The Impact Of Negative Social Feedback On The Sense Of Self Of Police Officers In Cape Town

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Declaration

I declare that this dissertation is my own unaided work save for the stated extent in the acknowledgements.

This dissertation has not been submitted and will not be submitted for a degree at any other university.

Signed by candidate

Marcus Crede

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Abstract

A theoretical and empirical investigation into the impact of negative social feedback on the sense of self of police officer was conducted.

At a theoretical level, an extensive literature review established that police work is often characterised by negative social feedback and that such feedback can be linked to a number of negative consequences. The literature review also focused on the need for self-enhancement and self-consistency as well as reviewing the frameworks of Mead and James; thereby establishing a theoretical basis for the claim that negative social feedback may impact negatively on the sense of self.

The empirical component consists of qualitative interviews that were conducted with 13 police officers and 7 police psychologists to investigate the impact of negative social feedback from members of the public and the media on the sense of self of police officers. Interview data was analysed using Kvale's content analysis method. Findings include that: a) negative social feedback is a common occurrence for police officers; b) such feedback is stressful; c) such feedback impacts negatively on both the structure and content of the self; d) this impact on the self is significantly strenghtened by the perceived absence of positive regard from police management, government, the courts, and the media.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

This thesis outlines a qualitative, interview-based investigation into the existence of negative social feedback received by police officers in the Cape Town Metropole from the communities in which they work and society as a whole, as well as the impact that such negative feedback may have on the sense of self of police officers. The type of negative feedback examined includes direct verbal and physical abuse, as well as negative reports on the police in the media.

Given the nature of the topic under investigation this thesis is comprised of two parts: one theoretical, the other empirical. The theoretical component covers four chapters. Firstly, the author has attempted to establish that there is sufficient evidence in relevant literature to suggest that police officers in general, and South African police officers specifically, are faced with a high degree of real, or perceived, hostility from the communities in which they work (Chapter 2). Secondly, the author has, in Chapter 3, reviewed the frameworks of William James (1890) and George Herbert Mead (1934) which establish how regard from others impacts on the development and maintenance of the sense of self of the individual. Chapters 4 and 5 review the literature regarding the individual's need for self-enhancement and self-consistency respectively; two components of a healthy sense of self identified by both James and Mead.

The empirical component of the thesis consists of 20 in-depth, semi-structured interviews conducted with members of the SAPS as well as with psychologists working for the Psychological Services of the SAPS. These interviews attempted to establish whether police officers believe that they encounter negative social feedback from the communities in which they work, and what the impact of such feedback is on the individual receiving the feedback. The utilised methodology is outlined and justified in Chapter 6 while the results of the interviews are summarised in Chapter 7. Chapter 8 contains a full discussion of the implications of these findings as well as their relationship to the theoretical issues discussed in Chapters 2, 3, 4, and 5.

Relevance of the Investigation

Before embarking on a detailed discussion of the various theoretical positions that are relevant to this research activity it is important to establish both the relevance of a study that focuses on the self and the relevance of a study that focuses on the possible negative impact of negative social feedback on the selves of South African police officers.

The Relevance Of The Self

A discussion that is concerned with the nature of the selves of a set of individuals, such as police officers must, of course, establish why the self is important to the well being of the individual.

Concern with the self, identity, personality, or personhood of individuals can be traced back to: the Ancient Hindu's and Socrates (Levin, 1993); St. Augustine (Freeman, 1993); LeBon (Lindskold & Propst, 1981); and the likes of Pascal, Hobbes, and Machiavelli (Gergen, 1987). Even though a number of philosophers (e.g. Hume, Ryle, Russell) as well as the behavioural school of psychology contest the very existence of the self, it is the idea of the self that underpins much of modern psychology (Rosenberg, 1979) as is evidenced by the profusion of alternate terms used to describe it (e.g. Sherif and Cantril's ego; Erikson's identity; Allport's proprium). (Interested readers are referred to the Broughton (1986) and Levin (1993) for excellent texts on the development of theories of the self.) While the debate as to the existence of the self continues, it is probably safe to argue that the this occupation with the self through the ages and across cultures, as well as the sheer breadth of literature on the matter reflects the key realisation that the self is central to the manner in which we experience ourselves and the world in which we are located and thus determines directly the individual's psychological well-being. This thesis thus takes the position that the experience of having a self, and of being a self, is in itself sufficient reason for investigations into the subject matter.

Defining The Self

In 1979, Rosenberg began his book with the statement that: *"It is somewhat astonishing to think that after decades of theory and research on the self-concept, investigators are as far as ever from agreeing on what it is or what it includes"* (p. 3). In the two decades since this statement was made, little advance has been made in the attempt at a consensual definition (Casey, 1995). A degree of consensus does however appear to exist if one examines some of the preferred definitions of authors. Many of these authors have been able to succinctly explain why the study of the self is so important for the development of a greater understanding of the individual's psychological well being.

For William James (1890), one of the first theorists of the self, the self determines the manner in which we experience daily life given that the source and origin of all reality is purely subjective and it is the self that guides the specific interpretation we give to our world.

> *As thinkers with emotional reaction, we give what seems to us a still higher degree of reality to whatever things we select and emphasise and turn to with a will. These are our living realities; and not only these, but all the other things which are intimately connected with these* (James, 1890, p. 925).

Many other theorists share this view that the self is crucial to the manner in which we experience and make sense of both the world and ourselves. For Mead (1934, p. 135), for instance, the self is important inasmuch as we "*organise our memories upon the string of self*". Similarly, Harre (1987, p. 42) argued that the self is that: "*... inner unity to which all personal experience belongs*", whereas for Rosenberg (1979, p. 7) it is: "*the totality of the individuals thoughts and feelings having reference to himself as an object*" or alternatively "*the picture of the self*". Rhodewalt and Agustsdottir (1986, p. 47) echoed these thoughts by referring to the self as: "*a personal awareness, arising out of his [or her] interaction with the environment, of his [or her] own beliefs, values, attitudes, the links between them, and their implication for his behaviour.*" Kuiper, MacDonald, and Derry (1983, p. 193), in turn, propose that the self is a "*memory structure that is deeply involved in the interpretation, transformation, organisation, and memory for personal information*".

Other authors that see the self as informing the manner in which the individual experiences the world and him/herself, as well unifying this experience include Bruner and Kalmar (1998); Denzin (1987); Gergen (1991); Goffman (1959); and Oyserman and Markus (1993).

For all these authors the self is thus central to the manner in which the individual interprets and experiences both the world in which he/she is located and (possibly more importantly) him/herself. Events that negatively impact on the self will thus also impact on both the manner in which experiences are interpreted and the way that the individual feels about him/herself and will therefore also affect psychological well-being.

The Relevance Of A Study Of The Self For The SAPS

Having established why the self is a worthy topic of consideration it remains to demonstrate why particular attention should be devoted to the experience of the self of the South African police officer. Three broad reasons present themselves.

Firstly, it is important to attempt to gain a greater understanding of the factors underlying the disproportionally high number of suicides among South African police members (Nel & Steyn,

1997), as well as the high absenteeism rate and high turnover rate (personal conversation, police psychologist, December 1999). Most of the authors that have attempted to gain an understanding of the particular difficulties that face the SAPS member (reviewed in the following chapter) have done so from a perspective of stress. The predominant assumption has been that dangerous working conditions, coupled with factors such as poor pay result in a level of stress that the individual is often not able to cope with. This author however believes that an alternate explanation is required, particularly in the face of figures which show that SAPS suicides almost tripled from 1991 to 1994 (Nel & Steyn, 1996) – a time when many of the stress factors such as dangerous working conditions due to political unrest should have decreased. The possibility presents itself that it is not only stress, but also a fundamentally negative sense of self, that is manifesting itself in the high suicide, alcoholism and absenteeism rate noted above. An investigation of the sense of self of police officers may thus offer new insights into some of the problems facing the SAPS. As Lester, Leitner, and Posner (1984) note, we should be concerned about the impact of stress on the police officer not only out of concern for their well being but also because their well-being is so critical for society.

