) and in terms of human rights (5.2.2.1). But these policy and name changes did have an effect – sometimes curbing abuse (3.2.6.1 & 5.2.2.4), but also, negatively, retarding discipline, work ethics and training standards (4.2.3).

- Are their stories unique to White male police officers or are they issues experienced by other racial groups in the SAPS as well (1.3.1)?

    Certainly, many of the frustrations were shared across all racial groupings, such as blockages in promotions and between hard working versus lazy members. But the impression I got of White middle-management police officers was of a comparison between how things used to work and their deterioration now, such as a growing lack of respect for ranks (3.2.2.2), poor management skills (3.2.2.4) and undermining officers in front of juniors (3.2.4.3). These officers saw themselves as still working hard, with a growing majority of other races deteriorating in terms of work ethics (obviously acknowledging a few exceptions).

- How have these police officers dealt with their own role in leadership (middle-management) and with the leadership exercised over them (2.3.4), whether politicians (3.2.4.2) or top brass (3.2.4.3)?

    Their faith in the leadership exercised over them was not flattering. A lack of being in touch with station-level realities, a lack of support in terms of incentives, corruption even at the highest levels and so on, filled the content of our discussions with negativity. Regarding their own role in management, they initially felt in a hopeless situation, but learnt valuable lessons when we read about business middle-management 5.2.1.1 about the leaders who are in a position to connect with people at the bottom and have some insights about what is happening at the top.

- And a question that was not originally considered, but which emerged through our discussions, was that of dealing with unions (3.2.4.1).

  Here we discovered two sides of the coin. On the one hand, was dealing with the deterioration of standards caused by unions. And on the other hand, where unions became the source of assistance.

Thus, the questions were posed in the first chapter and were addressed, to some degree, in the remainder of the thesis. I will critically evaluate this in 6.4.

The first chapter went on to describe the way in which I went about addressing these questions. I chose a narrative approach, taking seriously the stories of my co-researchers. I explained that this approach is within a postfoundationalist paradigm, which is consistent with the view that our world is socially constructed. Our lives change as we interact with others. And so this research is not simply gathering data, but respectfully intervenes in the lives of these policemen, deconstructing our views so that we can live more creatively. The method I used was the seven movements proposed by Julian Müller to guide me through this process.

Chapter Two gave some historical background. This was in line with the first movement that described the context (1.7.1). This context painted a wider picture of the policing situation in South Africa, before getting to the specific, local context of my co-researchers. It also provided an initial background for any readers who might not know the wider context and "taken for granted" knowledge during the interviews.

A listening process that identified issues these police officers were facing was addressed in Chapter Three. This was done in terms of the second and third movements (1.7.2 & 1.7.3) where experiences were listened to and interpretations were made. Although I recorded these stories under different headings, many topics overlapped and may give the impression of being untidy. But it would seem as if life cannot be neatly categorised and so we had to work within that untidiness. Among the themes we identified were the following:

- A low work ethic that included corruption, uncaring attitudes and poor management in the SAPS. The media also tended to capture these negative sentiments, but we also had stories of exceptions where good work was being

done. The way my co-researchers dealt with this was through incentives, staying positive, recognising good work when it happens, trusting that the truth will emerge and holding out until retirement.

- Relations between police members were not always healthy, characterised by tensions, distrust, a lack of respect for rank structures and racism.

- Further training being watered down by being less thorough and promotions being based on selective affirmative action. Training was either not implemented or far too short in duration to be of long-lasting value. And promotions, as in the past, seemed to be based on "who you know" rather than "what you know." There must surely be exceptions to that, but the general consensus in this research and that done by other researchers mentioned was that promotions were based more on favouritism than performance.

- Top structures and politics identified politicians who have a tough talk approach but are often viewed as being out of touch with local level policing. Top police management, including the national commissioner, did not seem to care about police officials at local level, leaving each to sort out their own problems (unless they cause trouble). It seemed as though leadership issues were difficult to deal with, moving from a structure of obeying orders from the top, to dealing creatively with problems.

- Community involvement through Community Police Forums, having an open-door policy, transparency about statistics, working with other law enforcers (even vigilantes), sources (or "informers" as they used to be called), courts and the church. My co-researchers seemed to say that they worked well together with others, although the media and some criminologists differed by pointing out elements of antagonism. Certainly we have seen a maturing happening from community involvement being simply a complaints forum and a political point-scoring opportunity to something far more constructive.

