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Drugs, police inefficiencies, and gangsterism
in violently impoverished communities like Overcome.

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degree of Master of Political Studies

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COMPULSORY DECLARATION

This work has not been previously submitted in whole, or in part, for the award of any degree. It is my own work. Each significant contribution to, and quotation in, this dissertation from the work, or works, of other people has been attributed, and has been cited and referenced.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Thanks...

To my parents for absolutely everything.

The Rotary Foundation for their generous scholarship.

Leo for his sound insights.

Thiven for his patience and support.

Irvin, Charles, and Jeremy for sharing their expertise.

Tara, Annette, and David for sacrificing their time to make sense of this paper.

The people in the community who showed me indescribable kindness at the most testing of times:
may your great-grandchildren live in a society free of substance dependency, violence, inequality,
and injustice.

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Abstract

This research establishes an understanding of the relationship between gangsterism, the drug commodity and inefficiencies in the state's policing institution, as well as the consequences of this relationship, in the context of Overcome squatter area in Cape Town. Overcome is representative of other violently impoverished Cape Town communities with its high rate of unemployment, low quality of education, domestic abuse, stagnant housing crisis, lack of access to intellectual and material resources or opportunities for personal growth, gangsterism, inefficient policing, substance-dependency, and violence. This research demonstrates that the current relationship between the gangs, drugs and the police fosters an unpredictable, violent environment, leaving residents in a constant state of vulnerability.

The argument is developed around three key historical junctures in the development of organized crime in South Africa, starting with the growth of the mining industry in the Witwatersrand after 1886, followed by forced removals and prohibition like policies in Cape Town circa 1970, and finally the upheaval created around transition away from apartheid in 1994.

Research for this paper was both quantitative and qualitative in nature, and included expert interviews on the subjects of police criminality, narcotic sales, and gangsterism. Newspapers articles, crime statistics, books, census figures, and a host of journals were also utilized.

Upon reviewing a host of police inefficiencies and criminal collusions, the research concludes that public criminals related to the state, such as police, and private criminals, such as gangsters, work together in a multitude of ways in a bid to acquire wealth, most notably through an illicit drug market today dominated by 'tik'. It is shown that this violent narcotics market binds police and gangsters together at the expense of creating a state of insecurity for those living in poor drug markets.

Table of Contents

1 Introduction.....	1
2 Methodological challenges	3
3 Literature review	6
3.1 Industrialisation, polarisation, and the rise of inequity.....	6
3.2 Forced removals, additional black markets and the proliferation of drugs.....	15
3.3 The years of transition.....	22
4 Seawinds at a glance	28
4.1 Demographics and economic indicators.....	29
4.2 Water, nutrition and healthcare.....	30
4.3 Violence.....	33
5 Gangsterism	38
6 Drugs	45
7 Police	51
8 Conclusion	62
9 Bibliography	63

1. INTRODUCTION

This research aims to establish an understanding of the relationship between gangsterism, the drug commodity and inefficiencies in the state's policing institution, as well as the consequences of this relationship, in the context of Overcome. Overcome is a squatter area in Seawinds, Cape Town, reluctantly recognised by the state in November 2005 (Independent Media Center, 2005). It is representative of other violently impoverished Cape Town communities with its high rate of unemployment, low quality of education, domestic abuse, stagnant housing crisis, lack of access to intellectual and material resources or opportunities for personal growth, gangsterism, inefficient policing, substance-dependency, and violence. It will be demonstrated that the current relationship between the gangs, drugs and the police fosters an unpredictable, violent environment, leaving residents in a constant state of vulnerability. Criminals of the underworld and those of the state are mutually motivated by money, regardless of the harm that comes to others, and the inseparable relationship between gangs, the drug commodity and police guarantees poor communities like Overcome exist in a state of unpredictable violence, creating a dangerous circumstance for all who have to live within them¹.

The thesis will commence with a literature review pertaining to the factors of police inefficiencies, gangsterism, and the drug commodity. Historical accounts will be provided for the development of each aspect in order to understand their contemporary relationship to each other. While the focus of research pertains to modern-day Cape Town, international parallels will be drawn upon in order to better understand the topic. Theories of various authors will integrate with each other in order to determine their strengths and weaknesses, while showing how they are significant to circumstances in Overcome. Thereafter an overview of the three factors will be given in the context of the squatter area. A symbiotic relationship between gangsters and police will be demonstrated, put forth that the private and public entities thrive off a common criminal relationship held together by financial interests tied to a brutal narcotics industry: a black-market which breeds desperation, greed and violence in Overcome.

¹This state of insecurity is markedly characterized by an inability to predict when or how violence will manifest, but, due to its close proximity and ubiquitous nature, residents are aware that danger is always present.

Research for this thesis has made extensive use of local publications from the Institute for Security Studies and the Medical Research Council, international publications on the topics of police inefficiencies and gangsterism, as well as a host of historical readings concerning the development of criminality in South Africa. Understanding the topic, and the formulation of the argument, has been greatly aided thanks to wealth of knowledge shared via interviews by the Cape Town criminologist Irvin Kinnes, South African social historian Charles Van Onselen and Western Cape policing expert Major General Jeremy Vearey. While large volumes of literature exist about police inefficiencies, gangsterism and the drug commodity, there exists very little information regarding the symbiotic relationship between the three. More troubling is the fact that there is even less knowledge pertaining to this relationship within a South African context. However, the literature review will conceptualise the three factors, pulling on South African and international findings where relevant information is available. This will aid in locating the thesis both historically and topically within the context of the existing discourse.

The aim of this research is to present an understanding for the constant everyday violence in places like Overcome, fueled by the drug market, and made functional by the working relationship between gangs and the police who sanction and partake in profiting from illicit markets. However, this would not be possible without analysing significant events in South Africa which contributed to creating the current circumstances. The literature review will demonstrate that three key historical junctures were pivotal in fostering a criminal industry in South Africa which today creates indiscriminate violence in many communities. This historical review will commence with a brief analysis of the turn of the 20th century and the discovery of major gold deposits in the Witwatersrand, followed by the 1970s and the prohibition and criminalisation of substances as well as forced removals in Cape Town. Finally the 1990s, as defined by the criminal pandemonium produced by the transition away from apartheid, will be analyzed, creating dialogue between various authors in each historical period in reference to police inefficiency, gangsterism, and drugs and how their working relationship produced violence. Upon completion, the readers' attention will be turned to the current situation in the Cape Flats and more specifically, Overcome, demonstrating how the interworking of police, gangs and drugs makes life unpredictable and volatile for residents.

2. METHODOLOGICAL CHALLENGES

The first hand information supporting this thesis was derived through unintended research which some may categorise as 'ethnographic', and which may be called 'participant observation' in social science. Two terms, which should be noted, the author was not aware of even after residing in Overcome for a year. For the sake of ethical considerations, it must be made clear that the aim of living in the community was never to further any academic ambitions; there was no intent to research, collect data, or write about that which was experienced. In short, moving to the community never had any academic purpose. In September, 2010, two weeks before moving into the township of Philippi with the intention of developing social programs for at-risk youth, a chance encounter with a protest leader near the Parliament building in Cape Town led to a change in plans. The purpose of the demonstration in the Company's Gardens was to acquire water, electricity, and basic social services for their deprived community. The author did not know where the community was, but an eagerness to learn and a desire to assist, resulted in accepting an invitation to return to the protesters' community that evening. Upon arriving in what turned out to be a squatter area and after spending a few days there, another naive decision was made: to move in to the community in order to try and better understand issues in the community and ways to contribute to their alleviation. Many months later, after moving to a different township to develop youth programs, this thesis was imagined and was developed.

There may be inherent flaws with the way data was inadvertently and retrospectively collected and the charge of bias may be valid. In Overcome, the author was considered to be 'white'. It was strange to be classified as such within these communities in spite of being born in Iran. However, the author has come to learn that he was seen as white in Overcome due to the social class he comes from, the economic opportunities and capabilities he has access to, the languages that he speaks and the parts of the world he has lived in. He may be seen as 'the other', a wealthy person from afar. 'Whites', 'Europeans', and 'the rich' are synonyms to many who have been generationally, racially and structurally marginalised in Cape Town. Many imagine that the author, like the millions of historically privileged people in South Africa, to have infinite access to the dominant material world. The underclass may not be far off in their assumptions given the intellectual and material goods the privileged class, of which the author belongs to, has access to (secure housing, quality education, healthy foods,

supportive family background and career opportunities). The author's identity, in the war zone² that Overcome can be, is imperative to how the community interacts with him. Here, in the eyes of many, he is often seen as four things he knows himself not to be: a senseless, millionaire whiteman from America.

To be associated with '*die wit man*', it was learned over time by listening carefully to the words of his hosts and observing their actions, is not favourable. For one, as will be illustrated, most of what the prison gangsters have learned has been significantly influenced by the same Europeans they have had disdain for and regard as their oppressor. Over the last 110 or so years, everything from brutality, to the ranking and training of fighters, to the sheer act of robbery were imbedded into the lives of those locked within prisons and hard labour sites. Over time, and between incarceration and relative freedom in the urban ghettos, what was learned in institutions was transferred to the streets. Jan Note, a legendary figure in South African gangsterism who will be introduced later, as he was known before imprisonment, or Nongoloza thereafter, the king of the prison gangs, as the *ndotas*³ know him now, only learned to organise criminally and steal after being taught by a group of European highway bandits who took him in as a skilled 'stable boy'. Violence, too, is best learned through experience. Perhaps as his companions had a severe distrust of white people, the same distrust is projected on to the author by some residents. This in turn may result in trickery and misinformation, especially when seasoned prison gangsters are concerned⁴ and although the author was shown unimaginable kindness, warmth, generosity and support by certain individuals in the community, there were others who put him in danger and deceived him regularly.

Veteran prison gangsters, for example the 26 prison gang member that the author eventually found out he had moved in with, and who, like all other 26s⁵, existed by the ethos of con-

²Noting that at the time of writing in December, 2010 Overcome remained, once again, patrolled by the military (September, 2011)

³Zulu word for 'man', signifying a bona fide prison gangster in the hyper-patriarchal realm of the Number gangs

⁴In her book titled *God's Gangsters?*, written after a decade of researching prison gangsters, Heather Parker Lewis concluded that "if they can con you they will do so!" (Lewis, 2006: 6)

artistry and theft, put the author in a precarious position. Given the author's privileged background, he was often treated as a financial opportunity. Thus, the author sceptically questioned the information he came by because he believed it may have been given to him in order to confuse or manipulate him for selfish ends. These interactions in themselves are demonstrative of the social decay that people have been brought to live in, creating mistrust and exploitative interactions, certainly not only with the author, but also with others within their community. Indeed, time spent in the community illuminated how fragile bonds are and that the people the author got to know best rarely trusted anyone completely; the saying "you can't trust anyone" (Standing, 2006: 121) seemed to be an established motto amongst Overcome residents, severely contrasting how the author fundamentally knew social relationships existing in his circles of privilege globally. Class outsiders, like the author, must be constantly aware of this uneasy reality in places like Overcome, where language, appearance and class-associations tend to dictate how one is perceived and treated, in order to be mindful enough to scrutinise information in an attempt to arrive as close to the truth as possible. The following section will explain how prison gangs, like the one the author's host pledged allegiance to, came to exist in South Africa

⁵While gang law dictates that the 28s work with poison and the 27s take blood, the roles of the 26s gang, which unlike the other two original Number gangs was founded in prison, is to accumulate resources, stealing and smuggling commodities, tricking wardens and prison gangsters for benefits. (Nott, 1990: 7)

3. LITERATURE REVIEW

3.1 Industrialisation, polarisation, and the rise of inequity

Nongoloza is the notorious figurehead of South Africa's original prison gang. He became a hardened, violent man due to the circumstances created on the Rand at the turn of the 20th century and his stoic stance in the face of brutality earned him growing respect amongst his peers. He had come to control gangs outside the prisons and inside them too. New prisoners were exposed to the criminal cult during incarceration and the transfer of prisoners around South Africa or release into their poor communities helped their criminal organisation spread. Today Nongoloza is legend within every South African prison population, as well as the communities from which the prisoners come and go, now both informed by the Number gangs. As the proceeding sections will demonstrate, he is an important figure in contemporary criminality and gang culture in South Africa's violently impoverished communities. His rise to prominence about a century ago is linked directly to the drastic rise in inequality brought about by a thriving mining industry.

The intensification of relations between government related criminals, such as those within the police, and private criminals, such as gangsters, was cemented in South Africa over 100 years ago. Charles Van Onselen, author of *New Babylon, New Nineveh* (1982), outlines the rise of social violence and development of organised criminality South Africa in relation to urbanisation in Johannesburg. The entrenched relationship between South Africa's policing institution and its criminal organisations came to be cultivated in late 19th century, a time historically demarcated by the discovery of vast gold deposits on the Rand. Then, like now, the life-blood feeding this symbiotic criminal relationship was the creation of illicit markets. At that time the key commodity was alcohol and its profitability was linked to acquiring cheap labour for the mining industry. Between 1888 and 1892 the number of liquor outlets in the Witwatersrand increased by almost 400%, swelling from 147 legal points of sale to 552 (Onselen, 1982: 7). This transpired because Kruger's government, with the help of his mining-tycoon allies who also controlled liquor production, operated under the belief that alcohol would foster a dependent, unskilled African work force, while it was ordained that skilled white workers were to be kept interested in their mining vocation by the prospect of

purchased sex⁶ (Ibid.: 7). A key philosophy of the mine owners was that if the addicted miners spent their money on feeding their alcoholic needs they would have to work longer underground:

“The more money the mineworkers spent on liquor, the less they saved; and the less they saved, the longer they worked before returning to the peasant economies of their rural homelands.” (Ibid.: 55)

Onselen also explains that “Both prostitution and drinking, therefore, partly grew out of the male culture that was rooted in the boarding-houses and the mine compounds” (Ibid.: 8), foreshadowing what inevitably contributed to a hyper-masculine prison gang culture which was soon to be fostered in another restrictive male institution: the penitentiary.

However, while in the beginning substance dependency seemed like the most promising way to drag workers to dreary work underground, it soon proved to create an unreliable work force threatening economic output, with 15-25% of the workforce continuously drunk (Ibid.: 18). Consequently, a decade after the discovery of gold on the Rand, Act No 17 of 1896 was made into law, prohibiting liquor sales to mine workers⁷ (Ibid.: 18). The government had created a black market which was immediately seized upon by violent Eastern European criminals who would not relinquish their lucrative interests. These men smuggled and sold mass amounts of cheap liquor to an addicted labouring class, while recruiting and importing prostitutes to work the nearly exclusive male population. Profiting side by side with them was the police who made their illegal operations possible, demonstrating the first large scale South African operations involving police collusion with criminals who secured their markets through violent means (Ibid.: 19). Regardless of subsequent anti-corruption, anti-gang policies ordained by the government, the criminal industry had gotten its proverbial foot in the door; the best efforts to un-corrupt the police were, at best, met with limited and temporary success (Ibid.: 91). The theme of black-market creation leading to gangsterism assisted by police criminality will be revisited regularly in the remainder of this paper as it is pivotal to understanding the establishment of relationships between government related criminals and

⁶ Onselen observes that the government’s liquor promotion policy allowed for the rise of prostitution, noting “A government anxious to protect a liquor industry that benefited its most powerful constituents and a mining industry that sought to attract and stabilise a working class on the Witwatersrand, between them has good reasons for condoning this conspicuous inactivity.” (Onselen, 1982: 8)

⁷ In similar fashion, until 1923 when it was made illegal for claimed reasons relating to work efficiency, mine owners also encouraged ‘dagga-breaks’ for their workers because they believed marijuana stimulated the labourer and increased output (Mckinley, 2012).

private ones. It will also be demonstrated that this relationship, protecting illicit markets, breeds violence.