The second reason, is that police work in South Africa appears to be characterised by a number of factors which make the impact of hostile working conditions on the self more likely. These include: the link established between the police and Apartheid in the minds of many South Africans; low job availability, which makes it unlikely that an individual officer would resign from his/her job if he/she found it to be impacting negatively on him/her, the presence of a whole host of other stressful job factors such as exposure to violence, poor pay, and shift work, and the presence of repressive coping styles among many police officers. The existence of all of these factors is established in the next chapter.

The third reason is that even within the general field of Occupational and Industrial Psychology most of the research that has focused on the possible negative impact of work on the individual has done so from the perspective of stress. The author has found astonishingly few studies that have concerned themselves with the impact of work on the self. This is surprising given that the study of and concern with the self is so widespread in the general psychological literature.

The following chapter reviews the extensive evidence that suggests that police work in South Africa and in other countries is characterised by a poor relationship with the public and that this poor relationship can be linked to a number of adverse psychological changes. The three subsequent chapters will outline the theoretical basis for our concern that negative social feedback

presented to the South African police officer during the course of his/her work activities is likely to impact negatively on the manner in which he/she views the world as well as the manner in which the individual views him/herself i.e. that there is likely to be some negative impact on the self.

Chapter 2: Review Of Police Literature

Introduction

As already noted in the previous chapter, it is necessary to first review existing literature on the police in order to establish whether or not the police do, in fact, tend to experience negative social feedback from the communities in which they work before attempting to understand how such negative social feedback may impact on the sense of self of police officers. This chapter is presented in two parts. The first part examines research evidence from countries other than South Africa regarding the existance of poor police-community relationships, the psychological impact of this relationship, and factors contributing to the negative impact of the relationship.

Given that our concern lies with the South African Police Services it is necessary to not only examine generic police working conditions as revealed by research from countries such as the USA, the United Kingdom, Australia, and India, but also the specific context in which the South African Police Services are located. It is this specific context which may add insight into the unique complexities of the relationship between the community and the police as well as the impact of this relationship. The second part thus examines factors that are specific to South Africa which increase the likelihood of poor police-community relationships, as well as reviewing evidence that suggests that such a poor relationship does exist and that it results in negative psychological consequences.

Research From Other Countries

In the stress literature, police work is a frequently examined occupation due to the perception that it is one of the most stressful careers and is thus likely to impact negatively on the individual police officer (e.g. Beutler, Nussbaum & Meredith, 1988; Blackmore, 1978, in Alkus & Padesky, 1980; Burke, 1987, 1993; Burke & Deszca, 1986; Reiser & Geiger, 1989), or his/her family (e.g. Beehr, Johnson, & Nieva, 1995). Authors such as Burke (1987); Hageman (1982); Sigler and Wilson (1988), as well as Nel and Steyn (1997) draw attention to the higher than average prevalence of heart disease, diabetes, cancer, suicide, alcoholism, and divorce among police officers as well as high rates of agression, moodiness, depression and emotional numbness - all of which suggests that police officers are confronted by a set of circumstances that are no longer manageable. This is especially surprising given that police officers normally start work in prime mental and physical health, having passed through background checks that are significantly more stringent than for most other occupations (Pendleton, Stotland, Spiers, & Kirsch, 1989).

No research, however, has focused *explicitly and specifically* on the role that negative relationships with the community play in the well-being of the police officer, while some investigations into police stress (e.g. Burke, 1993; Kaufmann & Beehr, 1989; Kirkcaldy, Cooper, and Ruffalo, 1995) have failed to even consider that strained relationships with the public/community *may* be one of the many police stressors. Much of the research and focus of the police itself still appears to be on Critical Incident Stress and Post-traumatic Stress Disorder (e.g. Burgers, 1994). Nevertheless, a surprising number of studies, briefly discussed below, show that strained relationships with the public are perceived to be one of the most stressful facets of police work, despite the fact that the intended focus of such studies was not on the poor relationship between the police and public. This is especially surprising given that the vast majority of this research originates in countries (e.g. the United Kingdom; USA) where the relationship between community and police has not been as tainted by historical factors as may be the case in South Africa.

The Impact of Poor Police-Community Relations

The key contribution that poor relations with the community make to the experience of stress for the police officer was first empirically shown by Kroes and his colleagues (Kroes & Gould, 1979; Kroes, Hurrell, & Margolis, 1974; Kroes, Margolis, & Hurrell, 1974) (all cited in Waters & Martelli, 1989). Since then similar findings have been made by authors like Alkus and Padesky (1980); Burke (1993); Violanti (1992); Violanti and Aron (1994); Violanti and Marshall (1983); and Waters and Martelli (1989), even though this was not the intended focus of their resepctive investigations. Surprisingly, many of these authors found that negative feedback from the public was often perceived as more stressful than other inherent factors such as long working hours. Alkus and Padesky, for instance, note that stressors, such as negative feedback, which threaten the sense of positive self-image are perceived as most bothersome by officers. Moyer (1986) also argued that much of the early literature on police stress (e.g. Hageman, 1978, in Moyer) illustrated that the unique stress of being a police officer was the result of both the hostility of the general public toward the officer and the physical dangers of the occupation.

Even in situations where actual hostility from the public may be fairly low, police officers often believe such a hostility to exist. A series of three surveys of hundreds of police officers and members of the public conducted by Belson (1975) showed that, even in the United Kingdom, police officers believed that a large portion of members of the public (50%) do not feel comfortable in their presence, and that 55% of all young people felt some degree of fear around

police officers. Furthermore Belson's findings reveal that the police believe that the a large part of the public perceives them to have at least some of a whole host of negative characteristics, including: secretive (95%); rude (81%); dishonest (79%); interfering (89%); frightening (74%); bullying (73%); and distant (88%).

A possible explanation for the fact that hostility from the public is experienced as stressful by police officers may be that the individual officer feels excluded from the community in which he/she is working. The dislike of police officers ranges from minority groupings, such as the Asian and African minority groupings in the United Kingdom (Belson, 1975), to social workers and laywers (Flanagan & Vaughn, 1996).

Also relevant to the hypothesis that officers feel excluded and isolated are the findings of Lester (1982a) who illustrated that state police officers, unlike municipal police officers, experienced the poor attitude of the public as significantly stressful. A possible explanation is that municipal police officers have a closer relationship to the communities in which they work and thus receive more positive, or less negative, feedback than do state officers who are likely to be relatively unknown to the communities in which they work.

Interestingly, even when compared to other, seemingly similarly stressful occupational groups such as firefighters and emergency medical technicians, police officers scored significantly higher on emotional exhaustion, depersonalisation, and chronic stress (Anson & Bloom, 1988) a finding that Anson and Bloom put, in part, down to their frequent contact with an unpredictable and hostile public as well as working in an indifferent police bureaucracy. The Anson and Bloom study furthermore suggests that probation officers and prison guards experience just as much stress as police officers, possibly because they are faced with similar circumstances i.e hostile "clients" and an indifferent justice system.