- Human rights and abuses was a topic we looked at predominantly in terms of the treatment of suspects and the use of firearms. Hard lessons are being learnt within a democracy based on a Bill of Rights – lessons that have cost policemen their lives and have been detrimental to their careers. Without a doubt, the use of force is necessary at times, but other options also need to be explored so that violence is not always our default reaction to every situation.

- The effects on family life have been a separation as far as possible between work and home life. I was not always satisfied that this was possible because the spouses picked up on the negativity in indirect ways and seemed glad that this research got their policemen husbands to speak about it in their presence. But there are also those who have tried to bottle up their emotions, and who have ended up in places of domestic violence and even suicide.

In some of the above themes the seeds of unique outcomes for both my co-researchers and I emerged. I will return to the subject of unique outcomes in 6.2.2.

These themes became the centre of our further enquiry into the discourses (explained in 1.6.3) or traditions of interpretation (explained in 1.7.4) that shape our attitudes – terms that I have used interchangeably. These constituted the fourth movement recorded in Chapter Four. This chapter also included the way we picture God's activity in our lives (as Hudson's quote in 1.6.3 states) – constituting the fifth movement (1.7.5). After much discussion, we distilled four discourses and five aspects of God that influence my co-researchers' reactions to the themes raised in Chapter Three. The four traditions of interpretation (discourses) were:

- An Afrikaans culture of respect, which affects respect for higher ranks and those with more experience (as one would respect one's elders). One must still respect the rank even if one does not respect the person wearing the rank. This culture of respect is also being undermined in other racial groups, being replaced with insubordination or having "a chip on your shoulder."

- Having pride in your work is being replaced with losing heart through continuous negative criticism and no longer seeing police work as a calling. Striving for excellence is no longer the prevailing desire and neither is it encouraged nor properly facilitated by top management.

- Discipline standards have dropped since becoming a "Police Service" rather than a "Police Force." Unions have to bear part of the blame for increased laziness, which makes police personnel less alert and open to lethal danger. However, Jody's approach of involving unions to improve discipline was the most creative approach I encountered.

- Values of honesty and compassion need to form the foundation of relationships with each other and with the community, from the way clients

are dealt with to releasing statistics for accountability to be a reality. This is the only way we can begin curbing corruption from the highest to the lowest ranks. It is here that the church plays a vital role, which led us to the next movement in our reflection.

The aspects of God that contributed to our thinking were:

- A God who calls us.

   The career of policemen (and women) is more than just doing a job, but a calling to make a contribution into the lives of people, using the talents God has given them. God wants us to strive for excellence, which is compromised by recent sub-standard training and under-utilised technology.

- A moral and just God.

   This explored what lay at the heart of corruption, where people no longer see a distinct line between right and wrong and the slippery slide into corruption is created. Examples of God's dealing with wrongdoing were cited from Scripture and linked to the comment that the truth eventually emerges.

- A God of compassion.

   This counter-balanced a possible God of vengeful wrath (coming from the moral and just picture of God). The two need to be held together as pure compassion could lead to the idea that people get let off. The area of human rights as pertains to victims and perpetrators of crime can be distorted if the two are separated.

- A God who gives us a vision

   In contrast to political and top management leadership, God gives an inspiring vision that kept them working towards a peaceful country. It still has a long way to go before we see the fulfilment thereof, but there are glimpses of it when communities work together and crime-fighting breakthroughs are made.

- A God of community

   Here we spoke about how God used people in miraculous ways and the biblical imperative into community life characterised by mutual respect and edification. The church plays an important role here in supportive care to members of the police as well as a prophetic role of constructive criticism.

Chapter Five contained the work of the sixth movement (1.7.6) – that of dialogue with other disciplines. In this chapter we discussed the categories of leadership, human rights policies, internal police relationships and utilizing communities and technology. In each of these categories, we brought them into dialogue with the disciplines of politics, business, criminology, social sciences (for example, psychology) and theology to see what we could learn from them.

- Under leadership, we affirmed the need for top managers to remain in touch with station level activities so that when they shape policies and provide direction, it facilitates growth and maturity where it is most needed. Likewise, we learned that having the qualities of humility, fairness, integrity, adaptability and respect are important values to possess in order to gain cooperation.