Most of the global literature relating to collusion between private and public criminals comes out of the United States. This may be troubling in the search for relevance that at times becomes strenuous given the vastly different social and historical circumstances influencing criminality from one place to another. However, certain theories may be applicable globally. Written in 1976, Peter Manning's and Lawrence Redlinger's *Invitational Edges of Corruption* such a theory. It explains that all industries, licit or illicit, embody a certain form of influence acquisition (Redlinger, 1976). Ultimately, in business, every actor has profits in mind, seeking to create market conditions conducive to their success. This naturally involves influencing decision makers. In the case of licit markets, Redlinger and Manning explain that actors advertise openly to the consumer or legally try to buy the favour of the government through what today is commonly referred to as lobbying (Redlinger, 1976: 3). Similarly, it can be argued that a person conducting a legal business who tries to buy favour with policy makers is not viewed in the same light as a person conducting an illegal person trying to do the same. The authors continue to explain that those with interests in illicit businesses try to influence those within the state who impact on their markets. Thus, while actors in licit markets openly attempt to influence decision makes, players in illicit markets must try to surreptitiously influence those whose stated purpose it is to shut down illicit operations (Redlinger, 1976: 4). Only by doing this could the trader in the illicit market run a thriving business. As such, outlaws must try to penetrate the policing institution and any other government apparatus threatening to diminish their profits⁸, while exercising violence, illegal as it may be, where it insures profits. South African criminologists like Gareth Newman and Ted Legget support this theory:

⁸According to Tilly in *Warming and Statemaking*, states have historically created social ills for which they claim remedies. He writes:

"...consider the definition of a racketeer as, someone who creates a threat, then charges for its reduction. Governments' provision of protection, by this standard, often qualifies as racketeering. To the extent that the threats against which a given government protects its citizens are imaginary, or are consequences of its own activities, the government has organised a protection racket." (Tilly, 1982: 1)

In that the South African state banned certain commodities, creating markets and individuals thereafter considered to be criminal (while breeding life into state actor corruption) and then went on to expend resources on addressing the problems it had created, its activities too may be argued to be verging on racketeering.

“The structural constraints of legally suppressed markets expose the agent to an accumulation of attempted influence. Because sellers want effective control over their markets, they must find ways to neutralise enforcement agencies. If they cannot avoid at least arrest and charge and it is probable that eventually they cannot, then they must attempt to gain favourable influence with agents” (Newman, 2002: 2)

While Legget writes:

“Even well established, mainstream markets have their frictions and legal commerce relies heavily on the dispute resolution mechanisms of the state's courts. These, of course, are not available when peddling drugs and violence is often required to sort out business disagreements” (Legget, 2002: 1)

Manning's and Redlinger's theory is exemplified by South Africa's pioneer organised criminals who opportunistically migrated from Europe and America to trade in lucrative illicit markets with the help of those ordained by the state to quell them (Onselen, 1982: 88). While the violence-breeding bond between police criminality and organised crime was brought about by the creation of black markets for illicit commodities, developments in Johannesburg, Africa's first city to undergo an industrial revolution (Ibid.: 368), also bred criminality amongst the local population in a different way.

Internationally, overcrowding is often linked to crime (Legget, 2002: 3). Johannesburg had a population of 3000 in 1887, increasing to 100,000 by 1896 (Onselen, 1982: 165). The mushrooming population owed its growth to migrant mine labour from rural areas. These labourers made functional an emerging mega-industry in which Johannesburg went from producing 0.16% of the world's gold to in 1886 to 27% by 1898 (Ibid.: 1). It goes without saying that astronomical profits were at stake and a city was being designed to insure its profitability. The underclass majority had to live alongside a dominant and wealthy minority who constantly sought to consolidate their control over surplus labour while maximising profits. In an interview with Charles Van Onselen in 2012, he repeatedly reiterated that criminality spawns as economies “open and close” (Onselen, 2012). The mining industry boomed between 1890-1891, 1896-1897, and 1906-1907 and busted in between those years (Onselen, 1982: 3). During the booms labourers were hurried in and during busts they were, at best, left to their own devices. Many who lacked a way to earn turned to crime. Though poverty alone cannot be held solely responsible for criminality, it has always been a great conduit for the rise in crime. This perhaps inspired the great historian and banditry expert John Hobsbawm to write in his book *Primitive Rebels* (1965) that “there are no other

individual methods of escaping the bondage of virtual serfdom but bullying and outlawry” (Hobsbawm, 1965: 38).

Aided by industrialisation and capitalist aspirations, there were also structural designs by the government which attributed to mass unemployment which increased criminality. Industries which provided employment for the poor masses and services for the burgeoning city were systematically replaced by modern versions, bankrolled by the elite who controlled the city and its resources. For example, in 1896 traditional brick makers were moved by the government miles out of town after the modern brickyards were given production priority (Onselen, 1982: 23, 323). Consequently, many unemployed brick makers turned to dealing in the illicit markets (Ibid.:38). Over 600 cabdrivers were rendered unemployed after the introduction of the foreign-funded electric tram in 1906, and this too had a similar affect (Ibid.: 41).

The industries dominated by African workers were worst hit due to the lack of social safety nets, such as the Rand Aid Association created established to win favour with the white unemployed⁹ (Ibid.: 41) . Most significant was the legislation which moved the AmaWasha, a large group of Zulu clothing washers who served Johannesburg’s growing population, far away from their source of water and urban clientele. At the same time the powerful mine financier Otto Beit, with the help of imperial capital and friends in government, introduced the steam washer to the city. Quickly thereafter the redundancy of the AmaWasha was established (Ibid: 22). So-called ‘house boys’ who cooked and cleaned for their white masters were pushed out of work when the government decided to start importing higher paid British women into the domestic role, hoping to force the Zulu domestic workers underground during the mining labour crisis of 1902 (Ibid: 39). Thereafter the advent of household electronics such as electric heaters and water heating systems made the Zulu domestic workers seem increasingly more expendable to their masters (Ibid.: 229). These labourers who had lost their land and cattle in their traditional homelands, and who had become dependent on the urban economy (Ibid.: 275), came to increasingly band together in outlaw groups, committing crimes to supplement their lost livelihoods. They began forming gangs; for example, the former domestic workers creating what were called the Amalaita gangs (Onselen, 1982: 38). These people were regularly rounded up and thrown into prisons which

⁹Recognising the significant sway disenfranchised white people wielded over the pursuits of capitalists, affiliates of the Independent Labour Party said in 1908 that “charity is a safety valve for capitalism” (Onselen, 1982: 355). However, no such measures were put into place for the racial majority.

will be shown to have further criminally transformed them. One marginalised 'houseboy' went onto attain god like status amongst the underclass, laying the foundation for the mass, organised gangsterism which still dominates South Africa today. He was born to the name Mzuzephi Mathebula, renaming himself Jan Note when pushed into a life of banditry and finally assuming the name Nongoloza: a reference to the fierce stare in his eyes towards prison wardens when he was forging his infamous identity in South Africa's brutal prison system¹⁰.

Charles Van Onselen writes of Nongoloza's life, explaining the development of gangsterism in South Africa in his 1984 work titled *The Small Matter of a Horse: The Life of 'Nogoloza' Mathebula, 1867-1948*. Observing how Nongoloza's life unfolded is telling of the conditions of the time. Born into a rural family in 1867, he and his kin had a transition into an urban lifestyle avoided by few around the Rand¹¹. In 1948 he died of tuberculosis. His body was worn from years of living in and out of the mines and prisons, exposure to countless lashes, and dozens of years of hard labour. It also did not help that he lived meagrely and consumed more smoke and liquor than most. He died so lonely that after his death his body was never claimed. However, today his legend is kept in the hearts and minds of many South Africans living in the most volatile of circumstances, informed by an ever more glaring prison and gang experience through kinship ties and personal experiences.

Working as a migrant labourer and still a teenager in 1886, Mzuzephi was retained by a wealthy colonialist who wrongfully blamed him for the disappearance of one of his horses. When Mzuzephi refused to promise his free labour for two years in payment for the horse he did not lose, and in fear of being sent to the gaol as ordered by his employer, he changed his name to Jan Note and ran away from his job as well as the false criminal label he was assigned. Hobsbawm notes that outlaws are often made of people falsely accused of criminality and this was the case with Mzuzephi and many of his poor countrymen (Hobsbawm, 1959: 15). In 1888, at the age of 21, he moved away from his family and began

¹⁰ His name is also interpreted to mean 'the rule giver' given the disciplined cult-like structure he formulated (Lewis, 2006: 39)

¹¹ Of such people Hobsbawm might have said: "They were geared to an earlier way of life; it was their tragedy that a new world, which they did not properly understand, whirled them into a future with which they attempted to cope by dreams and violence" (Hobsbawm, 1959: 108)

working as a “stable boy” in Turffontein (Onselon, 1984: 5). Upon being hired by the Europeans, Van Onselen further explains Jan’s descent into criminality:

“Two of his employers, Tyson and McDonald, gave the black servant some rather curious instructions and in return offered to remunerate him comparatively generously. He was not to allow any of his black friends near the house, he was to attend to the horses most carefully and just in case the groom failed to understand the message they showed him a revolver and threatened to shoot him should he disobey” (Onselen, 1982: 371)

The aggressive nature of his new employers, he soon learned, was to be expected given the fact that they were flourishing highway robbers. Jan had stumbled upon the ‘white underworld’; a reality which was fostered by the Rand’s economic upheaval that turned many to crime (Ibid.: 371). Onselen includes an appropriate quote from a newspaper dating back to 1895 which printed “In South Africa it is invariably a case of feast or famine, boom or bankruptcy. The happy medium is seldom hit.” (Ibid.: 371) “Famine”, especially in urbanised settings, can have the effect of pushing groups to create new and perhaps illegal ways of supporting themselves and depending on the circumstances and the setting, their self-help may manifest violence.

Given his discipline and trustworthiness, Jan’s employers began to take him out on their heists, involving him in their criminal acts, and teaching him the tricks of the trade. Here, Jan learned how to rob and steal and after sometime came to the conclusion that he did not need to work beneath his white employers and receive a minimal cut of the profits. Given the severe inequality around him, he recognised that he could form his own band of thieves and reap much greater benefits. He went on to transform a small group of unemployed migrant labourers in the outskirts of town who had turned to predatory banditry¹², forging them into a fully-fledged criminal organisation. They used violence and spared no one in their quest for power and profits. They called themselves ‘Izigebungu’ and under Note’s leadership they were transformed into the ‘Regiment of the Hills’. Note gave the group a patriarchal, religious, military framework, greatly influenced by the militant, masculine urban setting. He

¹²This group at times could have been classified as a group of ‘social bandits’ in that they stole from the unjust, rich white master for the benefit of the poor. Social banditry is an idea highly developed by Eric Hobsbawm; he writes “Robin-Hoodism is most likely to become a major phenomenon when their traditional equilibrium is upset; during and after periods of abnormal hardship, such as famines and wars, or at the moments when the jaws of the dynamic modern world sieve the static communities in order to destroy and transform them” (Hobsbawm, 1959: 24). However, this bandit group cannot be termed as social in that they also stole from poor black people and were violent toward the poor population as well.

also pushed women out of the organisation. Finally, The Regiment was transformed in to “The People of the Stone” or “Ninevites”¹³ (Lewis, 2006: 47). This followed the growth of the mining-prison industry which saw people of colour in and around the Rand, like Jan, either be confined to hard labour in the mining areas due to restrictive laws, or hard labour in prison for breaking the rigid regulations. The prison institutions were a revolving door during Nogoloza’s years. So entrenched was the capitalist system that pass laws were formulated around it in order to create a setting where people had practically no choice but to work in the mines, or go to prison for several years of unpaid hard labour – often in the mines. At any rate, a reserve of desperate workers would always remain on hand and those who refused to work for the capitalist structure were forced to work by means of the brutal, dehumanising prison system. Onselen writes:

“Where the criminal sanctions of the Masters and Servants’ legislation failed to restrict the employee to the mining industry, the buttressing pass laws ensured that the absconding labourer would almost certainly be confined to another largely male institution — the urban prison - thus contributing to the development of an emerging working class culture richly informed by prison experience” (Onselen, 1982: 3)

In 1905, Cinderella Prison became the first prison producing labour for the mines (Ibid.: 377). Policing and prison operations supported South Africa’s leading industry, while doing so was beginning to inform the culture of the urban poor. Records from 1910 show that “The Union spends 2,145,000 Pounds on the administration of justice every ten months, and of this 1,583,000 is spent on police and prisons.” (Pratt, 1913: 172). This, of course, was a

¹³ As mentioned earlier, European influence played a significant role in the development of South African criminality. Another glaring example of this is that Nogoloza based the structure of South Africa’s prison gangs on what he had learned from the Boers and British governments. Charles Van Onselen explained in an interview that this showed great admiration by him towards the Europeans strategy for domination (Onselen, 2012). Though his original followers were all black and felt ostracized by their white masters, Nogoloza explained that the very structure of his organization was to come from those who he regarded as the oppressors:

“The system I introduced was as follows: I myself was the Inkoos Nkulu or king. Then I had an Induna Inkulu styled Lord and corresponding to the Governor-General. Then I had another Lord who was looked upon as the father of us all and styled Nonsala. Then I had my government who were known by numbers, number one to four. I also had my fighting general on the model of the Boer vecht generaal. The administration of justice was confided to a judge for serious cases and a landdrost for petty cases. The medical side was entrusted to a chief doctor or Inyanga. Further I had colonels, captains, sergeant-majors and sergeants in charge of the rank and file, the Amasoja or Shosi — soldiers”¹³ (Onselen, 1982: 13)

fraction¹⁴ of the capital being derived from the mines which depended on a steady flow of labour made possible by the pass laws, inequitable labour laws and guaranteed labour coming from prisoners who broke the laws designed to keep the poor dependent and underground. The more men were deprived of their freedom, the more recruits prison gangs were able to indoctrinate.

One reason that is worthwhile in understanding how South Africa's original criminal organisations took form is that it allows researchers to draw parallels between the conditions and policies which drew people towards a criminal way of life historically and those which draw them in contemporarily. At the root of it, Nongoloza found himself in a life of banditry after being treated unfairly by the unequal society he had to live in and with this came great punishment. Part of the punishment was working for the same unequal society he refused to stand for in the form of hard labour. The lashes he received upon resistance strengthened his resolve and over time he learned not only how to control those around him, but how to lead them in resisting authority while pursuing a livelihood at a time when many poor black people were not afforded one. Many of his contemporaries, similarly accused, imprisoned, beaten, over-worked, or pushed out of work, respected and empathised with Nongoloza's belief in defying the dominant structure. Due to the appalling inequalities which existed between the commanding colonisers and masses of landless, often hungry Africans, criminality became a more natural response to despair.

Nongoloza organised around him those who detested the conditions they were forced into; they may have been servants, labourers, miners, or structurally unemployed as were the Zulu 'AmaWasha'. Nongoloza's followers understood the great inequality which existed between themselves, their employers, landlords and government. As such, the criminal organisations which flourished in the late 19th and early 20th century did so by demonizing the dominant forces that brutalised them, and finding strength in their collective punishment. As Jonny Steinberg states in *Nongoloza's Children: Western Cape prison gangs during and after apartheid*, a major reason prison gangs continue to thrive today is because they embody "collective adaptation to mortification" (Steinberg, 2004: 12). Hardened by their conditions, the prisoner labourers found justice in their anti-social behaviour, as many gangsters still do today.

¹⁴Even in 1899 South Africa's gold production was already valued at 15,000,000 Pounds (Onselen, 1982: 207).