The Proximity-Control Hypothesis of Malloy and Mays (1984) further illustrates the impact of the often poor relationship between community and police by stating that police stress "*...is functionally related to the physical and psychological proximity of the officer to society necessitated by the occupational role and the degree to which this interaction requires the social control of others*" (p. 211). As an example, Malloy and Mays note that a white policeman in Harlem or a black policeman assigned to duty in Marin County, California, is likely to have a fundamentally different work experience to a deputy sheriff in a sleepy Southern town. In the later

case psychological proximity is far greater while the need to exercise social control over others is probably far less regular.

More specifically the theory predicts that the impact on the officer of a negative social encounter will be a function of the strength of the interaction, the immediacy (closeness in space and time), and times the number of sources (people) providing the feedback. An officer who experiences intense verbal abuse (strength) relatively often (time and space) by a large number of different people (sources) is thus predicted to be impacted upon relatively strongly.

The Impact Of The Media

In addition to the presence of direct, face-to-face negative feedback many officers also face frequent media reports that portray the police in negative terms. A brief examination of four South African newspapers over the past year (1999) by the author, yielded 115 main newspaper articles that focused on some negative element within the SAPS. These do not include the daily articles outlining allegeded police incompetence. While the police in other countries may not be exposed to the same degree of public criticism it would appear that negative publicity is perceived to be highly stressful, even in countries such as the USA and UK.

In a study by White, Lawrence, Biggerstaff, and Grubb (1985), using the Spielberger Police Stress Survey, negative press accounts were ranked as the ninth highest stressor on the 85 item scale, ranking above: ineffectiveness of the judicial system; high speed chases; and excessive paperwork. Public criticism of the police (24th place); lack of recognition for good work (26th place); and experiencing negative attitudes toward officers (31st place) were also ranked relatively highly. The role of the media in creating and maintaining negative expectancies and images of the police was also outlined by Flanagan and Vaughn (1996).

More specifically, Brown and Campbell (1990) showed that senior police managers were most likely to be affected by criticism from the media as opposed to constables or sergeants although for constables this was the second most frequently reported stressor, after "lack of consultation". One police chief in the United Kingdom once even claimed that the police were: "*without doubt the most abused, the most unfairly criticised and the most silent minority in the country*" (in Chibnall, 1975, p. 67). Chibnall hypothesises that the often negative public image is the result of individual incidents of police misdemeanours being represented by a sensationalist media as representing the average police officer (e.g. the Rodney King incident in the USA). This may explain why, for the police in the United Kingdom, where police officers are traditionally held in

extremely high regard by the public, the interaction with civilians was cited as the third most frequently occurring source of stress for internal sources (Brown & Campbell, 1994). It is this stressful interaction with the public, argues Moyer (1986), that results in police officers distancing themselves from their jobs in order to cope.

The Link To Self-Esteem

Although much of the research outlined above has focused on stress in particular, Lester (1986) was able to illustrate that police officers with high levels of subjectively perceived stress (from whatever source) had significantly lower levels of self-esteem than their colleagues with low levels of perceived stress. Pendleton et al (1989) also found that the police had significantly lower self esteem than municipal workers (at p=.001) although they did not attempt to assign a specific cause to this finding. Interestingly, municipal workers were found to experience higher levels of state anxiety; trait anxiety and anxiety on the job. In fact, self esteem was the only dimension on which officers scored worse that municipal officers. This finding is interesting given that in a dangerous occupation such as policing high levels of anxiety could realistically be expected.

Changes In Individuals

Although few studies focused specifically on the possible impact of police work on the individual's personality a number of surprising findings were made in the course of relatively routine stress investigation that seemed to establish that police work is frequently accompanied by a number of negative personal changes.

Beutler, Nussbaum, and Meredith (1988) were able to illustrate convincingly that: "*...police service is associated with adverse psychological changes among officers*" (p. 506). Using the Minnesota Mutliphasic Personality Inventory they were able to show significant increases in somatic symptoms; anxiety; and alcohol vulnerability in new officers in the two-year period after being recruited. Further changes, in the same direction, were observed over a four-year period. The researchers attributed these increases to stress levels but it is also possible that they represent more fundamental changes in the officers. Stradling, Crowe, and Tuohy (1993) showed increasing levels of apprehension and social isolation and lowered levels of self-worth and commitment among police recruits after going through police training. Similarly Patterson (1989) illustrated the existence of an increase in stress levels in recruits over time, a phenomenon that was, in part, attributed to an increase in cynicism toward the job; a phenomenon that was also noted by Violanti and Marshall (1983). Kirkham (1975, in Alkus & Padesky, 1980) found that officers

were prone to generalised overhostility and even paranoia, possibly the result of perceived hostility from the environment in which they operate.

Similarly, psychological burnout, defined as "*negative personal changes which occur over time in helping professionals working in demanding or frustrating jobs*" (Burke, 1987, p. 175) was found to exist among police officers by Violanti and Marshall (1983); and Wallace, Roberg and Allen (1985). Both Burke (1993), and Gaines and Jermier (1983) furthermore linked burnout amongst police officers to experiences of *emotional exhaustion* and *depersonalisation*; respectively defined as: "*the feeling of being emotionally overextended....and no longer being able to function at an adequate psychological level*" and: "*a dislike of the clientele being served; in extreme cases, attitudes becoming so negative that employees believe that clients deserve their troubles*" (Wallace, Roberg, and Allen, 1985, p. 550).

In particular, the findings of Burke (1993), and Gaines and Jermier (1983) suggest that the police officer's subservience to the public as well as the extreme degree of psychological separation from the public is resulting in a state of emotional exhaustion that is characterised by: general loss of feeling and concern, trust, interest, and spirit; fatigue; irritability; frustration; intention to turnover; and negative feeling states. All of these consequences appear to increase with age, as well as length of service, suggesting a build up of stressors.

Police working condition such as social isolation and problems with clients have also been linked to emotional detachment and work alienation (Burke, 1987, 1993; Cherniss, in Burke, 1987); suspiciousness, a sense of apprehension, and unfriendliness (Alkus & Padesky, 1980); aggression and depression (Burke & Deszca, 1986); pessimism, neuroticism, and low self-confidence (Pestonjee, 1992); as well as cynicism and deviant behaviour (Violanti & Marshall, 1983). As argued by Alkus and Padesky (1980, p. 58): "*Police suffer personal rejection as a function of their job and may be oversensitive to signs of hostility.... neighbours may deride them.*" All of these changes appear to be at odds with the initial, highly motivated state that police recruits normally join the police force in (Berold, 1999). It must also be noted that the authors found that these behaviours were not coping responses as they did not reduce the experience of stress but rather represented more fundamental changes in the individual officer.

The social rejection wich these authors found police officers to experience suggests that police officers experience a degree of victimisation which can also result in an intense disturbance of the

individual's sense of social order and sense of community inasmuch as the idea that there exist shared values and beliefs is undercut (Fischer, 1984)

Factors Hindering The Coping Process

The impact of negative social feedback on police officers is only increased in the presence of a number of factors that merely serve to hinder the process of coping with the negative regard of others (e.g. Goodman, 1990; Sigler & Wilson, 1988; Tang & Hammontree, 1992). These factors include the social isolation of police officers; a cult of masculinity; and the fact that many of the coping processes that are implemented by police organisations do not address the cause of the problem.