- When it came to human rights policies, we acknowledged the gap between policies and what happens in practice. There is still abuse that occurs, even of some victims of crime. We also had to face the reality that criminals use human rights to their own advantage, including life-threatening attacks on police officials' lives. But in terms of dealing with apprehended suspects, improvements in intelligence and information extraction exercises need to replace reverting automatically to bullying tactics.

- Internal police relationships looked at the restructuring of units (the intention being to bring expertise to local stations, but smaller stations don't benefit and have nowhere to turn to in complicated cases); racial tensions reflecting what's happening in the wider society through, for example, racially defined promotions and favouritism (which was a factor even in the "old South Africa"); corruption and poor service delivery being a learned behaviour in comparison to policemen being proud of their work before. We looked to the insights of business and psychology to try discover new sources of motivation, be that through external or internal factors, which we can only hope will not be short-circuited by affirmative action for many more years to come.

- Utilizing technology and communities explored some of the literature that stated that there are situations where they are well used, but also cases of regretful neglect. Where there was a lack in these areas, vigilantism has sometimes been resorted to. Both the business and social sciences perspectives

spoke about interdependence and developing teams to effectively deal with problems. There is no excuse why this cannot occur with policing and, where technology and communities have been used, we affirmed the work that has been done.

6.2.2 Unique outcomes

Through the course of this research there were some unique outcomes (as defined in 1.6.5) that we identified. I have briefly reported them here next to each of the names of my co-researchers, including some of my own.

Jody The "robot system" (3.2.1.1a) was scrapped in March 2006. Top management realised that the intention of creating healthy competition between stations was not being actualised, but resulting in stations manipulating statistics.

His promotion to Superintendent (3.2.2.1) came despite affirmative action (3.2.3.4 & 5.2.3.3) and Pieter's approach of regularly going on courses and who tried using the unions to get promotion (3.2.3.3 & 3.2.3.5). Whether God was involved here (4.3.2), we can only speculate.

Pieter His arrest and community service sentence many years ago for torturing a suspect turned into a unique outcome (3.2.6.1). Since then he has developed a greater understanding about dealing with suspects that will not contravene human rights considerations.

Regarding his relationship with his station commander (3.2.1.1c), Pieter was moved to another station. While this does not solve the problem, it enabled Pieter to do the job he loves. It is not the sort of unique outcome we hoped for, because there must be better ways to deal with conflict than simply transferring one person to another station. But it is a better situation than the one of continuous grievances and counter-charges being made.

Leon Despite his initial negativity about defective detectives (3.2.1.1b), his story also had elements of hope, such as a positive station commander who was able to bring crime rates down (3.2.1.3b), reflected in a failed march by Black policemen against the White police officers (3.2.2.3).

We also observed that tensions were not simply a matter of race because two Black policemen at his station, who had been good friends, shot each other dead (3.2.2.3).

Although it is not the ideal unique outcome, Leon's retirement comes after a lifetime of service to an (often) ungrateful community. Yet, even though there have been frustrations, he has made it through with other aspects of his life intact, such as his family and faith.

Myself Relationships between police members was probably the biggest unique outcome for me. I always thought that they held to a code of secrecy and covering up for each other. A decreasing work ethic was not new to me – that has been plain to see. However, the frustration attached to it by police officers who still tried to work hard in the face of lazy or incompetent SAPS members was astonishing.

A further unique outcome for me was that these issues are not only experienced by White police officers, but by those of other racial groups too. For example, Whites were not the only ones to suffer stoppages to their promotions.

Further training, that should have given greater competence in terms of street survival, human rights and promotions etc, was insufficient to meet the demands placed upon a police service in a democracy with high levels of crime. It surprised me that little was being done to rectify this. However, the unique outcome here was when I realised again that God used fallible people too (4.3.1). And even though the SAPS limp at times, there are moments of excellence as well.

And then there is the unique outcome of the community-police relationship. For so many years these two bodies worked separately (except when it came to informers) and were suspicious of each other. Now there has been a heroic attempt to overcome past antagonism and hurt in order to work in partnership against crime. Some places have struggled here more than others, but we cannot underestimate the amount that has been achieved in these few years.

That, then, is a summary of the research project so far. Essentially, it is that content I take to the wider community, adding to the wealth of data already in the public

domain (Movement Seven). But we must remember that this is an ongoing process. People's lives did not stagnate after this research. And so I also want to include the next section of what happened to them between the time of completing the writing process and my final consultation with them regarding these conclusions (so that they would be involved from the formulation of the topic to the conclusion). In my final consultation, I found out about some of the developments in their lives.