Thus the history of organised crime is over a century old in South Africa. During the years of Kruger's government, when he warred with the resource hungry British empire, a disastrous scramble to deport prisoners back to their homelands resulted in the sneaky, smooth escape of many gangsters to other modernising South African cities. They pursued their crimes wherever they went, taking with them their incarcerated knowledge and gang organisation, subsequently creating new, violent criminal networks where there was money and prisons (Onselen, 1982: 376). As early as 1919, the prison gang Nongoloza had cultivated and was blossoming as far west as the Cape's Noordhoek Prison¹⁵ (Ibid.: 394).

Steps were taken by the government circa 1920 in order to suppress the prison gangs, and while the government was largely successful in insuring gang activities ceased in the public realm, they did not halt the growth of prison gangs themselves (Abrahams, 2010: 501). Rival gangs began to form. An intensifying gang culture was being fostered in the prisons which manifested in the formation of competing gangs such as the Mpondo-centered Isitshozi, helping spread the South Africa gang phenomena across the country at an even greater pace (Ibid.: 501). Organised crime in South Africa was fostered by the inequitable labour practices which ushered in the settings necessary to create prison gangs as well as prohibitory policies. These policies created illicit markets, attracting ruthless criminals to profit from them, flourishing due to police partnership. Both types of criminality bred violence, and the decades that followed played host to the intensification of criminal transgressions.

3.2 Forced removals, additional black markets and the proliferation of drugs

Now that the formation of organised criminality in South Africa has been examined, attention can be focused on criminal developments in Cape Town. Cape Town's underclass, like that of Johannesburg, was a group which struggled disproportionately. David Abrahams writes "As a result of urban migration and unemployment amongst youths during the 1940s, the notorious

¹⁵Gangsterism continues to rule prisons, and it is paradoxical that the June 2010 edition of SA Corrections Today magazine mentions the word 'gang' only once in their entire publication. Even then, it quotes Minister of Correctional Services, Nosiviwe Mapisa-Nqakula, on Freedom Day, April 30th, 2010 in KwaZulu-Natal (where Nongoloza was born well over a century earlier), proclaiming: "No human being was born, as a rule of nature, to lead a criminal life, to be a gangster and to have no inkling of compassion for the other human beings," (Zikhali, 2010: 35).

suburb of District Six became the birthplace of street gangs¹⁶” (Abrahams, 2010: 502) This, combined with the release of prisoners in to the community who were informed by the entrenched gang experience discussed in the previous section, effected Cape Town’s criminal developments in fundamental ways. The most damage, however, was done a few decades later. The 1970s saw the implementation of policies which greatly unsettled the urban poor and created social disorder in Cape Town’s most volatile communities. The forced removals from District Six, a process which scattered families and friends far from their homes, into new, alienating environments, had an ever damaging affect. Racist legislation for the removal of inhabitants was passed in 1966, with removals commencing in 1968 and intensifying during the 1970s (Abrahams, 2010: 502). Andre Standing, in his 2006 study titled *Organized Crime: a Study of the Cape Flats*, notes that in little over 20 years 50,000 families had been displaced from their close knit community in the centre of Cape Town to various areas far away in the sandy and historically uninhabitable¹⁷ Cape Flats (Standing, 2006: 5). Standing builds on the theorisation of Don Pinnock and writes:

“According to Pinnock, in inner-city areas of Cape Town prior to apartheid, such as District Six, youth crime was largely kept in check by parents, neighbours and extended family networks. In other words, there was a strong degree of *informal social control*. Forced removals meant the inhabitants of the city were dispersed over the Cape Flats and many extended family networks were broken. Life on the Cape Flats became far more impersonal and distrustful – it lacked the “cement which held the working class culture together”. There was a breakdown in the stability of family, shown in high divorce rates, a sharp increase in single mothers and a growing tension between children and their fathers, brought about because of the men’s sense of inadequacy in their new environment. It was in this situation that large numbers of unsupervised youths formed street gangs, primarily as a coping mechanism but also as an act of defiance.” (Ibid.: 12)

Social discord increased and the likes of higher divorce rates, unemployment and single parenting became more normal than exceptional (Ibid.: 13). It is moot to say that the

¹⁶Abrahams goes to say that “Its inhabitants responded fiercely with vigilante tactics; the ‘mafias’, as they became known, were in fact family-based groups who fought for the protection of their close friends and family against the ever-growing threat of gangsterism” demonstrating that the type of gangsterism was distinctly different from what was to follow a few decades later after the creation of new illicit markets that intensified the working relationship between police and gangsters.

¹⁷Extremely powerful winds created obstacles for those trying to travel across it before the advent of motorcars. In the mid 19th century alien vegetation was introduced by colonialists in a successful bid to break the power of the wind. The Cape Flats saw its biggest surge in population following the Group Areas Act of 1950 which over the next thirty-odd years saw the relocation of countless families to the area, many of them from the inner most core of Cape Town. Today, as shack-lands expand daily and the poor getting pushed further towards the outer margins of the city, the population of the Cape Flats continues to swell.

architects of these communities did not have social cohesion in mind and the scarce public spaces for healthy social activity, such as theatres, were soon shut down by the government as well (Spocter, 2005: 15). Juvenile delinquency, criminality and gangsterism seemed to follow naturally as is the trend in such downtrodden, inorganic poor communities internationally. This can be exemplified internationally by the research of Edmund Vaz on the development of youth gangs of France in 1962 following the construction of similar bleak living spaces:

“You have heard of our large building sites . . . the H.L.M.'s¹⁸. Here there is a lot of trouble with gangs. These families have very many children and they form into gangs. We were short sighted in the construction of these buildings, we removed these people from their surroundings and housed them in places without a social setting.” (Vaz, 1962: 24)

With Vaz going on to add that:

“...the appearance of anti-social, often violence-prone adolescent gangs tends to emerge under (a) traditional slum conditions, and (b) deteriorating conditions (new slums) of newly developed, low-rent housing blocks” (Ibid.: 24)

It becomes easier to understand the social discord and volatility which exists in the Cape Flats when reflecting on the formation of such living spaces, understanding the kinds of communities they tend to produce. While newly found insecurities were to foster the development of gangs in apartheid's dumping grounds, the formation of these gangs was soon to be complimented by seasoned prison gangs which had, until the 1970s, operated almost exclusively within the incarcerated realm (Lewis, 2006: 48). As will be demonstrated shortly, government policies of prohibition would once again create lucrative opportunities, bringing their ruthless prison practices to the streets of Cape Town's worst-off neighborhoods by forging relationships with the police in profiting from newly illicit markets. Vaz points out that the lack of criminal groups and narcotics lessened the formation of youth gangs in France, pointing out that where there are existing criminal groupings the chances of gang formation are much higher (Ibid.: 26). Cape Town, in this regard, was well suited for the growth of gangsterism. Imprisonment rates amongst the majority coloured community in Cape Town, which bore the brunt of forced removals, were extremely high. Standing writes

“The rate of imprisonment for Coloured people in South Africa, most of whom were living in the Western Cape, was more than double that of Africans: in 1980,

¹⁸habitation à loyer modéré or 'housing at moderated rents'

for every 100,000 of each racial group, 729 coloureds were in prison compared with 362 Africans, 81 whites and 57 Asians.” (Standing, 2006: 15)

By the 1970s prison gangs had established a well established following throughout South Africa’s prisons, and while dialects and nuances varied from one area racially dominated area to another, the ethos of the prison gangs had been well developed, setting the stage for the state of contemporary gangsterism, characterised in one way by the blurring of lines between prison and street gang, a development which will be discussed at length in the proceeding section on contemporary gangsterism. Before the late 1970s, the ranks and identity of gang members were restricted to life within prison. In the ‘outside world’, the order of the Number insisted that they leave their gang identities in prison (Vearey, 2011). Prison gangsters from that era would attest to this as fact. Prison gangster in such communities may have been regarded as strongmen who held sway over community disputes brought to them, but organised criminal activity amongst them in the public realm was a rarity. The creation of black markets based around illicit commodities, however, enabled the expansion of their realm of influence and empowered them in unprecedented ways, fundamentally transforming gangsterism and violence in poor communities.

“The breed of the late 1980s and 1990s gangster is completely different.” said Major General Jeremy, who carries out his duties out of Mitchell’s Plain Police station, South Africa’s biggest police station (police stations per capita ratio) (Vearey, 2011). This was a result of the relationship forged between gangsters and police, rooted in money derived from illicit markets created in the 1970s. Introduction of new illicit commodities can have the effect of empowering criminal groups which profit from their sale with the help of police protectors. This trend can be observed locally and abroad. In Brazil¹⁹, for example, the introduction of cocaine metamorphised the prison gangs and strengthened their might on the streets of Rio while setting fertile ground for police corruption by criminal collusion (Penglase, 2005: 4). As it will be demonstrated, the prohibition policy concerning alcohol and Mandrax in Cape Town helped gangsterism flourish on the Cape Flats and also assisted in establishing a relationship between police and criminals. Newly found competitive markets contributed

¹⁹Mark Shaw also draws on this parallel when he writes “The threat of drug operations to South Africa can be contextualised by examining Brazil, a country with a similar socio-economic profile. Brazil “is playing an increasingly important role as a transshipment state, and has developed an extensive drug consumption problem of its own in the [slums] of Rio de Janeiro”. This has led to increased levels of violence in the marginalised areas of the city, higher levels of petty crime, and increased state corruption (Shaw, 1996: 54).

to drastically increasing the quality and quantity of violence on the Cape Flats as competing groups came to battle publicly for significant profits, positioning residents of embattled communities in the crossfire. One of the most damaging substances – if not the most damaging given its sheer reach and scale of consumption – has always been alcohol, which was sold in limited quantity to Cape Town's coloured population in the 1940s and 1950s, with sales becoming severely restricted in the 1970s. Andre Standing writes that this shift created black market trading, resulting in the spread of violence (Standing, 2006: 9). The volatile industry of illegal liquor sales, known as "shebeening", was the backlash of restrictive government policy.

Though alcohol was not outright banned in coloured communities, the apartheid regime half-heartedly attempted to curb its consumption by only allowing for twenty government outlets to serve the entirety of the Cape Flats (Ibid.: 9). Consequently, the illegal smuggling houses, or 'shebeens', were born and by the mid 1980s they numbered in the several thousands in the Cape Flats alone (Ibid.: 9). These illicit outlets were made operational by police officers who protected them and profited with their owners (Grobler, 2009: 375). The rate of consumption was significant. In the 1970s, 75% of low-quality wine was consumed in the Cape Flats²⁰ (Steinberg, 2004: 117). Here, the roads between violence, profiteering and monopolisation of substances begin to collide again. Andre Standing explains:

"As is the tendency of criminalised industries, the shebeen industry became characterised by violent and morally reprehensible business methods. In particular, the inability to turn to legitimate authorities to sort out disputes meant shebeen owners required the ability to act violently in order to provide protection against their rivals or to help withstand demands for protection money from local gangs." (Standing, 2006: 10)

The gangs, once again, were provided with circumstances to proliferate and enhance their relationship with the policing institution.

There were other illicit commodities which had a similar effect in creating other violently protected markets. Mandrax is a depressant and product of methaqualon. Similar to the problems caused by the restrictions put on alcohol, Standing identifies parallel effects in the criminalisation of Mandrax in 1977 as a boost to violent Cape Town criminality. The black

²⁰It is worth noting that the illegal points of sale continue to thrive today, with the sale of cheap wine to addicts accounting for the greatest profits.

market for this drug created massive financial opportunities for gangs, consolidating the power of Cape Town's criminal industry, giving more might to groups who violently scrambled to control access to such substances. As expected, prohibition failed to curb high demands once again; instead, it increased the profits derived from the market:

“By the mid 1980s illicit demand, almost exclusively among working-class Coloureds, had skyrocketed and illegal supplies of Mandrax were provided by smugglers from Asia (where it was still produced legally), as well as from clandestine laboratories in Southern Africa. As a consequence of prohibition the price of Mandrax pills quickly rose to high levels and has now evened out at around R45/50 per pill. The profits from selling Mandrax are therefore substantial and alongside alcohol and dagga (marijuana), the trade in this drug swiftly became one of the most lucrative illegal industries on the Cape Flats.”(Ibid.: 10)

Such developments went onto secure new footing for gangs in Cape Town and as their profits grew, so did their increasing need to violently put down competing forces in order to expand their markets. At the same time, the more lucrative the illegal industry became, the more attention that was brought onto it by the state, meaning more police needed to be on the payroll to insure their markets remained as stable as possible. Following the collapse of apartheid, it was revealed that the government was actively contributing to the state of insecurity in poor communities by proliferating drug addiction and the flooding illicit markets. Granted that much will remain a secret regarding their operations, and though motives will never be revealed unless perpetrators take the unlikely step to volunteer information, it is by now clear that government actors were aiding drug gangs into the final years of transition and flooding the streets with products they ordained illegal. While the intention behind such a tactic can only be speculated upon, a 2002 report by the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research revealed that clandestine government programs produced mass amounts of narcotics. Under the auspice of Wouter Basson, head of South Africa's secret chemical and biological warfare program, a recorded ton of methaqualone was manufactured at a front laboratory called Delta G (Folb, 2002: 64). Though it has been confirmed that human subjects were tested on, no one has testified as to which group the government program used to this end (Ibid.: 84). It would be reasonable to assume that the operation was conducted on a mass scale since the records which do exist show that between 1983 and 1992 R418.2 million were allocated to this operation (Ibid.: 113). The report goes on to note that:

“Delta G Scientist, Geoff Candy, told the authors that in about 1985 Basson noted that methaqualone and cannabis (in combination) were the street drug of choice amongst youth, particularly in the Western Cape. This led to work on the combination of the two drugs. Whether the intention was to undermine the health of communities or to develop a drug to sell for personal gain is not clear... 1,000 kilograms of methaqualone was produced at Delta G Scientific under the code name Mosrefcat” (Ibid.: 124)

The program was monitored by the Commissioner of Police and Minister of Law and Order and in 1992 records show the purchase of a further 500 kilograms of methaqualone in mid 1992, months after the government supposedly ordered a halt to the program (Ibid.: 125). Testimony during the Truth and Reconciliation Commission show that in the same year Basson offered 100,000 Mandrax to one of his chemist for personal sale (Ibid.: 127). In 1997 Basson was arrested for dealing a in large quantity drugs, including Mandrax (Ibid.: 216). In 1999 he was indicted for dealing Mandrax and possession of 500 kilograms of methaqualone (Ibid.: 231). The report goes on to shed some light behind the possible reasons for this program when it quotes J.P De Villiers, one of the architects of the clandestine operation, when he said in 1982 that:

“This success consisted of the inflicting of over ten percent casualties on the Americans in Vietnam by the distribution of drugs to their forces. If this is considered a chemical warfare action [which it is not], it was undoubtedly covertly supported and managed by the Vietcong and their patrons, it is the most successful example of chemical warfare in history and one that should be taken most seriously, far more seriously than the threat of conventional chemical warfare attack” (Ibid.: 127)

The report concludes that it is possible that “the tablets were intended to undermine communities by introducing addictive drugs²¹.” (Ibid.: 127) In regards to these government policies, David Abrahams gathers that:

“The political agenda of the National Party government, as well as the actions of the South African security forces, is often seen as having fostered the creation of an environment conducive to gang activity” (Abrahams, 2010: 498)

²¹Revisiting Charles Tilly's definition of a criminal racket as a process in which a threat is created in order to charge for its reduction, it may be that South African government's actions transcended the classic model of racketeering. Though it is clear that the violent gangsterism fueled by state sanctioned trafficking created a problem which the state security apparatus consequently tasked itself to remedy, in light of Basson's government ordained actions, there also seems to be a serious element of personal profiteering and state maliciousness.