Isolation

Police officers appear to experience high degree of social isolation. Both Goodman (1990), and Sigler and Wilson (1988), for instance, draw attention to the need for social support to balance out the persistent negative feedback they receive, but found that officers feel little support from the judicial system in which they operate; particularly the courts. In addition, many officers suffer from both psychological and physical separation from friends and family that could provide the required support (Marks, 1995; Pendleton et al, 1989). Callan (1989), Holdaway (1989), and Punch (1979) (all cited in Brown & Campbell, 1994) as well as Alkus and Padesky (1980), and Mulcahy (1995) all draw attention to evidence that suggests that a police force is usually isolated from the outside world and that officers tend to loose contact with non-work friends. Support from superiors and other organisational stuctures is also frequently experienced as being inadequate (e.g. Berold, 1999).

A Cult of Masculinity

The coping process is further handicapped by a well-established cult of masculinity that exists in police forces and the fact that police officers even invest effort in accentuating the physical danger element of their jobs to maintain this image (Jermeir, Gaines & McIntosh, 1989, in Brown & Campbell) as they believe that they are in total control of their environment (Reiser & Geiger, 1989).

It is this artificially created norm of ruggedness that may lead to a culture of repressive coping among officers - dubbed the "John Wayne Syndrome" (Gresty & McLelland, 1989, in Brown & Campbell, 1990). This phenomenon is well establised in the police stress literature having been referred to by Alkus and Padesky (1980); Elison and Buckhout (1981); Melville (1999); Mulcahy

(1995); Munshi (1998); Reiser and Geiger (1989); Sandler (1989); Violanti (1992); and Violanti and Aron (1994). The result of this culture of repressive coping is that officers neither seek help nor admit to themselves or others that a problem even exists. The "rugged individualist" style of coping has thus been significantly correlated to drinking; emotional exhaustion; and depersonalisation (Beehr, Johnson, & Nieva, 1995; Burke, 1993; Merten, 2000) a phenomenon that may be partly due to the traditional expectancies of masculinity that the mostly male police officers feel they have to conform to i.e. hard working; emotionally stable and controlled.Conforming to this overly masculine image is doubly difficult, notes Alkus and Padesky, given that the police are almost constantly under public scrutiny, even when off-duty.

Similarly, Tang and Hammontree (1992) illustrated that "hardy" officers (i.e. officers who see events as controlable, challenging, and alienating) in fact illustrate higher absenteeism rates under high stress conditions than do non-hardy officers. The authors speculate that this may be due to repressive coping styles that lead to a build up of stress. This build-up of stress is made even more likely given that many police officers are highly suspicious of any attempt to help them (Alkus & Padesky, 1980; Beutler, Nussbaum, & Meredith, 1988).

Suggested Coping Processes

A full review of possible treatments and coping techniques is beyond the scope of this thesis but a number of authors have voiced some ideas as to how the impact of the police work environment may be reduced. Typical suggestions for reducing stress in officers thus include; better selection procedures; monitoring for signs of burnout; job redesign; better training programs; and exercise facilities as well as emotional, instrumental and social support (e.g. Kaufmann & Behr, 1989; Lester, 1982b; Lester et al, 1984; Wallace, Roberg, & Allen, 1985). Hurrell (1995) however argues that this focus on traditional stress management techniques is not ethical or particularly effective given that the focus is on the employee to change rather than a concerted attempt being made to change the environmental conditions, such as a hostile public, that have caused the negative impact on the individual. Hurrell correctly notes that most stressors that face employees, as well as police officers, are beyond their control.

In addition, the overwhelming focus on the individual ignores the need for supervisory support to prevent the officer to both deal with clients in an effective manner and not turn his/her frustrations inward toward him/herself, a process that often results in depression, suicide, and alcoholism (Elison & Buckhout, 1981).

The South African Environment

Conclusions regarding the conditions that prevail in South Africa need not only arise from an extrapolation of the data from other countries despite the fact that there are likely to exist a number of commonalities between the experiences of police officers of different countries. The South African police officer is faced with a degree of hostility that appears to be generic to police work across countries, but also has to contend with the added hostility that is resultant from a set of historical forces, particularly Apartheid, that continue to inform the manner in which the police is viewed and treated by the community. Although the primary reason for the poor police-community relationship is likely to be the role that the police is perceived to have played during Apartheid, recent studies suggest that the SAPS is not only seen as a tool of political oppression but is now also frequently perceived to be corrupt and inefficient (e.g. Stevens & Yach, 1995); with both images impacting negatively on the individual police officer.

The Apartheid Stigma

The strength of negative sentiment against the police is firmly rooted in the South African past but especially in the events of the 1980s. Political organisations such as the African National Congress and United Democratic Front as well as trade unions launched the most conserted effort to end the Apartheid State at this time. As a response the government not only virtually outlawed extra-parliamentary opposition but also introduced detention without trial as well as sending both the army and police into the townships with almost unlimited powers to overcome the resistance (Nathan, 1989). This crisis deepened with the declaration of the state of emergency in 1985 that granted the security forces even more sweeping powers. The result was that the police became associated with the disruption of meetings; detention of community leaders; the violent dispersal of marches and funerals; the targeting of religious, cultural, and civic organisations, as well as random house-to-house searches and even the torture and harassment of political activists (Albert, 1978; Anstey & Stanley, 1994; Berold, 1999; Coleman, 1999; Melville, 1999; Nathan, 1989; Nel & Steyn, 1997). Authors such as Goldstone (1994), Melville (1999); Rauch, Levin, Lue, and Ngubeni (1995); and Van Eyk (1993) speak of a mistrust and hatred of the police by many communities that can be probably be attributed to memories of police activities during the Apartheid period such as those described by Cook (1986) (see also 'No easy way', 1994; 'tough forensic work', 1994). The roots of this poor relationship can thus be safely traced back to the Apartheid era and, to a lesser degree, the lack of community involvement in the policing activities.

The result was that particularly, but not exclusively, black communities acquired an overwhelmingly negative view of the police force. For many township residents the distinction between the police and army became blurred; resulting in an society that saw the police force as representing the enemy almost in the same way as citizens of other countries would view an invading army (Chikane, 1989).

Indicative of the poor relationship between African communities and the police are the words of a Crossroads resident who noted: "*If one of the police or army come toward you, you are so scared. You know that the first thing they may do is beat you up, and then shoot you.*" (in Nathan, 1989, p. 67). Those who suffered at the hands of police (or have seen others suffer) will never know whether the same or worse will not happen again (Banton, 1964) and the negative perception of the police thus becomes rooted in memory and cannot easily be removed by a change in government.

The lingering suspicion and hostility toward the police made even more understandable if one considers that many peoples' experience of policing in South Africa is restricted to the notorious security police or the often brutal Kitskonstabels (Institute of Criminology, 1995). The Institute of Criminology outlines how many black policemen suffered and continue to suffer a form of segregation from their communities due to their occupation and the associated negative image. A study conducted in 1987 by the Institute of Criminology clearly illustrates the degree to which communities fear and dislike the police services in their communities:

- 80% felt that the black officers treated people badly
- 64% felt less safe from crime after the introduction of the kitskonstabels
- 86% said that they either heard or witnessed kitskonstabels swearing at community members
- 65% reported having seen people being beaten by the kitskonstabels.