6.3   MY CO-RESEARCHERS' LIVES NOW

When we read stories, we want to know how it ends and what happens to each of the characters. The truth is that people's stories do not end. Their lives go on and they hopefully continue to grow into better human beings. I realised that, by the time this document is finished, it would be outdated in terms of my co-researchers ongoing development. But I wanted to bring their contribution to some point of conclusion for the benefit of ongoing research. In 2007 I moved away from my co-researchers to Pretoria. As such I needed to travel back to them with my conclusions from our discussions. There I found how much their situations had changed, mostly for the better.

In Pieter's case, as I stated under the unique outcomes heading (6.2.2), he was transferred to another bigger station due to the charges and counter-charges between him and his commanding officer. The Prosecutor did not pursue these charges and the entire case was dropped. Pieter stayed at his new post where he was again under the command of a Black station commander. However, his new commander had tremendous faith in Pieter's ability and gave him the space to do his work. When I saw Pieter at the end of 2007, I could not believe the difference in this man. He was thriving in his new post! The only thing was that the issues of poor management over him were not dealt with. But Pieter was happy and that was, for him, a unique outcome of how God worked things out. It was not what he expected in terms of his grievances to be followed up on, but a satisfactory alternative had opened up. Furthermore, his previous commander was facing an auditing inspection on his high "success rate" of possibly opening cases only after the suspect was apprehended. The results of that audit fell beyond the scope of this thesis.

As I already mentioned earlier, Jody was promoted for his hard and innovative work. He was still at the same station and continues to do well. Further than that I was unable to ascertain whether his theology had changed as a result of our conversations. He gave no verbal indication thereof.

And as for Leon, he is now happily retired. The unique outcome for him was being able to see some of the successes despite the frustrations he experienced. His last station commander, who brought down crime in his area, still commands a great deal of respect across the Kwazulu-Natal Midlands and I wish I had the opportunity to have a conversation with him. Nevertheless, I wish Leon well – a person who did not always get the recognition he deserved for his hard work.

In terms of the politics of policing, there are also changes that continue to take place. The national commissioner, Jackie Selebi was relieved of his post in December 2007 on charges of corruption and defeating the ends of justice. And the African National Congress (ANC) are still trying to disband the Scorpions before the ANC president, Jacob Zuma goes to court over corruption charges.

6.4   A CRITICAL EVALUATION OF THIS RESEARCH

6.4.1   Did we achieve our aims?

I have a mixed response in regarding the extent to which we achieved our aims. My co-researchers thought we did achieve them. They expressed their gratitude in having someone taking their stories and contribution seriously. They found it therapeutic in being able to talk to someone about their joys and frustrations. This was because the process forced us to question our assumptions and taken-for-granted knowledge, deconstructing where it came from and seeking an alternative understanding for our lives. Further reading and other external voices stretched our thinking as well. Some of these were mentioned in 6.2.1, which gave a brief answer to each of the secondary questions posed in the first two chapters. And a lot more information came to the fore during our conversations that were beyond my initial questions. While I acknowledge these aspects as true and am deeply grateful for the privilege of sharing in those stories of successes and challenges, there were still things I felt we did not achieve.

For one thing, I wondered whether true unique outcomes were achieved or whether they were circumstantial. Did these police officers come to a point of dealing creatively with some of those challenges as a result of our conversations? Or did their lives turn out well in the end due to circumstances such as getting the promotion, the transfer and the long-awaited retirement? I can only hope that our discussions together had more than therapeutic value, but that they gained insight into their lives as we dialogued with each other and with the views of other disciplines.

I also wondered about the political role of policing. Again, while I acknowledge that the SAPS have come a long way since the days of enforcing apartheid laws towards a crime-fighting role, we did not deal thoroughly with politics. It was a topic that was sidelined in the name of not being interested in politics and only focussing on crime. Yes, there were police members who were uninvolved in political activity and who will continue focussing solely on crime irrespective of who is in government. But I don't think we got to grips with politics, albeit our passivity towards it. We did, however, speak about continued practices of racism (and reverse-racism) and torture that still occur.