It may have also been the case that drugs used as currency with gangs for political ends, trading the commodity in exchange for violence. Andre Standing cites testimonies during the Truth and Reconciliation Commission where Police Chief Abram van Zyl admitted to contracting Cape gangs to murder opposition activists (Standing, 2006: 137). A British newspaper article from 1997, speaking with the University of Cape Town's Centre of Criminology instructor Wilfried Scharf puts it the following way:

"Unfortunately, the expansion came just when the criminal justice system - and the police in particular - was in transformation and least able to cope. The police combating the war on the Flats are hampered by the corruption that riddles their ranks. Many officers have long-standing ties with the gangs which were used by both sides during the apartheid years. "Favours are still owed and information still has to be suppressed," (Braid, 1997)

Indeed, even as late as 2012 reports are still surfacing showing close working relationships between apartheid era members of the policing institution and criminal entities, such as the links between Staal Burger of the infamous Brixton Murder and Robbery Unit and night club protection tycoon Igor Russol (Dolley, 2012), reminiscent of criminal relationship between police and liquor smugglers of a century ago. A continuum of profiteering between criminals and police is ubiquitous in South Africa's history.

In the Cape Flats, the creation of unstable, socially deteriorated communities was complimented first by the prohibition of certain substances and thereafter by their illegal sale made possible by those in the policing institution tasked with stamping out their existence. The pursuit of profits from such illicit commodities remains a violent endeavour, with those living in the poor drug markets as the ultimate victims. As hoped for by many living in those markets before the 1990s, the transition away from racial rule did not diminish the violent illicit markets, nor hamper the relationship between public and private criminals which maintain them.

3.3 The years of transition

While the years before the end of apartheid deteriorated many communities by intensifying violence and criminality, the power transfer that took place in 1994 accompanied with it a host of catalysts conducive to further destabilising the already volatile communities. At this historical juncture, crime in South Africa increased. Antoinette Louw argues that statistics may reflect this reality because people came to feel more comfortable about reporting crime

after 1990 when political opposition was no longer illegal, though this fails to account for why crime rates still continue to be staggeringly high in the country (Louw, 1997: 142). She argues that the political violence before 1994 created marginalised groups which had come to depend on crime for survival (Ibid.: 150). She also argues that there were many illegal weapons in the country and that this trend of ownership increased given the state of insecurity which continued to exist after 1994, clearly adding to the bloodshed (Ibid.: 150). Louw reiterates the rise of violence from a historical perspective when she writes:

“One explanation for the high rates of violent crime refer to South Africa's political history, suggesting that families have been suffering from 'institutional violence' for decades through the disruption of their lives by the mass removals and migrant labour policies of apartheid ” (Ibid.: 151)

She believes that organised crime flourishes in places undergoing transition (Ibid.: 155), and that the opening of South Africa's border ushered in a wave of international criminals who were quick to take advantage of the already desolate conditions within the country. She writes:

“The clearest evidence of this in South Africa is the targeting of the country in recent years by organised drug traffickers. These syndicates are attracted to the country by weakened border controls, lack of legislative control over money laundering and mass unemployment which presents scope for recruitment ” (Ibid.: 155)

In 1994 the number of crime syndicates operating in the country amounted to under 300 groups (Masiza, 1996: 5). However, as of 2002, this was upped to over 800 groups. Given the secretive nature of these organisations, accurate figures can never be confirmed. Mark Shaw's paper titled *West African Criminal Networks in South and Southern Africa* explains that West African criminal network have “revolutionised” the violent South African drug market (Shaw, 2002: 292). In these countries²², such as Nigeria and Liberia, corrupt agents of the state such as police and border patrol persons participate in the criminal groups which began to operate in South Africa in the early 1990s (Ibid.: 297). Upon arrival in South Africa, foreign criminals build relationships with the local police, making their operations possible thanks to this working partnership (Ibid.: 301). At the same time, these African outlaws²³ hire

²²“The net result was often that the activities of the state and those of criminal groups became indistinguishable” (Shaw, 2002: 297)

²³The rising levels of crime in South Africa cannot be attributed solely to foreigners, though some stand by this false line of xenophobic thinking.

South African gangsters to carry out their blood work for them, further fueling the existing violent gang problem (Ibid.: 310). Mark Shaw compares South Africa to Brazil, another significantly unequal society after transition, and notes that there too the country was plagued by “levels of violence in the marginalised areas of the city, higher levels of petty crime, and increased corruption” (Shaw, 1996: 54). Shaw believes that the opening of South Africa’s borders allowed for the country to be flooded with illegal weapons from neighbouring countries, arming gangs who wanted to increase their power (Ibid.: 54).

Thus the opening up of South Africa’s borders left many doors open for heavy-handed opportunists to stake out new claims in South Africa’s drug market. A police interviewee of Andre Standing’s reflected in the following way:

“They had a field day. The police weren’t doing their job because of what was going on in the country at that time and the gangs took advantage of the situation. They acted like they were untouchable.” (Standing, 2006: 39)

Before 1994, South Africa experienced great international isolation, being cut off from many markets, international banking, travel and general interaction with the outside world. With the end of apartheid and acceptance into the global political arena, all this changed drastically. Almost too naturally, transnational crime found a new host. Most recently, the effectiveness of these criminal networks have been enhanced by South Africa’s modernised business and communication systems. South Africa’s former Minister for Safety and Security, Steve Tshwete, was quoted saying:

“...since its return to the global arena, [South Africa] has felt the effects of transnational organised crime syndicates attempting to extend their tentacles to ‘new markets’. Given South Africa’s relatively well-developed infrastructure, modern telecommunication systems, technology and business practices, it would appear that the scope of organised crime has evolved from generally small-scale local operations to international syndicates.” (Goredema, 2001: 3)

Beyond being supplied with new commodities, through this experience some South African criminologists came to believe that local criminals underwent a learning curve. Peter Gastrow put it the following way:

“greater exposure to and competition from established international criminal groups active in South Africa, have been some of the factors that contributed to

the increased sophistication of South Africa's indigenous organised crime groups"²⁴ (Gastrow, 1998: 56)

The 1994 transition strengthened gangsterism in Cape Town, helping to create the criminal realities which exist today. Hobsbawm notes in *Bandits* that "Banditry, we have seen, grows and become epidemic in times of social tension and upheaval" (Hobsbawm, 1969: 67). His half a century old finding seems to hold true in modern times. A 2002 article by Shaw shows that these trends are international. He explains how militarily ruled countries in Latin America, as well the former USSR, both ushered in organised crime during their time of transition (Shaw, 2002: 1). In the case of South Africa, writes Shaw, "the roots of criminality", which existed before 1994, were strengthened after transition, while also stating that the wide availability of fire arms increased the rate of violent crimes (Ibid.: 5). A few years earlier, in 1996, Shaw also wrote that during the years of transition, "There was extensive evidence of state involvement: senior police officers had been implicated in weapons smuggling" (Shaw, 1996: 5), again demonstrating a way police work with private criminals, increasing the state of volatility in gang-riddled communities. In South Africa, criminal groups became better armed and more organised (Shaw, 2002: 5). As noted earlier it seems as if during the years before the collapse of apartheid most political players hired gangs to violently attack their rivals, resulting in the rise of these criminal groups' strength following 1994 (Standing, 2006: 137), consolidating their prowess in the communities they operate in.

Shaw believes that the social discord experienced during the unstable period of transition fostered criminality and gang activity (Shaw, 2002: 8). David Abrahams similarly observed that "The lack of police responses to urban violence during this period meant that gangsterism, rape and murder flourished in the townships" (Abrahams, 2010: 504). South Africa was an unequal society before 1994 and the end of racial rule gave hope to people who believed that the destructive system would be replaced by one which fostered opportunities for growth. To this end Shaw writes:

"This is not to argue that poverty causes crime, but that increasing inequalities in wealth, in a context where the poor (and particular those who are young and poor)

²⁴One example is the evolution of extortion and drug-peddling by a night life security industry brought about in the mid 1990s by the likes of Yuri "the Russian" Ulianitski who was quick to form partnerships with local street gangs to grow his business and influence. (Mckune, 2012)

have high expectations that this position will change in the future, serves as a potentially important causal factor for criminal activity.” (Shaw, 2002: 9)

The people’s hopes were perhaps misplaced. South African’s may have envisioned that their police force would be positively transformed. However, according to Gareth Newman, following 1994, the government continued to recruit poorly educated individuals into police positions (Newman, 2002: 8). Furthermore, the new police service absorbed into its rank almost 30,000 people from the homelands police units which were notorious for corruption. It is stated below that 20,000 of these officers had criminal records (Ibid.: 8). Newman builds on the works of Tom Lodge, writing:

“Lodge details how corruption was deeply entrenched and routine at the highest levels of the homeland administrations throughout most of their existence. He makes the argument that considering that many of these people are in the present government, "it would be reasonable to expect the continuation of a certain amount of corruption... Furthermore, approximately one third were functionally illiterate, 30 000 policemen did not have drivers’ licenses and 20 000 policemen possessed criminal records" (Newman, 2002: 8)

Given the police history in South Africa, a negative view by South Africans towards this institution is nothing new. Today many Cape Flats residents believe there is an unhealthy relationship between police and criminals and this will be discussed in the following section. However, it is telling of the extent of disillusionment that even in 1990, children living in deprived communities shared this belief. A short book published by National Institute for Crime Prevention and the Rehabilitation of Offenders and the Social Justice Resource Project quoted a standard 4 learnersaying:

“Gangsterism is a dangerous thing. We must put a stop to this gangsterism. If you tell the police they say yes because they are also involved with this thing. I don’t know who we can tell to help us. That will be the day I die when someone will put a stop to this.” (Nott, 1990: 9)

It seems that just as private criminals were able to penetrate the South African underworld during a time of instability, the instability also created an environment where criminals within the policing institution were able to take advantage. The partnership between the two opportunistic parties created a heightened state of insecurity for poor residents.

This section provided a historic background on the development of South African criminality over the last century while drawing parallels to some internationally observed characteristics pertaining to the intensification of such antisocial developments. It was also explained how relationships came to be forged between public and private criminals and the effects the creation of illicit commodities had on fostering these violence-enticing relationships. Now that these findings have been reviewed, it is possible to focus on the three factors of gangsterism, the drug commodity and police inefficiencies in more contemporary times, allowing for emphasis to be put on the state of violence and vulnerability permeating in the Cape Flats squatter area of Overcome, located in Seawinds.

University of Cape Town

4. SEAWINDS AT A GLANCE

Seawinds is located less than 3 kilometres away from the beachside suburb of Muizenberg, playing host to popular tourist attractions such as world class surf-sites, opulent restaurants and luxury vacation homes. There are also historical attractions reminiscent of Cape Town's colonial legacy, such as the Rhodes Cottage museum, the vacation home and place of death of Cecil Rhodes, one of the most effective imperialists to ever profit from Southern Africa. The adjacent suburb of Seawinds, on the other hand, is home to some of Cape Town's most violent squatter areas. Unlike Seawinds as a whole which is dominantly coloured in its makeup, black South Africans, Africans from other countries and Asian store owners are present in the makeshift community of Overcome. The squatter area remains divided by a seemingly even split between coloureds and black migrants from the Eastern side of the country, mostly having migrated in hopes of economic opportunity. There have been no social surveys conducted in Seawinds and as such, it would be worthwhile to observe a recent survey from a nearby community which may be helpful when considering how people feel about crime and safety in such environments.

Mannenbergh, located 17 kilometers away from Seawinds, is another Cape Flats community locked in a state of perpetual violence²⁵. A 2004 survey of 1100 residents revealed how residents regarded their community. Of the residents surveyed, 48% believe the police to be corrupt, while 41% believed that police take money from criminals (Legget, 2004: 3). 59% felt that the crime in their community was gang related, while 69% believed drugs had a causal affect on crime (Ibid.: 6). Violent criminality has become so entrenched in these communities that 53% of respondents stated that they believed the country was better managed under apartheid. Legget concluded his findings by stating that "This high level of public knowledge about drugs is indicative of open drug markets, which can only exist in a context of lax enforcement" (Ibid.: 6), going on to add that:

"One clear area for enforcement is the sale of illegal drugs, which is being done openly enough for all to see that the law can be disregarded with impunity. Aside

²⁵ Given the steady violence in such communities, residents are aware that danger is always present. However, on Christmas day, there is of great sanctuary from crime and violence and people feel more at ease. This was the case in Seawinds according to residents. Similarly, during the month of Ramadan, poor Muslim communities are said to 'quiet down' during the days of religious observation.

from the social consequences of the drugs themselves, this fuels the public belief that the police are either incompetent or corrupt.” (Ibid.: 8)

While such data does not exist for Seawinds, the two communities are similar enough to warrant considering these findings as indicative of other violently impoverished parts of the Cape Flats. The following section will demonstrate many similarities observed in the Mannenberg survey, with an emphasis on the relationship between police and gangsters in the proliferation of the violent drug market.

4.1 Demographics and economic indicators

Seawinds is a poor and unpredictable place that shares a border with the infamous ganglands of Lavender Hill, with the busy, slow-traffic, two-lane street of Military Road being the symbolic boundary between the two areas. The flow of people from one area to the other is constant, as is the flow of violence. Typical of violent townships, Seawinds residents blame those from neighbouring communities for the crime. Regardless of race, only the poorest of the poor come to live in such squatter camps, serving as a real indication of the level of destitution. According to South African census figures dating back to 2001²⁶, there were 114 black Africans, 9 Asians, 12 white people and 8,378 coloured people living in Seawinds (Census 2001). More than a quarter of the population was aged between 18 and 34(Ibid.).

Of the 8,531 Seawinds residents counted in 2001, only 10% had graduated from high school (Ibid.). Furthermore, only a quarter of the population was employed with 24% of those employed working in what the government calls “elementary occupations” (Ibid.) which are those requiring the least amount of skill and the most amount of physical labour. These are also the lowest paying jobs and workers in this sector are easily and frequently replaced. All in all, 66% of those employed earn less than R1,600 per month (Ibid.). There were 1,730 dwelling structures in the community: most of them not yet paid for (Ibid.). The community is visibly over-crowded and people live in small quarters. Small shacks, as is the case in all squatter areas on the Cape Flats, can be filled by multiple families, troubling as it was noted earlier that internationally overcrowding correlates with increased criminality (Legget, 2002: 3). The government claims that garbage is removed weekly, but the area is constantly filthy,

²⁶Research for this paper was conducted before the release of the 2011 census figures, and correspondence with the Strategic Information office of the City of Cape Town revealed that updated ‘sub-level place’ statistics on Seawinds, such as those cited in this section, would not be available until March 2013.

and even in the year of 2011 cows could be found walking about the urban slum. Non-flushing toilets are also to be emptied weekly, but even when this does happen, by mid week the scene and smell would be unbearable to anyone raised outside such dismal conditions.

Nearly immobile motor-vehicles, ill-dressed children and piles of refuse clog the narrow, sandy dirt paths along which are countless shacks, put together by everything ranging from tin, crates, wooden pallets, sticks, plastic, cardboard to cement and zinc. These dwellings spread daily and expand outside the designated boundaries permitted by the city for the landless masses. Though government census in such communities serve as poor indicators, they may be amongst the best available to researchers trying to understand marginalised communities such as Overcome. Census in such communities are riddled with inefficiencies, so much so that Trevor Manuel, a member of parliament for another community on the Cape Flats, said to fellow members weeks before the commencement of the 2011 census that many poor South Africans “shut the doors, let out the dogs and turn out the lights when the enumerators approach” (Manuel, 2011).