Recent relevations about police activities during the Apartheid era at the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) have served to not only reinforce the negative memories associated with the police but has also resulted in a possible strengthening of negative sentiments and has destroyed any remaining moral authority that the police may have had. Stevens and Yach (1995) also argue that black communities will continue to view the SAPS as an illegitimate force for the foreseeable future. Research by Wintersmith (1974) supports this by showing that in the United States, a country where the police has not held the type of association in the minds of communities as is the case in South Africa, there is still a marked suspicion of the police. Words used by members of

black communities in the USA to describe the police include: enemy; harassers; corrupt; brutalisers; intimidators; and vigilantes (Wintersmith, 1974, p. 91).

Research on the impact of these negative feelings on members of the SAPS during the Apartheid era is limited but Sandler (1989), discussing the experiences of the army and police in the black townships in the 1980s, argues that they were aware of the feelings of anger aimed at them as well as the frustration and pain in the environment in which they were working. This awareness led to a process of whereby their memories of their own lives were split from the reality that they were confronted with; a process that, in turn, resulted in feelings of loneliness, isolation, and sadness. Sandler also notes that soldiers who served in the townships in the 1980s experienced anger, hatred, and resentment toward loved ones at home who were isolated from this experience.

A Changing Perception

The SAPS has been at the forefront of the political changes taking place in South Africa, not only policing a changing society but also undergoing a process of organisational transformation itself (Cronje, de Beer, Scharf, & Venter, 1997; Rauch, Levin, Lue, & Ngubeni, 1995;). The tarnished image of the police has however remained largely intact (Levin, Ngubeni, & Simpson, 1994).

Stevens and Yach (1995) for instance, illustrated that the poor police-community relationship in South Africa is only partly the result of a lingering association between the police and Apartheid brutalities. Allegations of police involvement in criminal activities; perceptions that the police are partisan in dealing with community conflict (e.g. gang-on-gang violence); as well as a widespread perception that the police are incompetent (see also Goko, 1999; Schronen, 1999a) have further reduced the quality of the police-commmunity relationship. In addition it must be remembered that many of the laws that the police enforce are in themselves unpopular e.g. the raiding of shebeens, and thereby harm the police-community relationship (Albert, 1978; Meduna, 1993).

The fact that attitudes toward the police have not changed significantly despite the political transformation, and may in-fact have worsened, is illustrated when considering some of the more overt symptoms of the poor relationship. The Judge Goldstone led inquiry (1994) into attacks on the police force clearly shows that since the start of political transformation in the early 1990s the hostilities toward the police have not decreased. Indeed, 1993 saw a 106% increase in the number of attacks on police officers when compared to 1992, while police-deaths rose from 96 to 176 in the same period. Possibly even more disturbing is the fact that 56% of all these deaths occurred while officers were off-duty (Goldstone, 1994). A total of 1090 officers were killed in South

Africa between 1994 and November 1999 (Nxusani, 1999). The increasingly dangerous working conditions are also indirectly illustrated by a 1978 study which describes police officers entering a dark alley without fear to disperse a small group of men (Albert, 1978). It is unlikely that SAPS members would currently engage in such behaviour.

The toll on police officers is however not only felt through attacks and murders. The general work environment leads to what Nel and Steyn (1997) refer to as *an "overexposure to death and disaster"* (p. 317). Police officers can thus be described as secondary victims as they often become victims of crime or are forced to engage in violence themselves. Not surprisingly the suicide rate among police officers is twelve times as high as among the general population (Nel & Steyn, 1997). Suicides amongst officers rose from 65 in 1991 to 172 in 1994 (Burgers, 1994; Nel & Steyn, 1997) while the number of officers boarded for psychological reasons rose from 37 to 540 in the same period. Turnover in the SAPS since 1991 has also risen to a massive 10% per annum (Burgers, 1994).

This thesis takes the position that the extremely high incidence of murders, and attacks on police officers outlined above (see also Nxusani, 1999) as well as the equally high occurrence of suicides and mental distress can, at least partly, be attributed to the extremely poor relationship that exists between many South African communities and the police force as well as the expressed hostilities that arise out of this poor relationship. Gulle, Trudeaux, and Foster (1998), for instance, illustrated that the poor police-community relationship is a significant cause of stress amongst SAPS members. Similar findings were made Anstey and Stanley (1994), Marks (1995), and Van Rooyen (1987), who argue that the lack of respect, acknowledgment, and positive feedback from the community is resulting in feelings of isolation; and feelings of being misunderstood among officers.

The findings of Gulle, Trudeaux, and Foster (1998) relating to the SAPS are also interesting when compared with those of Violanti and Aron (1994) relating to the USA police force. Both studies utilised the same instrumentation (Spielberger Police Stress Survey) and a comparison shows that factors such as: *"personal insult from member of public"; "experiencing negative public attitudes"*; *"distorted press accounts of police"*; and *"public criticisms of police"* were perceived to contribute more to stress in South Africa than in the USA. Other pertinent examples of differences between the USA and South Africa samples include the fact that racial prejudices and conflicts were rated as a high source of stress in South Africa but not in the USA: *"racial issues*

between the SAPS and the public...are generally more stressful than not" (Gulle, Tredoux, & Foster, 1998, p. 133).

Gulle, Tredoux and Foster (1998) furthermore showed that officers, on average, have 5.9 occurrences of negative public attitudes per month and 5.7 occurrences of public criticism of the police per month. These may not appear to be high until one considers what the impact of this would be for another occupation i.e. being publicly criticised every 5 days and experiencing hostility from a member of the public every 5 days. These findings may help to explain the extreme disillusionment that officers undergo after the highlight of graduating after training (Burger, 1994).

The South African Media

Of course face-to-face interactions are not the sole source of negative social feedback. Hardly a day goes past without a media report that attacks the police force in one manner or another (Van Eyk, 1993). A brief review of newspaper reports on the police over the last year (1999) highlights the negative perception that is reflected in such reports. A total of 115 leading articles that focused on some negative aspect of the SAPS were found within five daily newspapers (Argus; Cape Times; Sowetan; Business Day; and Star) - not counting shorter articles that refer to police problems; whereas only about 30 articles were found over the same period that acknowledged any progress that the police was making or highlighted the stress and danger experienced by police officers (e.g. Koopman, 1999; Makgalemele, 1999; Vogel, 1999). The topics covered by the negative reports included: police incompetence (e.g. Ensor, 1999; Friedman, 1999; Gifford, 1999; Goko, 1999; Schronen, 1999); corruption (e.g. Schronen, 1999); police brutality (e.g. Altenroxel, 1999; Creswell, 1999;); racism (Gophe, 1999; Kotlolo, 1999; Maluleke, 1999; Steinberg, 1999); and problems such as drunkenness (e.g. Merten, 2000). Television reports on police problems further add to the experience of public criticism.

Changes in the Individual

As argued earlier, the combination of verbal, physical, and media attacks is likely to result in negative changes in the individual police officer. Similar findings have also been made in South Africa. Munshi (1998), for instance found evidence of alcoholism and spousal abuse and that 73% of SAPS members experienced extreme levels of stress. A recent study of police work in the Western Cape also illustrates the change in police officers quite clearly. Berold's (1999) findings indicate clearly that police members initially joined the SAPS in order to serve and help the community, but later developed extreme levels of disillusionment; were embarrassed to be

associated with the police force; did not enjoy their work; and believed that management does not understand the dangers that they face. This disillusionment may also be the result of a tendency for group identity to determine the reaction that an individual officer receives from a given community. The officer has little or no control over how his/her actions are interpreted as it is difficult to establish oneself as an independent and distinctive individual in a social milieu that views the police officer in a set manner. Berold (1999) also found that there was little sense of personal continuity between the work and non-work environment, with most participants indicating that work and non-work lives were kept separate and that they did not even feel as if they could talk to their families for fear of worrying them.