I was not sure whether we were able to close the gap between policy and an inward conviction or belief. Was there any change in our beliefs about, for example, the death penalty and human rights as a result of our conversations and reading? And did my co-researchers' own style of management change as we looked at leadership? They implied that they already practiced new styles of leadership and management in their own situations. There was, however, a partial appreciation for where those underlying values came from theologically, once we had completed this process.

On the other hand, we sought to look forward towards better policing and an alternative story that we hope will develop. We all had the desire for an end to corruption and for people to be given their due reward of incentives and promotions irrespective of race. Along with what we hope is the majority of our society, we want to work together to end crime through effective community policing and partnerships with various specialised organisations.

Regarding areas of transversality (1.5.3), which we tried to find in the fifth chapter, were there significant points of agreement between disciplines? Here, I have to say that there were. There were agreements about the negative aspects of policing under a new constitution and about some possible ways forward. Different language may be used, such as "servant-leadership" in theological terms would not necessarily be used in a business forum. However, the sentiment of empowering others and delivering a good service would be shared, even though the terms each discipline uses may differ. The issue of human rights will also always be the source of vigorous debate between human rights activists and the law-enforcers. That dialogue still needs to continue as each party learn from each other and appreciate the situations each one encounters. Not only that, but such debate will prevent the extremes of a too-soft and a too-abusive approach. Also, there are differing opinions about how well the police work with communities and with other specialised units. There it is probably dependant upon where one lives, because it seems as if experiences differ from place to place.

Despite my own mixed feelings on whether we achieved what we set out to do, we did listen as best we could to the various narratives. We tried as best we could to understand the discourses that lay behind them – why we view our reality the way we do. I would argue that we were consistent with a social constructionist and postfoundationalist paradigm (1.5.3). This is because I involved them from the beginning to the end of the process. We acknowledged that we came into our discussions with certain views and knowledge. We spoke about situations or stories that were happening personally as well as in the nearby context (news articles), rather than jumping straight into concepts (as a predetermined questionnaire may have led us into). We looked for new interpretations on our experiences through engaging different ideas and opinions of other police members (other races and higher ranks) and other researchers, journalists and disciplines. And although we began with a local situation, it has a contribution towards the wider community (both in terms of our method and the data collected). Finally, in their graciousness, the various participants (including the other police officers I listened to) expressed their appreciation and their willingness to embark on this ongoing journey with me. As the word journey implies, we are still on a road of discovery, not having reached our final destination (whatever that destination may be), and so there are also some unanswered questions at this stage.

6.4.2   Questions that remain unanswered

In terms of my original questions, there were some that were left unanswered. This is because some questions I had were not necessarily important for my co-researchers at the time. The conversation went in a new direction from the one I presumed it would go in. Other questions may not have been discussed because I neglected to follow up on them sufficiently or did not obtain their permission to discuss them. And still other questions, such as the future structures of policing units, will only be answered in time to come. Here is a list of some of those unanswered questions.

In 3.2.1.1a, we never came to any satisfactory answer regarding the measurement of successes. Is there not a better measurement of success rates than statistics (the robot system was not replaced with anything better) or annual incentives? Delays in the judicial system make it difficult to measure successes in terms of conviction rates and rehabilitation of offenders. Although this question does not have anything to do with the experience of White police officers, it has been an issue in terms of accurately measuring whether standards have dropped or not since 1994. So the question of measuring success remains unanswered.

Under 3.2.1.1c, we failed to find a more effective way to deal with conflict. Transfers to another station, or avoidance by going on courses, or making sure there is a union representative present in order to keep calm did not present the best ways of dealing with conflict. We failed to explore other alternatives and it did not seem as if there was much effort from higher management to intervene, other than to transfer Pieter out of the situation.

With regards to Jody's story of a corrupt vehicle theft investigation (3.2.1.2b), we still do not know whether it was a deliberate act or pure neglect by the detective. That, probably with many other corruption cases, will only be discovered in time to come.

Closely related to corruption investigations was my question of how the work of the Independent Complaints Directorate was viewed (2.3.7 & 3.2.1.3). Not much was said, except by Leon. Some writers and journalists seemed to suggest that there was

very little cooperation between the SAPS and the ICD, but the ICD's own report suggested otherwise. I did not feel that such stringent accountability structures were fully investigated in this research, but my co-researchers did not suggest it as something that could make a contribution to this thesis.