4.2 Water, nutrition and healthcare in Overcome

According to the 2001 South African census, there were 1,380 dwellings with piped water inside, which correlates closely with the number of houses, flats, and other solid structures in Seawinds (Census 2001). Seawinds’ shacklands had access to 40 “Piped water on stand; distance greater than 200m from dwelling” and 51 sources “less than 200m away.” (Ibid.) However, water is not readily available to all and single water-points are often shared amongst hundreds of shack dwellers living in the dangerous community. This is a reality made harsher by the fact that the majority of residents – women, who outnumbered men by 311 in 2001 – are only able to access taps in daylight hours. Come night time, few people are brave enough to face the dark, cold streets, fearing a violent threat may be around the corner. Legget observed that people in Mannenberg similarly feared walking in the dark (Legget, 2002: 4), while Standing quotes in the *Sunday Herald*:

“When night falls over Lavender Hill, the people who live there live in fear. They fear to go outside after sunset because of gangs who move about under cover of darkness and terrorise people.” (Standing, 2006: 11)

Water may be difficult to access, but like any other modern slum in the age of consumerism, Coca-Cola signs are virtually everywhere. Both the young and old often claim that the

purchase of a highly advertised can of Coke provides a distraction and a momentary escape in the dreary environment²⁷. Lacking a way out of the township, nor things to do within it, petty consumerism comforts many who live in a society where some may believe that their consumer habits denote their social status. Most cannot afford public transportation to leave the violently bleak township, creating what Andre Standing calls a “claustrophobic existence”, sometimes leading to interpersonal violence between those stuck within (Standing, 2006: 120).

Food production is practically impossible in the area. Seawinds and the Cape Flats as a whole, was merely hectares of sand which, combined with the powerful winds in the area, made it uninhabitable until the mid 19th century. Due to the poor, sandy soil, food production is a distant reality. Lacking access to material and intellectual resources necessary for food production, Seawinds’ expanding squatters resemble an overpopulated wasteland with its inhabitants usually hungry for food that is never guaranteed. Work, typically strenuous, is low-paying, extremely scarce, and usually temporary. Locally food can only be purchased at the shack-turned-store-front ‘spaza shops’ which carry a very limited number of goods sold at higher prices than distant grocery stores which can offer lower prices due to their bulk purchasing power. While the upper classes not too far away exercise their privilege of spending hundreds or thousands of rands and buying in mass, squatter customers at the spaza shops normally buy their bread loaves in halves and tobacco in the form of single cigarettes. Cheaper grocery stores, kilometres away, remain practically inaccessible to the poor who lack the meagre funds necessary for transportation into the suburbs where the stores are located, and those who are willing to trek the distance typically do not possess the spending power to buy bulk. As such, the poor eat what is near and what they can afford. Only a handful of fresh vegetables and fruits are sold at the spaza shops and since these items often cost more than processed foods like canned beans or bread, people tend to opt for cheaper, less nutritious options.

The combination of low food quality, limited food quantity, insufficient knowledge regarding healthy nutrition, substandard living conditions in the worst geographical corners of Cape Town and the inability to address these difficulties ultimately leaves the population far

²⁷Coke, which is grotesquely expensive relative to the shack-dwellers finances, remains one of the few accessible sources of entertainment – a rare connector between the classes, it is the drink held in the hand of American presidents, Hollywood stars, the rich and the poor.

more susceptible to illness and disease. Tuberculosis, for example, already dominates the township. Statistics from 2008 to 2011 show an active problem with about 300 people in Seawinds constantly suffering from the illness, which in the last three years has caused 76 (recorded) deaths (Seawind Clinic, 2011). It would be reasonable to assume that many live and die undiagnosed and untreated. Various religious mobile medical outreaches, comprised of vans with testing apparatus and survey staff, sporadically visit the area, parking outside shipping containers that act as political counsel offices in order to conduct ad-hoc examinations of the population. However, an amalgamation of the slum-dwellers' lack of education regarding their health, suspicion towards outsiders and those associated with the council, a general lack of faith in the quality of such clerical-health outreaches, as well as a morbid fear of discovering a life threatening ailment which they believe they will not have the ability to treat, keeps many township residents at bay and this perpetuates the health crisis. Adequate medical facilities to treat ailments do not exist in Seawinds; one government clinic exists for the entire community. At times of emergency the urban poor can try to access distant public healthcare institutions; however, wait times are lengthy and quality of service often poor. Regardless, many cannot go at all because they lack funds for transportation²⁸.

Residents discussed the inadequacies of the sole community clinic in Seawinds, mostly in a mocking fashion. Some may have physical scars as proof of the low quality of service received. One young man was left with a scar on his arm after the clinic had mistakenly stitched his skin to his muscle when he had gone in for emergency treatment after a stabbing. Wait times are long and quality of service substandard, but what seems to upset people most is the attitude of the government employees, with some feeling that they are treated carelessly and that the clinic workers looked down on them due to their socio-economic status. Reference were made about doctors being '*perdedokters*²⁹', which in the Number

²⁸Private clinics, on the other hand, are conveniently located wherever hubs of wealth are present. Speedy and reliable ambulance service is often taken for granted by those people living in wealthy neighbouring suburbs who can readily access them. These medical businesses own private helicopters and fleets of emergency vehicles and their facilities are equipped with the latest medical technology and specialists to operate them. Medical services come as swiftly as one can show proof of insurance, swipe a credit card, sign a cheque, or put cash on the counter. Few, if any, residents of Overcome have ever possessed such spending power and that will not likely change within their lifetime. Most live day to day, or as locals often repeated 'hand to mouth', utilising coins and small banknotes, which greatly contrast the large banknotes and credit cards the nearby privileged community is accustomed to.

²⁹Here is the term in the context of Jonny Steinberg's prison research in the Western Cape during the early 2000s, in an interview with an inmate: "'We never trusted prison doctors,' Magadien tells me. 'For one, they

gangs means 'horse doctors'. Such people do not think highly of government health initiatives or institutional health care workers and their terminology is important to decipher as prison education can influence entire generations and communities, a result of the poor population's regular recycling through the scarring prison institutions. The lives of many Overcome residents have become intertwined with gangsterism, prison and institutionalisation to the point that they interpret life in public as if incarcerated. A common theme between a life of incarceration and a life in volatile communities is the ever present threat of violence.

4.3 Violence

Overcome falls in the Muizenberg policing district. According to the South African Police Service's website, between March 2011 and March 2012 there were 3 culpable homicides and 26 murders. There were 78 reported cases of sexual crimes, 35 attempted murders, and 212 assaults "with the intent to inflict grievous bodily harm" (the highest number in the last 8 years), above and beyond the 309 common assaults (South African Police Service, 2012). There were 84 robberies and 210 more with "aggravating circumstances": a further 1,084 thefts of an undisclosed nature were also recorded by the SAPS (Ibid.). The number of residential properties broken into was 649 while 410 motor vehicles were broken into and 123 vehicles stolen (Ibid.). There were 32 cases of illegal arms possession and 2 kidnappings. (Ibid.) The 4580 criminal offences recorded in Muizenberg policing district in 2012 marks the highest number since 2004.

At the time of writing in early 2012 there were three squatter camps in Seawinds, or 'informal settlements' as referred to by state representatives. Since the 2001 census, boundaries defining the borders of Seawinds and Lavender Hill have been altered more than once. Squatter camps have grown and expanded in population and space, with new, smaller ones forming as well. Boundaries continue to be redrawn, placing a squatter community in one municipal suburb one year and another suburb the next. For all practical reasons and purposes, namely the sheer amount of violence and the low quality of life, these areas are referred to by many residents as 'ghettos'. Such vocabulary is also shared by academics ranging from Andre Standing to Don Pinnock and Charles van Onselen, as well as high-ranking members of the police in the Western Cape, all of whom are familiar with the gang reality which dominates everyday life in the urban ghettos (Vearey, 2011).

were white. And they were also mapuza, the enemy. We called them perdedokters (horse doctors)'" (Steinberg, 2004: 37)

While writing in June 2012, there were 9 attempted murders in a 2 week period, with 10 people killed as a result of drug-market related gang warfare (Dolley, 2012). By July this number was over 20. Residents remain vulnerable. In that same month, the provincial government began demands for national military operations to fight the gang warfare, a move which seems to be increasingly popular with governments in charge of drug-riddled communities³⁰. On July 6th, 2012, 3 hours after the Community Safety MEC Dan Plato arrived in Seawinds with a heavy security detail to discuss the shootings, another person was gunned down. The family members of the victim, too afraid to be named or speak at length in fear of reprisals, were quoted saying “Everyone is afraid. It’s almost like we’re living under a curfew.” (Maditla, 2012). Her sentiments reflect the reality of living in such volatile, seeming lawless communities³¹. A day earlier Plato had recommended an extra 6 hours of policing in the already tense, gang-riddled communities, failing to address the underlying relationship between the drug commodity, gangs and the police which compromises the lives of residents through the violence produced in illicit markets.

In such communities, insecure, traumatised, and stigmatised youths in awe of prison gangsters continue to form collective security agreements that manifest themselves in the form of gangs. This reality has been noted by many Cape Town criminologists from different decades, such as Pinnock, Standing, and Kinnes, observing other parts of the Cape Flats. Youth form gangs amongst themselves in a bid to address their mutual vulnerability in an unpredictable environment. The gangs can also serve as a foundation to hatch criminal plans for material excess, such as drugs, liquor, cars, designer clothes and cash: things many youth seemed to strive for. Observing the street where most male youths in Seawinds spend their time, one quickly notices that “26”, “27”, and “28” visually dominate the public sphere. These numbers are typically found spray-painted or created through other forms of vandalism and brand most intersections, street corners and traffic signs. At the same time “Corner Boys,” “JFK” (Junky Funky Kids), or “Sexy Boys” promote dominant street gangs. American and British³² flags flown, worn, or drawn represent similar, equally or more

³⁰See the *limpienze*, or cleansing, of Cuaca Valley, Colombia.

³¹ Sometimes this sense of lawlessness leads to residents form vigilante groups, such as the group People Against Gangsterism and Drugs, and ultimately taking the law into their own hands.

³²The American flag represents the Americans gang, one of the largest in Cape Town. The Union Jack, on the other hand, does not necessarily depict a particular gang, but it is linked to gang lore and weaponry. For

powerful street gangs. Flying the flag of a particular street gang, such as the American flag, is a bold and aggressive maneuver which obtains its significance from the imaginary visuals portrayed by prison gangs who metaphorically fly their flags within their prison compounds, once again showing the influence prison gang culture has had on street gangs. The interplay between street gangs and prison gangs is ever changing, but what once was a culture kept within prison now dominates countless communities like Overcome. The youth are most eager to learn whatever they can about gangsterism and disseminate the information they come by amongst each other with great fervor.

Other high-traffic areas, though free of graffiti and visual claims, are hawkishly guarded by young, armed gangsters protecting small markets. They are sent there by their superiors to protect territories and maintain claim to 'turfs' by eliminating competitors and selling noxious narcotics, such as Mandrax, most recently 'unga' (heroin), and, of course, 'tik' (crystal methamphetamine) which will be discussed at length in the drug section of the thesis. These narcotics are sold to anyone who has money and even to those lacking the funds but showing promise of susceptibility to dependency or subordination. Through credit, the gangs can utilise such individuals in roles such as drug runners and sellers, or assassins. The latter is a position preferably reserved for child addicts the gangs actively seek to foster for their rosters. These young addicts are often of the utmost value because they are not only hard to spot as assassins, but are less likely than adults to be caught or imprisoned. The grim realities of this realm of life in Seawinds manifested itself one Saturday morning, on the 12th of November, 2011.

After residing in the community for what seemed like a couple of weeks, the author realised that the man he spoke to at the protest and who he subsequently moved in with, was a high ranking member of a prison gang. For the interest of protecting those who knew him, the man will be referred to as Calvin. He was affiliated with different street gangs throughout his 50 years, graduating from one centre of criminal power to another. He once explained how he had spent most of his life in prison. Out of the twenty-odd positions he listed one night in his shack bedroom, Calvin was about three 'notches' away from being the top man in his

example, to be 'going British', as street gangsters would say, means to be carrying guns. This dates back to South African gang folklore formed from the colonial period around the year 1900, demonstrating yet again the power of prison education on people on the Cape Flats. Prisoners use the term geBritish, meaning 'an armed man' (Lewis, 2006, 38).

particular Number. In early 2011 he was assassinated. The room where he was killed was a place where countless people, from toddlers to elders, addicts to police and preachers, would always come and go. Some came to sell stolen goods, many to buy marijuana, but most dropped by to socialise. One night, in the typical presence of the many people from the community who would gather in the room, young assassins of Overcome's leading tik gang stormed in. They emptied a few rounds into the ground to disperse the crowd before spraying Calvin with five bullets to the body and three to the face. He died instantly, sitting on the old, dirty, orange-cushioned, throne-like chair he always sat on. This particular chair was the only soft chair in the shack and thus reserved for the patriarch who provided for so many people in the community, while intimidating even more³³. The chair, which remains in the high-traffic smoke-room, is a stark reminder of how quickly things can change in communities riddled with drugs and gangsterism, and representative of the ever present threat of unpredictable violence.

Calvin's memorial was held seven months after his death at a neighbouring squatter area by the name of Hill View Projects 2. This squatter area falls in and out of Seawinds, with 2001 maps drawing it in and 2008 maps placing it within Lavender Hill. In reality, however, the communities are one in the same. The memorial was held inside a metal tin-shack hall that is a popular social gathering spot for many from Overcome, as it is the only large gathering area to dance. It is a very large shack, perhaps as big as ten average-sized shacks put together. On Friday nights, wonderful, upbeat music blares from the massive speakers within the metal hall. Inside is a dance floor packed with the young and old, dancing until the early hours of the morning while smoking broken glass bottle-necks crammed with cheap, seedy marijuana and tobacco, in a liquor-free environment. The dead man's 50th birthday was also held there months earlier. On the morning of the memorial, a loud cracking noise was heard in the hall as if the tin roof was collapsing. Looking up, it was clear nothing had moved. Outside, however, lay a dead man who was on his way to the memorial.

³³Hobsbawm may have been describing men like Calvin when he wrote:

"They are heroes not in spite of the fear and terror they inspire, but in some ways because of them. They are not so much men who right wrongs, but avengers, and exerts of powers; their appeal is not that of the agents of justice, but men who prove that even the poor and weak can be terrible" (Hobsbawm, 1969: 58)

About 30 meters away from the hall a small crowd began gathering around him. People knew his name and reputation. He was on his way to pay homage to his old friend and colleague, Calvin. That night people spoke about the assassinations he carried out as a member of one of Cape Town's gangs from the 1980s. He was one of the most notorious members of his gang, having acquired a long list of enemies due to the number of people he had killed. He often dressed up in different disguises, sometimes as a labourer, other times elaborately as a woman, in order to tactfully carry out his craft. That morning, he took one bullet to the top of his head and another through his neck. The teenage tik addict who shot him was on a bicycle; belonging to a gang, whose dominance is unmatched in the area, growing in influence, territory, and strength as it carelessly battles with other established gangs for territorial drug supremacy on the Cape Flats. Following the shooting, no one seemed distraught or surprised; it was just another Saturday morning and just another killing. Such shootings seem normal for the residents, with some elders adamantly believing that things in the community will only worsen. Many of these elders, who have seen the changing nature of gangs, claim that the youth in these communities are doomed; this was the dominant message from the elders present at the memorial that night who are witness to the rise in drugs and partnerships between gangs and police in proliferating markets.

5. GANGSTERISM

The public domain in Overcome is bullishly dominated by men and the little privacy that shacks provide to a private life is also controlled by the patriarch. Residents, as well as those familiar with the socio-economic conditions of the townships, know all too well that the types of conflict and the quality of violence are wide-ranging. Many youths living in the community, like their counterparts in other urban communities, admire power, material wealth and social status. In the communities like Overcome, no one is more admired and feared than the gangster, as they tend to have the greatest access to the material goods money can buy, such as designer shoes, cellular phones, cars, substances, as well as protection, and power. They also tend to be in company of many women. For some, fear seems to be as desired as respect, with some easily impressionable youths believing that the two are interchangeable as they grow up with gangsters whose dominion is based on being feared through the violent acts they perform (Standing, 2006: 192). Many young people want to be like the gangsters-come-drug-dealers and sometimes, even before learning to walk, they learn to throw up gang signs with their fingers. Such behaviour is a source of laughter for families who are the oral historians of a gang-riddled history.