The Impact of Police Changes

In order to overcome the increasing problems in the relationship between the SAPS and communities, community policing has been established (e.g. Cronje, de Beer, Scharf, & Venter, 1997; Rauch, Levin, Lue, & Ngubeni, 1995), but these recent police initiatives at community policing in the SAPS may, in fact, serve to further worsen the relationship between community and police inasmuch as the reputation of being able to deal with the criminal element is diminshed by the need for help from the community (Terry, 1985). The change to a community policing culture is also difficult for officers to manage inasmuch as it requires a change in the behaviour and thinking of officers or is perceived to merely cosmetic (Anstey & Stanley, 1994; Munshi, 1998; Oppler, 1997; Shearing, 1998).

Significant efforts are also being made by the police at transforming the culture, practices, and image of the SAPS. Ironically it is these efforts (e.g. Cronje, de Beer, Scharf, & Venter, 1997; Melville, 1999; Oppler, 1997; Shearing, 1998) that may be contributing to the impact of negative social feedback. Simply put, it is a case of the communities not being ready to accept the new face being put forward by the SAPS; and the reaction thus remains largely unchanged (Levin, Ngubeni, & Simpson, 1994). The impact of the reaction, however, is increased as the discrepancy between expected response and actual response for the police officer is far greater than previously when the police expected a hostile reaction and perhaps understood this reaction far better. It is far easier to deal with negative feedback that one is expecting and can understand than negative feedback that is not anticipated and cannot be linked to any event that would justify such a reaction.

An Alternative Perspective

While the evidence that police officers struggle to cope with negative feedback appears overwhelming it is also necessary to examine some of the contentions of dissenting voices. Not all authors have found that a negative relationship exist between community and police or that public criticism impacts on police officers in a negative manner.

The argument of Hart, Wearing, and Headey (1995), for instance, is two-pronged. Firstly, they argue that Australian police officers perceive organisational stressors to have a greater impact than routine operational stressors e.g. being sworn at by the public.. This argument is however flawed in that the subconscious impact on the individual of these "routine" events is not considered. Indeed this is one of the fundamental problems with the possible impact that police work has on the self. Officers cannot easily "defend themselves" against it, and police management may not even be aware of any impact given that it manifests at a level that is even difficult to think about or analyse (Gergen, 1971; Mead, 1934).

Their second argument is that uplifting experiences such as: assisting victims; dealing with offenders; good relationships with supervisors; having good amenities; enjoying sound relationships with co-workers; and low workload; and the ability to make their own decisions compensate for the negative elements of police work. Attempting to find these same "uplifting" factors in the SAPS would however be difficult. Perceived low organisational support; lack of assistance from the courts; lack of training for interacting with victims; poor pay and facilities; the strain that transformation and affirmative action has placed on relationships; an high workload; and a bureaucratic organisational structure (Gulle, Tredoux, & Foster, 1998) all mean that the uplifting experiences cited by Hart, Wearing, and Headey (1995) can only be generalised to South Africa with a great deal of caution.

In their comprehensive review of police stress literature up to 1984, Malloy and Mays (1984) also cast doubt on the validity of the assertion that police work is one of the most stressful occupations. Police officers were, for instance, shown to not have a significantly lower average age of death; or greater admission to community mental health centre than other high stress occupations such as air-traffic controllers. Similarly, Lester (1979, in Lester, Leitner, & Posner, 1984) found no evidence for exceptionally high levels of mental illness among police officers. The repressive coping that appears to be prevalent among the police may explain why police officers are not

admitted to mental health centres more than other occupations while it is also important to realise that an affected sense of self does not automatically imply mental illness in the police officer.

Authors such as Terry (1985) and Pendleton et al (1989) question whether police work is really as stressful as it is generally thought of as being; their argument being that the image of policing being stressful has been created by police novels and television series as well as psychologists and psychiatrists, and thereafter adopted by police officers in order to increase their leverage in bargaining with police management. As argued by Pendleton et al (1989) "*This is not to argue that police stress is feigned, but is is to argue that evaluation of one's own well being is a subjective matter in part and is subject to at least some social influences, as are all other subjective judments*" (p. 206).

Rather than damaging our argument in any way this contention merely adds to our thesis that social interaction determine how we see ourselves. For if officers are likely to believe that they are in a highly stressful occupation merely because that is the social message even though their job is not stressful then surely it is also possible that the social feedback telling them that they are useless, incompetent, and undesirable will also be believed.

Conclusion

This chapter has established two important points: firstly, that both in South Africa and other countries, there exists an unsatisfactory relationship between police forces and the communities in which they operate; and secondly, that this poor relationship has such a negative impact on police officers that researchers such as Kroes refer to the police as "society's victim" (1976, in Elison & Buckhout, 1981). Also important to realise is that the specific historical factors that exist in South Africa merely serve to exacerbate this poor relationship and thus, possibly, also increase the resultant stress that is experienced.

This chapter has also attempted to go some way toward establishing a need for the specific research under consideration here. No research that the author is aware of has specifically examined the impact of public criticism or the poor police-community relationship on the wellbeing of police officers - a opinion that is backed up by Brown and Campbell (1994) and Kinsey (1990, in Brown and Campbell) respectively. Brown and Campbell do refer to a number of investigations into "anti-police campaigns" that are being undertaken by the police in the United

Kingdom but these investigations are focusing more on the reasons behind such campaigns than on the potential impact such campaigns are having on the well-being of the individual officer.

Even within the police the focus is primarily on helping officers to cope with Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and Critical Incident Stress (e.g. Burgers, 1994). A lack of resources as well as the overwhelming immediacy of traumatic events such as exposure to death and extreme danger mean that the Psychological Services of the SAPS have few resources to devote to other possible sources of psychological distress (Wessels, 1999, from interview). Even PTSD appears to impact on the self inasmuch as it frequently accompanied by feelings of self-doubt, guilt, and ego-injury (Reiser & Geiger, 1989).

The research discussed in this chapter has focused almost exclusively on the sources of stress for the police officer. This approach is, of course, valid but it is the author's opinion that the impact of a "stress" factor such as negative social feedback can be examined at a deeper level than that of stress. The focus on stress - defined as: *"the subjective experience of being overwhelmed by demands for which one's usual way of coping are inadequate or for which one has no ready-made ways of coping available"* (Strumpfer, 1990, p. 2) may prevent us from fully understanding the long-term impact which this stressor has on the person inasmuch as it is really only saying that the event represents a negative, unpleasant experience (Brown & Campbell, 1990).

In addition there appears to be an over-reliance by researchers on either medical records (e.g. Hageman, 1982) or self-report measures (e.g. Lester, Leitner, & Posner, 1984; Patterson, 1992; Pendleton et al, 1989; Violanti, & Marshall, 1983) in deciding whether or not officers are stressed (or impacted upon). Self report measures are however limited inasmuch as the mechanisms which we are interested are not well understood by police officers who already engage in repressive coping (e.g. Alkus & Padesky, 1980; Brown & Campbell, 1990; Sandler, 1989; Violanti & Aron, 1994) and may have little experiences on reflecting on their experiences.