The use of firearms and laws pertaining to the control of firearms (3.2.6.2), which has come into effect since 1994, were also not fully addressed. We did have discussions about the topic, where Jody gave information about the Walters & Walters case in the Constitutional Court and a circular letter from the national commissioner. Pieter also said that these new laws did not change or hinder the way he operated as a police officer. But in terms of our further reading, it was not a subject that was pursued in our research together.

With these limitations, the question becomes whether I consider the narrative approach to research within a postfoundationalist paradigm a worthwhile one.

6.4.3   Is a narrative approach to research satisfactory?

What I found very helpful in this research project was having the space to utilise the insights of other research methods as well. There are many dynamics at work when people tell their stories. Postfoundationalism opened the way to recognise that the context influences how we interpret our experiences and it allowed for a careful listening to the discourses that inform our attitudes. Furthermore, postfoundationalism gave respectful consideration towards an interdisciplinary conversation using Scripture and theology as well as non-theological disciplines to enrich our discussions and discoveries. And yet there may be researchers who would approach this topic differently.

Some investigative researchers, for example, might argue that more aggressive questioning is required, even picking up on the sensitive political issues of racism, deteriorating policing skills since affirmative action was implemented and politicians making ill-informed decisions. I chose not to do so because I did not want to alienate my co-researchers or put them in a difficult position. Neither did I want to focus on every area that *I* thought was important, irrespective of what the policemen I

interviewed thought. I let them determine much of the content and flow of the discussion. That was also a reason why I did not use predetermined questionnaires in my interviewing method. When I did try to steer the conversation, as I admitted to in places, I was met with polite smiles. The one exception was when I introduced the deconstruction phase of the research, where we explored traditions of interpretation and God's involvement. There we needed to be more thorough, but it was in terms of the themes we had already discussed.

A literature study on the topic would be another approach to this research. I could have limited my research to the available literature that was available through other disciplines of criminology and other social sciences. But a purely literary approach would not be consistent with a practical theological approach that I value (see 1.4.4). I began with the concrete experiences of police officers. The conversations then entered a dialogue with literature and "theory" before returning to a new way of viewing our experiences. I used literature to get a spectrum of thought on each topic to help us understand our experiences and compare them to the insights others bring to the conversation.

While this process did not guarantee constructive changes in my co-researchers, it did provide an opportunity to think about their lives and ideas. The choice to change their attitudes and actions would still be left to them. However, this movement from their practice (and that of other policemen) to theoretical reflection and back to practice (future, preferable ways of acting) was a fulfilling process for me to engage in.

6.4.4 What this process did for me

As I stated in 1.3.2, prior to 1994 I had no inclination towards a constructive relationship with the police. Since my involvement with them began, I have not stopped learning. I have said that my co-researchers found this process therapeutic and fulfilling in being able to contribute to my research. The question I am left with is: what did this research process do to me? Because I don't believe I can be totally neutral, I must ask myself how I was affected.

On the positive side, it was a tremendous privilege to listen to the stories of police officers and their spouses over a prolonged period of time. More than my co-researchers, they became close friends because of the depth of sharing we were able to reach. We were able to break down many of the "expert-client" distinctions and attain relatively deep interaction. With them I have learnt about how discourses influence the way in which people choose to live their lives. We could listen to our stories and the way in which they were worded and deconstruct them, finding new ways to speak about our experiences.

Because the narrative approach positions itself in the social constructionist and the postfoundationalist paradigm, we could utilise diverse sources. We used newspapers, academic articles and opinions from different disciplines to thicken our stories and enrich our understanding of our lives. The input of other police officers from, for example, Head Office and those of other racial groups provided valuable outside voices. Some of their experiences were not all that different from those of my White co-researchers in middle management. These included things like neglect and being overlooked for promotions. In other instances we discovered differences such as station level members working well with specialised units while battles over territory raged in the higher levels and were exploited by the media. I found this process very fulfilling. Strangely, the most fulfilling portion was initially the most difficult. That was in movements four and five where we explored the traditions and theology that lie behind our stories. It was difficult because we do that usually think about our lives in that way, taking those things for granted as unwritten laws. But as we struggled through, we made discoveries (certainly not exhaustive ones) that enhanced our insights.

Apart from gaining insights into the lives of police officers, I was also challenged personally. I did not come away from those interviews thinking: "I'm glad I have some information to write up in a thesis." My predominant feeling was: "I need to explore some of the discourses, traditions and taken-for-granted realities in my life as a practical theologian and pastor." I experience joys and frustrations in my career too that need to find a voice and then discover preferable ways of living.