Overcome's past is spotted with gang migration, housing many gangsters who have found refuge there over the last decade in their bid to avoid reprisals for what they may have done elsewhere. Calvin, for example, was one of the founding squatters in the area after fleeing Hanover Park. He moved because he feared for his life. Indeed, such fear-based migration is common for those who dread being hunted³⁴. However, what is most troubling about Seawind's gang reality is the constant proliferation of violent criminality. This is manifested by constant gang creations by traumatised, misled youth and the recruitment of new, young gangsters by established, father-figure like gangsters³⁵ whose drug operations are made possible due to police partnerships.

³⁴This is true of both the young and old entrenched in gangsterism. A young man of 13 who was spoken to in early 2011 explained how he had moved to Overcome and changed his appearance in order to avoid retaliation from family and friends of those he killed as a child assassin years earlier.

³⁵ Because many of those who turn to gangsterism lack parents or healthy family structures, powerful patriarchal figures such as gang leaders and the gang structure hold great appeal in the eyes of young recruits.

It was mentioned earlier that South Africa was the first country in Africa to undergo an industrial revolution and the rush for profits had many consequences, inequality between the rich and poor arguably being the most harmful one of them all. It was also explained that gangs were formed by those who were economically disenfranchised. Today, with extreme inequality still present as one of South Africa's most definitive features, many people in Overcome, lacking opportunities for personal growth, turn to gangsterism. For such people, gangsterism is tantamount to initiation into manhood³⁶. Young men gain a place of respect in the community through intimidation and the instilling of fear. At the same time, so ingrained is gangsterism for some living in the squatter camp that they feel they were born into the life, often due to intergenerational, family-wide participation in the gangster way of life. Having met those whose mother's and father's families were both gangsters, familiar with Nongoloza's condition as they also lived under gravely unequal circumstances and were forced into dehumanising intuitions and ways of existence, it is easy to understand how one could fall into the path of gangsterism. Such people grow up committing crimes; they and their families tend to treat this as a normal part of life. Often one has to live this life of crime in order to survive. Others have been made to believe that gangsterism and crime are natural parts of their lives that they must embrace in order to ensure their own survival.

Just as many privileged young adults may take for granted that they must go to university, many youth in violently impoverished communities foresee joining a gang and going to prison. Youths from these communities are often labelled as gangsters before ever turning to crime and this labelling has horrendous consequences. Andre Standing argues that doing this creates a "self-fulfilling prophecy" (Standing, 2006: 124). This self-fulfilling prophecy is strengthened by an apparent infatuation with gangsterism. It is crucial to understand that gangsters in the community – those who have demonstrated their readiness and enthusiasm to carry out extreme acts of violence – are widely idolised. Young men, who make up the demographic sought out by gangs for recruitment, see the gang leaders as beacons of omnipotence in their claustrophobic communities. Furthermore, these men are also the only residents of the community with weapons and a support system of combatants which is highly appealing in an

³⁶Very few female gangs exist in Overcome, but rarely do they rob, steal, or work with drugs (unless doing so for male gangs). Typically these gangs are linked to male gang, usually forming as social groups, and rivaling other females gangs.

unpredictable, threatening, and violent squatter area like Overcome. The gangsters also practice dominion over women – something very appealing for young men raised in highly patriarchal, sexualised setting where men can shout and grab at women at will. Compendiously put, the gangsters are looked up to because they have access to money, power and sex; three things many young men are socialised to yearn for in the bleak township.

Different theorists offer varying explanations as to why gangsterism thrives within townships. The most basic of explanations pertains to the lack of opportunities for youth within townships; however, this is too superficial of an explanation. To comprehend why gangsterism thrives within Cape communities one must scrutinise the history of the local population. The apartheid state's treatment of the majority coloured population in Cape Town varied greatly from the treatment of others. A particularly paternalistic outlook towards the group exposed people to the will and design of the white government which used a combination of heavyhanded punishments and dependency-creating aid, portraying coloured men in poor communities as drunks in order to disparage them, and giving family welfare aid to female heads of households which seemed to have a belittling effect. Standing writes:

“White paternalism has been used to explain specific policies towards the Coloureds under apartheid. So, for example, abhorrence at the level of broken families and youth delinquency meant large numbers of social workers were dispatched onto the Cape Flats to save women and children from their drunken husbands and fathers. The upshot was a tendency to send many young Coloured boys to reformatories – draconian institutions that attempted, quite literally, to whip Coloured boys into shape. In 1980 there were 2,500 Coloured youths so incarcerated on any given day” (Standing, 2006: 9)

Prisons and other institutions administering Cape Town's racial majority were pivotal in the degradation of entire communities far before the decade preceding the collapse of racial rule. This legacy of institutionalisation continues and its results are equally if not more destructive. Standing explains:

“From the mid twentieth century, there was a steady increase in the number of young Coloured men being sent either to reformatories or to prison. The national prison population grew from 23,000 in 1945 to about 51,000 in 1959. Coloured people were also being exposed to high levels of corporal punishment, including caning, and the death penalty: it was estimated that some 18,500 people were given official canings in 1958 alone. Far more were beaten at school and in

reformatories. It is moot whether this brutal response to petty crime and lack of discipline can be linked to high levels of interpersonal violence in the Coloured community. Perhaps less contentious is the argument that exposure to prison was, and still is, psychologically ruinous and the cause of much more harm than good.” (Standing, 2006: 15)

The inequitable treatment of the coloured³⁷ population was coupled with other destructive policies. As explained earlier, forced removals further disintegrated communities, fostered violence and increased the likelihood of young men seeing the need for and value in, gangs. Still today many youths feel that in order to safely navigate the chaotic and bleak townships they must ascribe themselves to equally bleak, chaotic groups such as gangs. This was certainly the case in Overcome from 2010 to 2012 as youths grouped themselves in gangs averaging three to five people. These teenagers quickly militarised as well with guns and while in the 1980s gangsters typically fought with knives, today the youths easily access arms. Insecurity can result in increased volatility. Take for example an incident in late 2011 when a teenager in Overcome was stabbed in the throat after getting into a verbal altercation with another group of youngsters who had demanded R1 from him. To protect themselves from encounters such as this one, many youths organise themselves into small gangs. The friends of the boy who was killed now carry guns. A few months after forming their grass-roots security collective, they were breaking into houses and selling tik for the leading gang in the area. Here the same conditions which foster gangsterism to flourish in prison can be recognised in the townships. One condition which nurtures gangsterism is individuals' inability to escape the unpredictably austere conditions which exist in their surroundings (Steinberg, 2004: 19). Steinberg writes “in the 1990s, the youths of Cape town's ghettos began to imagine their neighbourhoods as prisons” (Ibid.:281). In the case of prisoners, they cannot escape the prison, and in the case of youth within the township, they cannot escape the brutal township life where the threat of violence seems to always be lurking.

Major General Jeremy Vearey, a uniquely knowledgeable person when it comes to policing and gangsterism given the fact that he himself used to be a gangster (Joseph, 2003), believes youths are more likely to turn to gangsterism because “the gang is the largest group formation and subculture. Here the consistently strong and sustainable social formations are gangs” (Vearey, 2011). So strong is the culture of gangsterism that he

³⁷It must be noted that this was not the reality for all coloured people as there were minority coloured groups who were relatively well off, well educated and living in safer, drug and gang free communities. Thus, the argument here pertains to the poor, violent communities.

described how it was accepted practice that when gangsters were killed, like the ones in his family, the family would carry out part of the processions and the gangs the other part. “It shows you how permeated it is in normal cultural life in the Cape Flats,” going on to add that “If you were a youngster growing up... there was very little group activity that you could do that would fill in the gap between adolescents and becoming an adult.” (Vearey, 2011) In the four or five decades before the end of apartheid, gangsterism was far less about money than it is now. He also believes that today’s gangsterism is much more imbedded in the poor communities. The advent of a lucrative drug market caused a fundamental shift.

Vearey is one of the people who believes that the intensification of gang criminality around drugs formulated from the late 1970s, booming, thanks to criminalisation and again in the 1990s with the opening of South African borders, creating a crossover between street gangs and prison gangs (Vearey, 2011). It is well documented that profits pressed prison gangs, which traditionally only existed in prison, to sell their influence to increasingly powerful street gangs. Although the reasons for the inception of gangsterism in Cape Town were dreadful, the social phenomena has transformed tremendously since its rise to prominence in the second half of the 20th century with the key factor being the proliferation of a powerful and lucrative narcotics market made possible by the protection of police.

While prison gangs used to have the utmost supremacy in Cape Town’s criminal world, gangsters and drug dealers now attest to a structural changing of the guard. To be a part of a prison Number was a lengthy and rigorous process, in which one could only climb the ranks after serving many brutal years in prison, a process which almost always required shedding blood. High-ranking street gang bosses now enter prison and easily buy their way into the highest ranks of the Number (Lewis, 2006: 11). Once back on the streets, they possess new powers and networks as a result of their trip. This is a common strategy used by many aspiring street gangsters looking to bolster their criminal credentials. Cash is king and it is quickly buying influence within the Numbers who control prisons, as the street gangs have come to thrive off money from new drug markets.

Prison gangsters wanting to cash in on the street gangsters’ financial successes are willing to ‘sell’ their well-defined names, affiliations and Number to those strong enough to purchase it. At the same time, the formerly dominant prison gangs’ power continues to be challenged by

street gangsters in a way which often obliges them to hierarchically fast-track their 'outside' counterparts; in this zero-sum game, if they do not do it, their competitors will. Prison gangs offer protection to the powerful street gangsters while they remain incarcerated. Often they are only in transit while their well-paid lawyers are getting them out of prison. Indeed, time spent 'inside' is a time of vulnerability for anyone, especially those known for access to resources. For the last three or so decades, the prison gangs have built relationships with dominant drug gangs³⁸ whose interests are maintained by bloody warfare over drug markets kept alive with the support of their respective police partners. With the stakes rising and the end of apartheid creating a vacuum for gangs to proliferate, what used to be inter-gang battles fought with knives, axes and pipes has given way increasingly haphazard gunfights (Vearey, 2011), reflecting the increased presence of illegal weapons which became noticeable during the years of transition away from apartheid.

With narcotic markets continuously expanding, consequentially empowering criminal operations, the Cape's drug market and gang culture proliferates. Gangsters and the people living amongst them, as well as the highest ranks of the police (Vearey, 2011), agree that this trend has led to the destabilisation of the gang-order that existed before the 1980s. In the past, only prison gangsters gained criminal respect on the outside. An interview with leading Cape Town criminologist, Irvin Kinnes revealed that this corresponds with an era when addictive drugs were not yet prominent (Kinnes, 2012). Today however, the competition for market shares in the sales of expensive and highly addictive narcotics has made urban poverty far more erratic. Gangs are competing for limited markets, steadily decreasing the value of life in unison with the maximisation of profits³⁹. Though affiliation between prison gangs and street gangs is no new occurrence, profits now come before all else, dissolving the little order that the prison gangs used to offer gangsterism and criminality. The institution of South African gangsterism has changed over the last century, and the behaviour of gangsters has become harder to predict. The ever increasing youth gangs are especially impulsive. A few gangs used to control many members, while today gangs can be comprised of as few as three people, operating with their own rules and motives. Even gang loyalties are now

³⁸ The most important relationships are between the Americans who are aligned with the 26s and the Firm, the other super drug gang, who is aligned with the 28s.

³⁹ Interviewing Major General Jeremy Vearey; he spoke of violent, yet predictable blood baths which kept the community at large safe during the 1970s. Gangsters used to warn bystanders and clear them out of the area where fighting was to take place (Vearey, 2011). Today, however, violence is if far-less discriminatory or predictable.

questionable, as it is not uncommon for a 26 to kill an American, another 26, or to go against the order of the Number, which used to hold dominion over gangsterism.

Today the gangs are well protected by their police contacts. Police are known to sell weapons and drugs to gangsters and even transport illicit materials for them (Grobler, 2009: 385). If a gang is to be raided, friendly police officers warn them (Ibid.: 377). All of this is common business practice between gangsters and police internationally as cited by the Mollen Commission's findings regarding corruption in the New York Police Department which will be discussed at greater length in the concluding police section. In the case of Cape Town, recent research has shown that the relationship between police and gangsters is easily struck up because many police officers have grown up with gangsters in drug ridden communities (Ibid.: 297) and this may play a part in explaining rampant corruption (Ibid.: 366). Some within the police believe that every major criminal group is working with the police (Ibid.: 381). It has also been found that where there are drugs, the propensity for collusion between cops and gangsters is heightened (Ibid.: 441). The types of links between gangsters and police will be discussed after observing the role of drugs in the proliferation of a violence and unpredictability in Overcome.

6. DRUGS

By now it is clear that illegal substances have long played a formative role in Cape Town's townships. Prohibited items always create black markets for their sale and as demonstrated earlier, apartheid's paternalistic treatment of the population did not diminish the demand for government banned substances. Consequently, their illegalisation led to fierce competition between competing forces looking to profit from valuable intoxicants traded at great risk. While in the past police commissioned with shutting down illicit markets also got paid by criminals to 'look the other way', today the relationship between cops and gangsters over the sale of drugs is far more complex. This may be due to the drug market's expansion and the introduction of much more lucrative substances. For example, crack-cocaine was first found being sold South Africa in 1995 (Legget, 2002: 18). It follows naturally that with greater profits, gangsterism proliferates and as it does, the need to protect business interests is heightened, leading towards more deep-rooted ties with those whose proclaimed duty is to shut down such markets.

The number of people benefiting from the distribution of banned substances has risen dramatically, as has the potency of substances. In the process gangsters as well as state officials, ranking high and low, have come to benefit. Most recently on the higher end, the now former wife of South Africa's intelligence minister, Siyabonga Cwele, was convicted of importing drugs into the country with a Nigerian syndicate. Clearly, the problem is a systematic one, affecting everything from near the root – say the spouse of the intelligence minister – to the leaves – the cops on 'the beat'. The drug markets are jealousy protected and it seems as if there are no warnings put out to those who impede on existing businesses. In the case of Calvin, there were two suspected reasons for why he was shot: one was that he overstepped his boundaries by selling a small quantity of tik that he had bought at a very low price from a seller who had to liquidate his supply before escaping from the area.

Commenting in reference to the gang warfare plaguing the Cape Flats at the time of writing in July 2012, Celia Dawson, deputy CEO of the National Institute for Crime Prevention and the Re-integration of Offenders said:

“Youth, young adults and older males in particular have lost the ability to craft a life for themselves. This helplessness and hopelessness have contributed to the relentless phenomenon of the gang” (IOL News, 2012)

The same news source states: “Dawson said drugs were the local currency for these communities, both as a means of earning a living and as a way to dull the pain of hopelessness.” (Ibid.) This state of being is fostered by the relationship between gangsters and police criminals. Elizabeth Grobler’s PhD dissertation pertains to police criminality in the Western Cape, and she explains how the relationships with criminals manifest themselves in a multitude of ways. For example, one of the most common ways is by drug dealers calling their police contacts after a transaction to have the buyers commodities confiscated and sold back to the drug dealer at a fraction of the price. Grobler also found that drugs are the commodity most often stolen by police (Grobler, 2009: 305). Other practices include, but are not limited to, police doing surveillance work for drug gangs and the ‘disappearing’ of weapons from police depots for sale to gangsters. Dockets on gangsters go ‘missing’ by the hundreds. Furthermore, police will muster up false warrants in order to raid drug dens so they can sell back that which they ‘confiscate’ back to their drug dealing associates (Ibid.: 386). According to Elizabeth Grobler’s research, it is believed that only 5% of drugs are ever confiscated (Ibid.: 292). This finding cannot be taken lightly, and in light of all the transgressions, it would be reasonable to imagine corrupt police officers as members of the drug gang’s criminal rosters. Residents living in drug infested communities tend to feel helpless against the power and influence wielded by gangsters. Andre Standing states in regards to the Cape Flats that “...there is a strong level of public distrust in the local police, who are often accused of being corrupt and of having close connections to gang members.” (Standing, 2006: 53) Elizabeth Grobler similarly writes that:

“It is largely accepted that police cannot fight crime effectively without the support⁴⁰ of the community in which it occurs. Likewise, police criminality, corruption, and misconduct cannot be reduced if there is no positive communication and trust between the police and the community they serve.” (Grobler, 2009: 214)

⁴⁰According to AfroBarometer “In 2008, 46% felt that ‘almost all’ or ‘most’ police officials are involved in corruption, compared to a majority of 51% in 2011”. Thus, within the South African context, this ‘support’ from the citizens must be diminishing even further as the 2012 AfroBarometer findings show an increase in people’s perception regarding the extent of corruption in the South African Police Service (AfroBarometer, 2012).