We are thus faced with broadly two categories of stressors. The first are those that represent what may be termed acute stressors i.e. incidents that occur relatively seldom but are experienced as overwhelmingingly negative when they do occur, such as being shot at, seeing someone being killed, or shooting someone. The second category are what may be termed chronic stressors i.e. incidents that occur on a regular basis but are seen to be part of the job and thus do not have the same legitimacy in terms of being a cause of stress. This category would include: being overworked; negative reactions from the public; and lack of support. Chronic stressors are

particularly interesting for a number of reasons. Firstly, it may be that officers do not consciously experience these events as particularly stressful given that there exist so many other events that are more obviously stressful and that these chronic stressors as a result are not consciously acknowledged or sought assistance for. Secondly, because they are not acknowledged there is no formal coping process or helping structure in place which makes it more likely that long-term impact will be negative (Singer & Davidson, 1991; Lazarus, 1993). Thirdly, and perhaps most importantly, these chronic stressors, occur relatively frequently and continously and are thus viewed as normal and acceptable. These three factors suggest that the police officer is located in an environment which not only provides him/her with continuous negative messages about him/herself but also makes it difficult to cope with or even acknowledge these messages given that the impact is likely to not be immediately visible or easily connected with the stressor.

It is the aim of the following chapter to discuss how such an environment could, theoretically, impact on the individual's sense of self.. In particular, we will consider how William James and George Herbert Mead conceived the formation and maintenance of the self and how negative social feedback may impact on the self.

Introduction

The prevailing approaches to mental well-being in the police, reviewed in the previous chapter, appear to hold that the negative relationship with the community represents a set of circumstances that the individual officer is unable to cope with and thus results in the experience of stress. This chapter will however attempt to establish a different interpretation regarding the impact of this relationship on the police officer. In its review of the frameworks of William James and George Herbert Mead respectively, this chapter seeks to demonstrate that there exist theoretical positions that suggest that continuous hostility from a given community will impact negatively on the sense of self of the police officer who works in that community. This interpretation does not, of course, exclude the fact that hostility from the public is also experienced as stressful but suggests that the impact on the individual may also manifest at a deeper level, impacting on the manner in which the police officer views him/herself and the social world in which he/she is located.

The Framework of William James

William James represents one of the most fundamental shifts and developments in our understanding of the self given that his understanding of the self was the first to actively incorporate a social component to the self. This is not to say that the understanding of humans as social beings or the impact of the social world on the development of the self was completely new to philosophy and psychology before William James. The likes of Kant; Schopenhauer; Hegel; Marx; Kierkegaard; and Heidegger had already discussed how the self is rooted in the *Umwelt*; arises out of interaction with others; and is determined by our experiences as well as shaping the experience itself (Levin, 1993). Nevertheless, James' framework of the self was the first systematic schema that acknowledged and developed the impact of social interactions on the self.

For James the self is constituted of two composite parts: the empirical self or me, and the pure ego; each of which will be briefly examined given their relevance to our discussion.

The Empirical Self

James understood the empirical self to be that which each of us calls me and to be, in turn, made up of three main components: the material self; the social self; and the spiritual self.

The Material Self

The material self is primarily, but not exclusively, a bodily self. Included thus in the material self is the body as a material thing and the sensations arising out of the body but also everything else that is identified with the body (Levin, 1992). James gives the example of the importance of clothes in constituting the self; an idea that would later be developed into the impression management frameworks of Goffman (1959). Levin however argues that all of our possessions and constructions must also be included as constituents of the material self: home; books; car; money; and the occupational life that is built. James (1890, p. 293) also includes occupational life in the material self by arguing that: *"The parts of our wealth most intimately ours are those which are saturated with our labor"*. This object-relational approach to the material self implies that the loss or diminishment of any of these components will result in a diminishment of the self:

> *In its widest possible sense.... a man's Self is the sum total of all he can call his... If they wax and prosper, he feels triumphant; if they dwindle and die away, he feels cast down - not necessarily in the same degree for each thing, but in much the same way for all.* (James, 1890, p. 291)

The Social Self

The social component of the self can be linked to the material self given that James included people in the material self inasmuch as they can be considered a person's possessions. In the explanation of the social self James, however, expands on this approach and acknowledges the importance of recognition from others. The way that an individual feels about him/herself is strongly determined by the attitude of others toward that individual. Positive regard and admiration from those who are important to the individual, termed *"significant others"*, facilitates the experience of positive self-feelings and, likewise, negative feedback from the social environment will result in negative self-regard. In this manner the view that we have of ourselves is constructed by others.

Positive regard from others is so important for James given that he believed that there exists an intrinsic need within all of us for "felt relations" which, in turn, leads to what he terms social self-seeking; a phenomenon that is remarkably similar to Goffman's (1959) impression management. In a noted passage he argued that: *"No more fiendish punishment could be devised, were such a thing physically possible, than that one should be turned loose on society and remain absolutely unnoticed by all the members thereof."* (James, 1890, p. 293)

This need for relationships with others arises partly from the fact that the individual has little objective knowledge of his her/her attributes (assuming that objective knowledge of the self is even theoretically possible) and is therefore reliant on information from outside sources (Harre, 1987). The implication is that information about him/herself must be gleaned from the reflected appraisals of the social environment in which the individual is located. Indeed, James goes so far as to suggest that it is *only* through our interactions with others and their attitudes toward us that we can gain knowledge about ourselves.

Another key realisation made by James was the fact that any individual has many different social selves given that we enact different roles with different people and are viewed differently by different people. As a result it is likely that some of these roles are in conflict with each other. James referred to this disharmony between the social selves as "splitting" - an important concept to which we will return in Chapter 5.

> *Properly speaking a man has as many social selves as there are individuals who recognise him and carry an image of him in their mind. To wound any of these images is to wound him. But as the individuals who carry the images fall naturally into classes, we may practically say that he has as many different selves as there are distinct groups of persons about whose opinions he cares.... From this there results what practically is a division of the man into several selves; and this may be a discordant splitting, as where one is afraid to let one set of his acquaintances know him as he is elsewhere.* (James, 1890, p. 281-282).

From this passage we can conclude that, according to James, *any* negative regard from others will "wound" the experience of the self, irrespective of the number of people who regard the individual in a positive manner.

The Spiritual Self

The spiritual self according to James is the individual's inner subjective being; the most enduring, intimate part of the self characterised primarily by feelings, and is that which we seem to *be* (Levin, 1992). Indeed this spiritual component is so important and precious that: " *rather than lose it, a man ought to be willing to give up friends and good fame, and property, and life itself*" (James, 1890, p. 315).

James sees this core self as being composed of relatively stable attributes and any change to this spiritual self will therefore lead to psychosis (Levin, 1992) for it is the "*center around which experience accretes*" (James, 1890, p. 296). A shifting of the centre will have detrimental effects on the experience of events and of the individual him/herself and thus impact on mental well being.

James acknowledged the manner in which the material and social selves impacted on the spiritual self and was particularly concerned about the impact of multiple roles and the conflict associated with these. For him it is up to the individual to determine which roles to adopt in order to establish "*his truest, strongest, deepest self*" (p. 310). This admonition does, of course, ignore the reality that many roles are not freely chosen but are hoisted upon the individual by the expectations of society or the demands of organisational life.

The Pure Ego

For James the Pure Ego is the individual's sense of personal identity and the judgement of sameness (Levin, 1992). For the sense of personal identity to exist there must exist a corresponding sense of personal unity which James assumes to exist. He speaks of an "*unbrokenness in the stream of selves*" (p. 298) and a sense of the sameness of the self at different times. This *unbrokenness* would be affected by any possible discordant splitting of the self.