On the more negative side, I ended these conversations feeling somewhat frustrated. The reason for that is that I felt I could not do anything to help my co-researchers, except to listen and observe. They had to discover their own ways of dealing with their situation. That was a humbling experience for me as I discovered the truth of not being the "expert." They truly have to be the experts of their own lives. All I can do is journey with them for a portion of their lives, asking questions that will help them uncover some of their insights. Thinking about this frustration at not being able to take on the "saviour role," it is possibly a unique outcome for me. It saves me from my compulsion to understand their lives fully (which I knew intellectually I could not do) and simply walk a part of the way with them.

6.5   WHERE DOES THIS RESEARCH POINT TO?

I believe that we must take each other's story seriously because we will never have a total understanding. This we do through allowing them to tell their story in their own words and then evaluating it together. Through that, I believe people can look at their lives in new ways, even if it seems insignificant to the researcher. This is a value I would want to hold before anyone seeking to do further research in this field. As we do this in our various contexts (even around the world), we grow in understanding and appreciation of each other, contributing towards the wider pool of knowledge. This knowledge is not only limited to practical theology, but to other disciplines too. It is for this reason that I would want to take the insights of this thesis into a wider context.

The first context I have taken these insights into is that of Community Police Forums. Stories shared with me have helped develop understanding in the local CPF structures I have been part of. When people take time to listen carefully enough, we are able to comprehend (even partially) some of the dilemmas facing police officers. The community can then provide a place of supportive accountability to those in middle management to lead well amidst the ever-changing challenges.

The second context is to take portions of this research to higher management. Obviously they know about many of these things, having been there themselves at one time. As a result, they may not appreciate what has been said about them now. But they need to be reminded of the gap between what happens in an office somewhere

and what happens at local stations. The intention is not to be de-motivating and destructively critical. We share a passion to reduce crime and to lead those in the SAPS with due consideration.

The third context to point towards is other organisations. These may include other crime-fighting organisations or helping professions. Other crime-fighting groups can seek ways to dovetail with the work of the police who have multiple tasks before them. In terms of helping professions within the SAPS structures and those assisting from outside, I would hope that some of this research would help them understand White middle-management experiences better. But more than that, that helping professions will take the process of listening and evaluating as partners (rather than as "experts") with SAPS members seriously.

The fourth context is the international one. Police throughout the world have their own stories to tell. Some of them will be similar to those of members in South Africa, others not. But every person has a story to tell and we may find echoes through each other's voices, perhaps encouraging us and imparting hope. Community policing, for example, is a growing practice and we are sure there are those who struggle with it too. Corruption, human rights abuses, accountability issues, crime prevention methods etc. are not limited to South Africa. Other places deal with them too. Surely in our speaking and listening to each other we will find greater insight and suitable solutions.

The church I work within is the fifth context I want us to point to. As stated at the beginning of this research, the Methodist Church of Southern Africa remains largely silent on the issue. I have encouraged greater debate on this at Synods and Radio Pulpit. In my own local church, I have encouraged our members to actively participate in partnerships with the police. This has been through neighbourhood watches, conducting workshops on domestic violence at farms and factories, trauma counselling, prison ministry and teaching basic values of relationships.

Articles to various journals are another way of reaching beyond my local situation. Through them there can be a practical theologian's contribution towards other disciplines. Those disciplines, such as criminology and social sciences, have

contributed to my understanding and perhaps the stories shared with me can contribute towards theirs.

6.6   CONCLUSION

As I stated in the beginning, many structural and policy changes have taken place since the President's speech in 1990. With a new Constitution, the police have had to change their own patterns of behaviour and ensure that other South African citizens do the same. Management of this is crucial to ensure that a successful and mature democracy emerges. Those in the middle ranks of management are the ones who make those constitutional policies a reality because they are face to face with the public. So, while White male police officers feel stuck in those positions without promotion, they need to remember the vital role that they play in South Africa's present history. Other incentives and continued training need to be explored to keep these officers motivated and self-motivated to grow into excellent leaders. We have to believe that God is at work through their lives and their contribution at this time.

A last word of thanks goes to those who shared their stories with me. It was a privilege to be invited into their lives and then to discover you are standing on holy ground.