Within communities like Seawinds, and very rarely at that, there are seldom brave individuals who take a stance against the drug dealing gangs. None, however, take lightly the possible aftermath. Perhaps because they know what will happen to them, few ever cooperate with police or act against the drug dealers in their communities. In October 2011, less than a kilometer from Overcome in neighbouring Lavender Hill, a 61 year old woman named Joan Everson, known for her anti-gang stance and taking the initiative to call the police regarding the location of drug dens, had her spaza shop petrol-bombed. She continued her activities and two months later she was mutilated by having acid thrown on her face (Maregele, 2012). A year earlier, the son of a 52 year old mother by the name of Rita Jacobs was murdered: she was the founder of Seawinds Neighborhood Watch, receiving regular threats from local drug gangs. (Dolley, 2010)

Although the basic way illicit markets function has remained the same, with black market policies and police collusion remaining the operational catalyst, the nature of illicit commodities has changed dramatically. The most harmful substance in Overcome, due to the criminals it finances and the citizens it harms through both use and victimisation of others by users, is 'tik'. The remainder of this section will give an overview of the destructive commodity.

The exact time of arrival in Cape Town is unknown, but it would be reasonable to assume that tik (also known as crystal methamphetamine) arrived in the Western Cape a few years after the transition away from racial rule (Henda, 2012). It is relatively easy to make and most ingredients needed for its manufacturing can be bought over the counter. Since its introduction, it has ravaged entire communities and nowhere in South Africa is its usage comparable to the Cape Flats. Users have described it as the substance that speeds everything up and allows you to 'keep going'. Others have spoken of using tik for days on end without the need to sleep. Within the context of Overcome, residents spoke of thieves using the drug at night before 'getting to work'. The chemical is used as a stimulant believed to allow users to perform rash acts – be they brave or aggressive. Those on tik speak at a rapid pace, their bodies shake, their hands move seemingly without the user noticing it and it appears impossible to stand still. Majority of users in the community inhale the clear-white, odourless substance after putting its powdered form into a broken light bulb or glass pipe and holding fire underneath it. The pipe, it should be noted, is referred to as a 'lolly': another

shameless marketing ploy to attract children⁴¹. A 2008 Cape Flats study by the Medical Research Council (MRC) found that young girls were especially affected by the spread of the new drug, and the most commonly cited method of acquiring the drug was in exchange for their bodies (Wechsberg, 2008). However, the social ills caused are much more numerous.

In Overcome, residents see tik as the key illicit substance linked to anti-social behaviour. Such behaviour may manifest itself in the form of violence and it is commonly associated with personal and property theft. Those in Overcome who use tik are in constant search for their next fix, as life becomes a seemingly endless cycle of drug use and drug acquisition. This theft leads to further violence as some angry residents who do not have faith in justice being delivered from the police violently claim their own justice from their perpetrators. It was very common to have jittery addicts come to Calvin's shack trying desperately to sell whatever they had stolen or found. BlackBerry phones, with a retail value of around R2000 had an asking price of R250. Brand name shoes were a commonly traded item. On one occasion two young men looking to acquire their drugs were going from shack to shack, carrying the plastic shell of a hot tub. Anything and everything may be taken in an attempt to come by the funds needed to feed this powerful chemical dependency. Many residents are often disgruntled as their power is cut resulting from electric cable theft. It is thus not surprising that although there are no copper mines in the Western Cape, the province plays host to exporting vast quantities of the metal, so much so that the Chamber of Commerce and Industry has been lobbying the government for the past year to rigorously increase regulations on the scrap metal industry and set up a commission of inquiry on copper theft in the Western Cape (Cape Chamber, 2011). Tik addicts are known for scavenging for the metal where ever it can be found, which they sell for very little to scrap metal businesses who then ship the metal abroad at an increased price. Last year an article by the *Weekend Argus* reported that 88 meters of wire, worth R48,000, was stolen and sold for R80 (Weekend Argus, 2012). It also noted that the two months prior to the article being printed there had been 96 major incidents of cable theft in Cape Town. In the townships, tik addicts regularly risk electrocution, climbing on to shack roofs, digging underground, or breaking-in, in order to strip electrical wire.

⁴¹ Another example is heroin being marketed as 'brown sugar'.

Tik use is on the rise: research by MRC shows that in 2003 there were 1724 people seeking medical help for their dependency while in 2008 this number rose to 2807, indicating an increase exceeding 60% (Plüddemann, 2008). The report goes on to state that “These findings are unprecedented in terms of the sharp increase in the number of patients seeking treatment for methamphetamine related problems.” Nearly all users recorded were from the Cape Flats. The drug epidemic is stifling. Though correlations cannot be claimed, it is worth noting that drug related crimes in the Western Cape numbered 19,940 in 2004, increasing every year and arriving at 77,069 by 2012, marking an increase which exceeds 380% (South African Police Service, 2012). While other provinces saw an increase in drug related offences, none came close to the Western Cape’s 2011 figure, with KwaZulu-Natal placing a distant second with 37,415 offences in 2012. Below is the number of drug related offences reported at Muizenberg police station over the last 8 years(Ibid.):

<u>2004</u>	<u>2005</u>	<u>2006</u>	<u>2007</u>	<u>2008</u>	<u>2009</u>	<u>2010</u>	<u>2011</u>	<u>2012</u>
132	239	228	185	215	185	269	357	359

On occasion a newspaper will print an article celebrating ‘drug busts’ in Seawinds. During March 2011 *Die Burger* published such an article:

“The operation began on Saturday 12 March, at 16:10, when a house in Potberg Street was searched. A 42-year-old man was arrested after the discovery of Mandrax and tik. That same evening, at about 20:10, a house in Langeberg Street was searched and a 22-year-old man was arrested for the possession of 43 packets of tik. The operation was concluded with a follow-up raid in Potberg Street, where a 31-year-old suspect was arrested after being found in possession of a pistol stolen in Woodstock earlier this month. Drugs, including five large packets of tik, were also found in the man’s possession.”(Fouché, 2011)

The article, titled “Police clean up on drugs”, and ending with a photo captioned “BUST: Warrant Officer Leon Verster with some of the goods confiscated”, either wilfully or ignorantly overlooks many underlying realities. One such reality is that the three people ‘busted’ all lived within a one minutewalking distance of each other as the two short roads of Langberg and Potberg, being no longer than 200 meters each, intersect each other, meaning that those arrested wereselling tik for the same gang. While many different independent sellers of marijuana may live close to each other and even assist each other, rival tik outlets do not stand so close to each other. Were this not

the case, given the territorial wars that take place over competing markets, the area would be in daily shoot outs. The people who earn the lion's share of the profits never get arrested and they have a lot of tik: even 100 packets of tik denote a ground level dealer. The small quantities which were reported to be confiscated further demonstrate that the people arrested were not decision makers in the illicit market. It would be reasonable to assume that their boss simply went on to supply other people to act as drug outlets, as such positions are numerous in nature given resident's amalgamation of desperation and fear. What the article also disregards in its celebratory tone is that it is inevitably the case that there are police officers within the same police station, although it may not be known who or how many, on the payroll of other drug dealers who were not 'busted' that day. Gangsters and police work together, maintaining the violent drug markets.

University of Cape Town

7. POLICE

According to the South African Police Service's (SAPS) website, under the heading 'Vision and Mission':

"The Constitution of the Republic of South African, 1996 (Act 108 of 1996) lays down that the South African Police Service has a responsibility to

- prevent, combat and investigate crime;
- maintain public order;
- protect and secure the inhabitants of the Republic and their property; and
- uphold and enforce the law.
- create a safe and secure environment for all people in South Africa.
- prevent anything that may threaten the safety or security of any community
- investigate any crimes that threaten the safety or security of any community
- ensure criminals are brought to justice; and
- participation in efforts to address the causes of crime

To fulfil in the Mission of the South African Police Service, all the members are subjected to a Code of Conduct." (South African Police Service, 2012)

On the 31st of October, 1997, the South African Police Service officially introduced this 'Code of Conduct'. One would imagine such literature to be lengthy, but in fact it is only 247 words. Nonetheless, it would be of particular value to review the opening and closing lines of this document in order to try and understand to what standards the institution holds itself:

"I commit myself to creating a safe and secure environment for all people in South Africa by –participating in endeavours aimed at addressing the causes of crime; preventing all acts which may threaten the safety or security of any community; and investigating criminal conduct which endangers the safety or security of the community and bringing the perpetrators to justice.

...I undertake to – ... act in a manner that is impartial, courteous, honest, respectful, transparent and accountable;exercise the powers conferred upon me in a responsible and controlled manner; andwork towards preventing any form of corruption and to bring the perpetrators thereof to justice."(Ibid.)

Unfortunately for South African citizens who look to the police for protection, there is little recourse to ensure police are ethical agents. There are a host of inefficiencies associated with the SAPS and the following section will highlight those with links to criminality that breeds violence. Elizabeth Grobler defines police corruption and misconduct in the following way:

“Police corruption includes activities, both criminal and those construed as unethical or misconduct, but not illegal. The criminal activities by police members include crimes ranging from theft, taking bribes, to murder. The corrupt acts which are not illegal but are unethical, include dereliction of duty, excusing small transgressions, nepotism, and accepting gifts for favours, for example, free meals in return for ‘improved police visibility’ amongst others... Misconduct consists mainly of legal but unethical acts, whereas corruption consists of illegal and unethical acts.” (Grobler, 2009: 11)

The SAPS lag behind with many global best practices. Unlike Great Britain and the United States, where it was shown that the periodic transfer of officers from one station to another was a preventative of corruption, South African police are not rotated, allowing them to entrench themselves in criminal relationships and illicit dealings with greater ease (Ibid.: 311). What is perhaps more troubling is the fact that police officers are transferred to other stations when they have been caught in criminal acts, which exasperates the problem by spreading it (Ibid.: 338). Unlike England or the United States, there is no integrity testing in the SAPS (Ibid.: 268) and while laws exist in these countries which make it illegal for police to associate with gangsters and known criminals (Ibid.: 282), observing the news reveals that the highest ranking police officials have friends who are powerful gangsters, such as Jackie Selebi, the police’s former top brass, and his working friendship with drug trafficker Glen Agliotti. On the lower end of the police hierarchy, observing places like Overcome quickly reveals that gangsters’ drug dens are regularly frequented by friendly police business associates. The Western Cape, which embodies many gangs and drug infested communities, is especially prone to working relationships between police and gangsters (Ibid.: 288). Grobler argues that extortion in South Africa is highest in high crimes area (Ibid.: 305). This finding is supported internationally by the findings of Manning and Redlinger as well as those of the Mollen Commission. It is not surprising to find that 90% of Cape Flats residents believe police to be in business with gangsters (Ibid.: 288). Grobler writes “Police involvement in syndicates has been ascribed to the habit of many police members socialising with criminals” (Ibid.: 294), which surely has the effect of residents losing faith in the police.

In Overcome, it seemed that many would rather turn to the gangsters they live with as opposed to the police they deem as corrupt and do not trust. In other violently impoverished communities, such as drug-ridden favelas in Brazil, this antagonism towards the police empowers drug gangs (Penglase, 2005: 5), and it could be argued that there is a similar

occurrence in *Overcome*. Grobler writes that in such communities, crime tends to be underreported due to a lack of faith in police (Grobler, 2009: 333). It was common for victims of crimes to forgo contacting the police; rather, many went to the strongmen in the community, like Calvin, to deal with many of their grievances which, in an ideal situation, ought to have been handled by the police.

Elizabeth Grobler's PhD dissertation sheds new light on the understudied subject of contemporary police criminality in South Africa and confirms first hand findings regarding the relationship between gangster and police criminals. She emphasises managerial level failures within the policing institution as the leading factor in the seemingly free reign of police corruption in South Africa (Ibid.: Summary). Her 2009 study is the most recent and in-depth in the field, filled with current facts and statistics. While there are numerous recorded cases relating to theft, murder, rape, drug use and sale, what is most illuminating is the number of cases against the police that result in acquittal. Telling of the policing institution's inner workings, she references the *Sunday Times* in 2005, stating that:

“between 2000-2004, 53,740 police members had been arrested for criminal offences. An additional 6,132 were convicted, 9,699 were in the process of being prosecuted, and 37,918 were acquitted.” (Ibid.: 7)

Grobler's work is also valuable in that it brings attention to many understudied police inefficiencies in South Africa, for example, how Cape Town police officers – paradoxically from the Organised Crime Unit – became addicts after acting as 'bait' for drug dealing gangs (Ibid.: 47). While this particular case was reported, one can only guess at the number of police addicts who continue to feed their chemical dependence at their work place. It was not unusual to see police officers with known drug dealers in *Overcome*: on one occasion in late 2010, two were seen posing with smoking pipes, holding up gangs signs for photos on their phones in a place considered by the police to be a drug den. Grobler's research also indicates an increasing problem with police officers becoming drug addicts, perhaps providing another avenue for cooperation between drug dealers and police.

The relationships between private and public criminals are vast and wide ranging. Police may drive drug dealers to deliver their commodities and even do the deliveries themselves (Ibid.: 375). Grobler also explains how gang informants are paid by police who inflate the fee which is supposed to be given to informants for information, only to take a large cut of the

informants' fee for themselves (Ibid.: 57). She highlights the extent of police leaking information to criminals and their social relationships with known gangsters (Ibid.: 82). Police have also been known to pass information to criminals regarding witnesses set to testify against them, putting the lives of such witnesses in imminent danger (Ibid.: 83). Indeed, in the case of Calvin, the second theory regarding his murder was that rival gangsters had found out that he had been a witness to a gang murder, the trial for which was approaching. This is not unusual; currently a Cape Flats boss in the 28s gang is under trial for 21 murders committed over the last 6 years, many of them committed for the purpose of silencing witnesses (Dolley, 2012). Grobler notes that police are known to keep their gangster associates out of prison long enough for them to eliminate witnesses before their trials (Grobler, 2009: 305), perpetuating their violent activities which endanger residents, reconfirming once again gangster impunity and police alliances that maintain residents' sense of insecurity. All in all, Grobler's research demonstrates that police, individually and in groups, are involved in a multitude of crimes, ranging from murder, to rape, theft, child trafficking, drug dealing, weapons sales and much in between, breeding violence in collaboration with drug dealers who are their criminal counterparts in the private realm.

Given the multitude and nature of these criminal acts, Grobler gathers that is not a case of a few 'bad apples' but rather the entire policing institution is flawed (Ibid.: 91). She emphasises the fact that poor management, an inadequate promotion structure, and low pay leads many police astray. One of Grobler's interviewees, a police officer imprisoned for corruption, said "we must work for ourselves because the money is not enough" (Ibid.: 389). The relationship between insufficient wages and police criminality has been observed locally and globally. Mark Shaw wrote that criminal groups "have the ability to 'buy into' government and bribe officials including those in law enforcement who earn comparatively little" (Shaw, 1996: 54). The extensive 1994 report titled *Commission to investigate allegations of police corruption and the anti-corruption procedures of the Police Department*, set up by the City of New York, confirmed the same findings in the United States. In South Africa, police convicted of corruption predominantly justified their deeds in relation to low pay⁴² (Grobler, 2009: 314).

⁴²It must almost be taken into account that the people hired by government institutions for low level jobs are commonly from poor socio-economic backgrounds. It is not uncommon to hear of forest rangers that try to take advantage of money offered by rhino poachers (Dardagan, 2012), or government nurses taking hundreds of thousands of rands worth of medicine from the hospital for private sale (News24, 2012). The same reality applies to the economically restrained people working for the government in the policing, security and judicial institutions. For example, Andre Standing writes of vanishing investigation dockets – 1500 of which related to

Though this alone cannot account for why police turn to criminality, low pay becomes an even greater factor when police are overworked: South African detectives handle an average of 80 dockets per month while the international average is 24 (Ibid.: 320). Grobler writes that 60-80% of police work second jobs due to the inability to make financial ends meet (Ibid.: 136). The SAPS are recruiting from a poor population surviving in a depressed job market, meaning many join simply for pay and to have a job, as opposed to looking for a career aimed at bettering society (Ibid.: 327). Gareth Newman echoes this point when he writes:

“Many people will join the police agency not for vocational reasons, but because personal issues to do with status, power, access to weapons or merely because it is a job” (Newman, 2002: 8)

Such recruits, Grobler adds, tend to be poorly educated and she argues that poorly educated officers are the ones most likely to have corrupt tendencies, both locally and abroad (Ibid.: 328).

Another widely cited cause of police corruption is due to the relationship between police and drug informants (Ibid.: 132). Manning and Redlinger demonstrate that this is an international problem when they state “Agent corruption is a product of the requirements of narcotic law enforcement and a theme found in the history of the enforcement enterprise” (Redlinger, 1976: 5) Manning and Redlinger believe that “Informants are the heart of the enforcement of narcotics law (Ibid.: 8) and that

“narcotics law enforcement is such that rather than providing inducement to conformity to the law, it is more likely to underscore the virtues of avoidance of the more obvious requirements of law enforcement.” (Ibid.: 6)

In South Africa, narcotics enforcement is even more flawed. There are no checks or balances in place, as there are in Europe and North America, to ensure proper handling of informants (Grobler, 2009: 300), which is all the worse given the fact that “narcotic law enforcement is

attempted murders and murders, according to an internal audit (Standing, 2006). This figure only accounts for 1994 and 2001. Another police commissioned investigation of missing dockets revealed that between April 2008 and February 2009 alone 688 dockets went “missing” (Omar, 2009): this is an ‘industry’ figure and one has to wonder if the actual number is higher. Reports of such theft occasionally surfaces in the news and most recently, in July 2012, the Bellville Commercial Crimes Court heard of a prosecutor working at the Bellville magistrate’s court, selling dockets for as little as R1800 relating to crimes such as the arrest of an individual – his customer – caught for possessing 29,182 kilograms of marijuana (Whitten, 2012).

virtually always secretive, duplicitous and quasi-legal and is extremely difficult to effectively regulate” (Redlinger, 1976: 5). Grobler quotes a police interviewee saying:

“A crooked informer will always have a hold on a crooked cop. The relationship exists beyond this because the cop will not be able to arrest his informer. Information provided by this informer boosts the cop’s career but the informer is a crook, they are dependent on each other” (Grobler, 2009: 301)

This a sentiment shared by the Major General Vearey (Vearey, 2011) and a reality made more likely due to low police wages. These findings make lighter work of understanding the dangerous workings between police and drug dealers in Overcome.

Vearey also believes that there exists a systematic relationship between gangsters and corrupt South African police. The bulk of violence in Overcome is controlled by the gangs and the gang’s dominance is vested in the drug market which they run with the help of police. Without such assistance they would be arrested: community members know where the drugs are kept, who sells them and what they sell, though they lack confidence in the police to do much about it and often fear what may happen if they approach those who they may regard as the gangsters’ government partners.

Major General Vearey identified police corruption in the context of townships into two categories: petty crime such as when a police officer leaves the scene of a crime with more items missing than when she or he had arrived, which is more common amongst young officers and gang-level corruption which takes place in higher-up, more specialised units. Although he believes he commands one of the most efficient units in the Western Cape, when asked if there was corruption at his station, he flatly replied “Yup.” In the last three years, fifteen officers there had been arrested. When asked the reason for the arrests, he replied “Drugs.” (Vearey, 2011)

Some officers, Vearey said, believe that becoming a police is the “best opportunity” for criminality. Given the violent nature of Cape Town’s poor drug markets, the opportunism of a few causes suffering for the masses. Much of the criminal workings between police and gangsters observed in Overcome were reconfirmed by Major General Vearey. Establishing the bonds between police and organised criminals is a game of patience, relationship-building, and psychology. While many different types of relationships exist at different levels in the

hierarchy of the police and gangs, a common one which was described by both camps worked in the following way. It usually involved a cop within a specialised unit such as the Crime Prevention Unit (CPU) which is the active, on-the-ground arm of the SAPS, conducting patrols and visible policing. “It’s what they’re interested in which determines who they corrupt” Vearey explained, adding that the gangsters are interested in:

“any police operation that is going to take place, so the person they’re going to target isn’t going to be an ordinary constable that’s going to be a part of the operation because that person is least likely to have the information they need in terms of which addresses the police will come to.” (Vearey, 2011)

It’s the CPU which holds this information and thus it is they who are infiltrated. It begins by gangsters presenting themselves as police informers. However, as confirmed by both state officers and street criminals, gangsters do not simply corrupt police; police also coerce gangsters (Vearey, 2011). In fact, Grobler’s findings were that when it comes to the corruption of police, no one is more effective or efficient in proliferating the institutional inefficiency more than police officers who are seeking to introduce new police officers to their private criminal partners (Grobler, 2009: 418). Her thesis revealed that those most often responsible for ‘corrupting’ police officers are other police officers.

“A gang leader would send you five informants” explains Vearey “and they would target specific people in the station to give you information”. The gangsters disclose information pertaining to criminal activities –drugs, murders, weapons – which incriminate competing gangs. The immediate result for the co-operating gang is that their market share increases, while the rank of the police officer rises as a result of a ‘successful bust’. What follows is that the police officer is promoted to an elite unit, gaining access to sensitive information pertaining to gang activities as a supposed gang expert, and becoming more useful for their gangster partners. “Meanwhile, they’re basically being controlled”, says Vearey. The gangsters’ investment flourishes. The police are now dependent on gangsters for recognition and promotion and the prestige and pay increases that ultimately follow. Referring again to Manning and Redlinger’s findings in 1976, they write:

“Internal pressures for excessive enforcement are created by: (1) aspirations for promotion, salary and "easy numbers" within the unit; (2) quotas for arrests or stops insofar as these are tied to notions of success and enforced on agents”(Redlinger, 1976: 5).

It is ambitious officers who are looking for positive statistics, and the disgruntled, under-appreciated and disheartened employees, who are prime targets that Grobler revealed are plentiful amongst South African police. However, within the highest ranks of the state's security institutions similar trends of criminal activity persist⁴³.

What Vearey, Van Onselen, and Kinnes explained to the author about the relationship between gangsters and police, historically and contemporarily, resonated with the behaviours observed while living with the veteran gangster Calvin. For example, Calvin used to pay off police officers from neighbouring areas and in return the policeman would give Calvin raid warnings⁴⁴. There were social visits which resembled friendly extortion. People who spent their days in Calvin's shack naturally looked out for the police. Verbal and physical signals, such as code words and hand signs, communicated to others the police's arrival, at which point illicit commodities were hidden or taken offsite. Police visited often. Regardless of how irritated Calvin may have been about being pressured to pay, he would act cool and the representative of the state always left with marijuana, music, a cool drink, or a combination thereof. Interestingly, after he was gunned down by the area's leading tik gang, his wife, ceasing to recompense police bribery, no longer received her husband's police perks and has since been repeatedly arrested for being in possession of marijuana, put in jail, sent to court and told to pay the court for the marijuana she had in her possession. The average fine of R300 is almost unaffordable for her, but since the only way she can feed her family is by continuing to do the only work she knows how, she continues, knowing she will be squeezed for cash by the courts again.

⁴³Jackie Selebi, the former national commissioner of the South African Police Service and president of Interpol, was convicted in December 2011 for corruption – having received money from a convicted drug smuggler – only to be released for 'medical reasons' less than 8 months after the conviction (Cape Times, 2012). Vearey believes that Selebi's case is typical of criminal side dealings with gangsters (Vearey, 2011). Selebi's replacement, Bheki Cele, was quickly suspended after corruption charges. Collusion between the middle-ranks in the police institution is not uncommon either. A 2004 court case heard how numerous Cape Town police officers were on the payroll of drug-gang boss Quinton "Mr. Big" Marinus; it was common for the gangster to order drugs, then call contacts in the police to intercept the delivery, confiscating the narcotics and freeing the deliverer, only to go on and sell the drugs to Marinus at low rates (Maughan, 2004). Indeed, in the townships too, low-ranking police officers have been known to sell illegal substances to gangsters.

⁴⁴This is a common practice internationally, it seems, as Madding and Redlinger wrote in 1976 that "First, there is a payoff to officers from dealers for advance-warning information concerning raids, or other such warning information. This type of payoff is made on a regular basis. Secondly, there are payoffs made at the time of a raid or arrest" (Redlinger, 1976: 6)

Vearey explained that the law used to work in a way that many of the top gangsters in the Cape could never get arrested because they were the informants of police; therefore, when they were taken to court the police working with them would tell the court that the gangster had informer immunity. When asked “What if the guy is going around murdering people?” he replied “In most of these things, it’s the value of the target beyond that determines what the person gets... It’s who they want – who the police want – afterwards that determines what the value of what you get” (Vearey, 2011).

Vearey went on to say that the relationship changes when the police profit with the criminals. In 1997, his superior handed him about 14,000 dockets, dating from 1980 to 1997, relating to the gangsters protected by this relationship. Vearey was to arrest as many of them as he could as the police had admitted that the system had given rise to severe “corruption”, mimicking moves by the police in the early 1900s when Smuts cleaned out the police force due to the relationship brewed between police and criminals over illicit commodities (Onselen, 1982: 16). Vearey then went on to reiterate that in the couple of decades before the collapse of racial apartheid, gangs were politically aligned with the police and used as hit squads against anti-ANC forces in exchange for the privilege of keeping their violence-brewing businesses running. The relationship’s currency may have changed, but the relationship has not ceased. Standing writes:

“What is clear is that police corruption is inadequately ‘policed’. Established in 1995, the SAPS internal anti-corruption unit was downgraded in 2003 and integrated into the Organized Crime Unit. The reason for this remains unclear as the anti-corruption unit managed to increase the number of successful prosecutions against police officers by 600%⁴⁵.” (Standing, 2006: 147)

For each reported case, it is probable that many more go unreported. Gangsters and other criminal entities have described to the author numerous instances of paying someone – a clerk, an office worker, a police officer with connections, or someone with some sort of institutional tie – to do things like ‘vanish dockets’. It is well cited that police sell confiscated substances to friendly gangs, which Manning and Redlinger find particularly troubling as this act actually makes the police marketers of narcotics (Redlinger, 1976: 9). Police officers have actually assisted gangsters in raiding police barracks for weapons: this happened in 2000

⁴⁵ Two years after Jackie Selebi came into power the unit was disbanded, possibly shedding some light as to why the unit may have been shut down.

when the Hard Livings gang was assisted by the police in this endeavour at the Faure police base (Standing, 2003: 5). In October 2012 the Western Cape police commissioner, Arno Lamoer, finally took heed of Grobler's findings and admitted that there was a serious problem with the violence nurtured through police's relationships with gangs, saying that in the last year 87 police officers were arrested for selling guns to gangsters and armed robberies. In the last 3 years, he noted, 159 police weapons had been lost or 'gone missing' and this does not include unofficial guns held in police locks ups (Johns, 2012).

The material resources which exchange hands between government agents and state outlaws need not be grand, as the quality and quantity of those exchanges are dependent on the actors involved. Therefore, the regular handing over of a music CD, can of cool drink, or the 'gifting' of a 'stoop' of marijuana (street value R5), is as typical as the same police officers selling these materials elsewhere for cash. These kinds of dealings, according to Elizabeth Grobler, qualify as acts of police corruption, fostering unhealthy relationships, lending support to the criminals who create a state of unpredictability, vulnerability and violence for people living in drug markets like Overcome (Grobler, 2009: 12). Standing believes that:

"The genesis of this corruption may lie in the propensity for police to seek additional income and to extend their local power; and for organised crime, on the otherhand, to find ways of managing insecurity. (Standing, 2006: 139)"

As discussed earlier, Charles Van Onselen records that as early as the 19th century the sale of illegal commodities was dependent on being in business with the police, both low and high ranking (Onselen, 1982: 81). From taking out competitors, making evidence and witnesses disappear, raid-warnings, gun sales, witness assassinations, and more. South African police profiteering side by side with gangsters is as old as South African gangsterism itself (Ibid: 85). It is interesting to note that over a century ago, in 1899, a move was made by the government to supplement the wages of police while separating them from the prosecuting Attorney General's office in order to create greater ethical oversight. The result was a dramatic decrease in corruption and an increased ability to combat gang activity. When this policy was disbanded, however, illicit sales reached a new high (Ibid.: 72) "and in the lower ranks, where the salaries were least adequate, police corruption remained a pervasive problem" (Ibid.: 91).

In light of all these historic and contemporary findings, it may be argued that without police inefficiencies, the violence which is derived from the relationship between public and private criminals would decrease and that illicit markets would cease to function as they do today. Indeed, a high ranking police interviewee of Andre Standing stated “Corruption is our biggest enemy. If it wasn’t for corrupt police then we would have sorted these gangsters out years ago”(Standing, 2006: 146).

University of Cape Town

8. CONCLUSION

This thesis has demonstrated the development of gangsterism, police criminality and the proliferation of violent illicit markets which have aided the relationship being formed between the two parties. Certain historical junctures have been argued to have attributed to the growth of this partnership. The relationship has been shown to foster volatility and violence in Overcome where most of the violence is conducted and controlled by gangs. Today, their power and influence is vested in the selling of government banned substances. Some of these substances decay the lives of already desperate people, forcing them into a life of criminality in order to feed their addiction. Hopeless addicts prey on other people living in the poor communities, committing crimes against them so they can get their drugs. At other times, addicts give their criminal services over to gangs in direct exchange for narcotics; such is often the case with child assassins. In these communities, the brave few who speak out against the gangs risk their own lives and of those close to them. People do not feel safe in their communities and many feel that there is no justice or recourse, owing to the power and influence of the gangs allied with police. Residents find rest hard to find even at night time because it is not guaranteed that the hours of darkness will be quiet: helplessly locked in their shacks, it is common to hear neighbours struggle against intruders. Living in such circumstances weighs heavily on the populace.

The police know which gangsters are doing what, and where they are doing it. It may be argued that without police corruption, the drug market would cease to exist as it does. The gangs cannot conduct or grow their business without the permission and support of the police. The police are seemingly always on the payroll of drug dealers. If there is to be a raid of a drug dealers premises, their police contacts give them a grace period to move. When the drug dealers may seem like they are caught and are going to be imprisoned, bringing their violence-breeding activities to a halt, their police connections will manipulate state offices to clear charges. At other times the police sell drugs and weapons to gangsters in order to grow their mutually beneficial business, deliver drugs for them, or take out competing gangs. Both the criminals of the underworld and those of the state are driven by money: ultimately, human suffering is a non-factor. It is this indivisible relationship between police, gangs, and the drug commodity which ensure poor communities like Overcome remain unpredictable, violent places, creating a state of vulnerability for all who have to live in them.

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