Relevance

It is comparatively easy to establish the pertinence of William James' framework in light of what appears to have been established in the previous chapter. Simply put, an occupational environment which is characterised by frequent negative feedback from social interactions will impact on all of James components of the self: material self; social self; spiritual self; and the pure ego.

The material self is affected inasmuch as the occupational life, a material construction, is characterised by unpleasant social interactions. Individuals tend to emotionally experience "*things, persons, and experiences that are somehow uniquely 'owned' and specially 'ours'*" (James, 1890, p. 279). James (1890), in a passage discussing the material self, argues that having an element of the material self insulted or loosing that element will result in "... *a sense of shrinkage of our personality, a partial conversion of ourselves to nothingness...*" (p. 281).

The impact on the social self is probably the most significant. A lack of positive regard from others and the presence of negative feedback in an as important part of our lives as signified by

work will, according to James, result in a significant impact on the self. We all crave positive feedback from others in order to construct a positive picture of ourselves, and the absence of such feedback makes the construction and maintenance of a positive sense of self difficult. In addition we must consider the possibility of the occurrence of a discordant splitting of the self when the (hopefully) positive regard received in non-work environments is contrasted with the mass of negative feedback received at work.

Given the link between the three components the impact on the material and social selves imply a similar impact on the spiritual self and the pure ego. In particular the discrepancy between work and non-work may result in damage to the "*centre around which experience accretes*" (James, 1890, p. 296) and the "*unbrokenness in the stream of selves*". The continuous shift between work and non-work experiences will thus not only result in a discordantly split self but also make it difficult for the individual to independently develop his/her "*truest, strongest, deepest self*" (p. 310).

The Framework of George Herbert Mead

James' framework and Mead's symbolic interactionism differ in two fundamental ways. Firstly, James and others like Tarde, Baldwin, Giddings, Cooley, and Wundt assumed the inherent presence of the self, whereas Mead opposed this view arguing for an *emergent* self (Morris, 1955). Secondly, James, like Hegel, acknowledged that social interaction is a component of the self whereas for Mead the self cannot develop without social interaction and, especially, without the agency of language. The self thus arises out of social interaction as a by-product of the individual's concern about how others think of, or react to him/her. The argument is well represented by Burr (1995) who holds that: "*Fundamental to symbolic interactionism is the view that as people we construct our own and each other's identities through our everyday encounters with each other in social interaction*" (p. 10).

Mead's argument that the self is not an innate property is also well reflected in Rosenberg (1981) who holds that the self:

> *... Is not present at birth but arises out of social experience and interaction, it both incorporates and is influenced by the individual's location in the social structure; it is formed with in institutional systems, such as family, school, economy, church; it is*

constructed from the materials of the culture; and it is affected by the immediate social and environmental contexts. (p. 593).

The "I" and the "Me"

For Mead the self is composed of two parts, the "I" and the "Me", which engage in an internal dialogue whereby the "I" is an object to the "Me" i.e. the self becomes an object to itself.

The "Me"

The process whereby the "Me" is developed, maintained, and changed can be represented via a series of six steps (from Dodds, Lawrence, & Valsiner, 1997).

1. X initiates a social act with the stimulus of a gesture (which may be vocal) to Y.
2. Y completes the act with an appropriate response to X's stimulus.
3. After the interaction X remembers the action in its entirety, and therefore:
4. X is able to stimulate himself to have the same response as Y.
5. In future actions of the same type X will be able to remember the gesture-response sequence, including the attitude that Y took.
6. X is able to think about X (me) and to be aware of X, i.e., X has acquired a sense of self.

As Morris (1955) explains, this process first occurs when children engage in games - an activity that requires the child to become aware of any other who is also engaging in the game and must, indeed, have within itself the whole organised activity to successfully play its part in the activity. Via this process the individual learns to experience him/herself indirectly, first through the particular standpoints of other individual members, and then from the generalised viewpoint of the relevant social group as a whole.

This ability to see oneself as others see one requires that the values and attitudes of the generalised other be internalised. This internalisation is achieved via what Mead terms *reflected appraisals*, an idea derived from Cooley's (1902) "*looking-glass concept*" which holds that we primarily see ourselves through the eyes of others. The premise behind the idea of reflected appraisals is that what others' truly think of an individual is not as important as that individual's *perception* of their view of him/her (Rosenberg, 1981).

The principle of reflected appraisals, suggested by the theories of Mead and Cooley, holds that of others look up to us and treat us with respect, then we will respect ourselves accordingly, but if they derogate or disdain us, then our self-esteem will be low. (Rosenberg, 1981, p. 603)

Support for this position has more recently come from the likes of Strauss (1997) who notes that "*Everyone presents himself to others and to himself, and sees himself in the mirrors of their judgements*" (p. 11).

It is this process of internalising the *perceived* values of the generalised other that leads to the development of what Mead terms the "Me". As argued by Mead (1934, p. 68): *"we are more or less unconsciously seeing ourselves as others see us"*. The "Me" is thus a socially constructed component of the self, and it is this "Me" which is the subject in the internal dialogue inasmuch as it evaluates past, current, and future actions that the "I" has, is, or may engage in (see also Miller, 1973). Thoughts such as "*what would everyone else think if I did this*" illustrate the role of the internalised generalised other in everyday thought. Indeed, for Mead, this internalisation is the "... *essential basis and prerequisite of the fullest development of that individual's self*" (p. 155) as well as, reciprocally, allowing the functioning of society.

This focus on perception is important if we consider the findings of Belson (1975), discussed earlier, that indicated that police officers tend to think that the public view them more negatively than they actually do. Similar findings were made by Schrauger and Schoeneman (1979, in Rosenberg, 1981). The self-concept is thus likely to be worse than the, in South Africa, already negative evaluation from the community would warrant.

Once the generalised other is internally established in this manner the individual is able to converse with him/herself even in the absence of others; leading to the establishment of a self-dialogue; that is the individual speaks to him/herself as if he/she were the object of the opinions of this generalised other. The individual thus becomes an object to him/herself *in the same manner that others are objects to him/her*. Self-consciousness as well as a moral sense develops given that the individual is constantly aware of the perceived, possible reaction of society to him/herself.

"The self; as that which can be an object to itself, is essentially a social structure and it arises in social experience. After a self has arisen, it in a certain sense provides for itself its social experience...." (Mead, 1934, p. 140).

The "I"

The "I" with which the socially constructed "Me" engages is seen by Mead to be the creative, impulsive, and reconstructive part of the self. It is the "I" that enters into social relations with others and thus creates experience, and the "Me" that introspects and examines this social "I" from the internalised viewpoint of the generalised other. As Levin (1992, p. 129) states: "*the "I" is the response of the organism to the attitudes of the others, and the "Me" is the organised set of attitudes of others than become internalised*".

Within the individual there is thus the organised set of attitudes of others which call on the individual to act in a certain manner (the "Me"), as well as the individual's response (the "I") (Mead, 1934, p. 177). The subject of interaction, the "I", thus becomes the object of introspection or observation by the socially constructed "Me". In the same way that we inspect the acts of others and others inspect our acts so can we inspect our own acts (Dodds, Lawrence, & Valsiner, 1997).

Split Selves

Like James (1890), Mead acknowledged that individuals tend to split their self as a result of having a number of different social relationships. "*We divide ourselves up in all sorts of different selves with reference to our acquaintances*" (Mead, 1934, 142).

Unlike James (1890), Mead however did acknowledge the possibility that such a splitting of the self can have detrimental consequences for the self or personality. "*Two separate 'me's' and 'I's' two different selves, result, and that is the condition under which there is a tendency to break up the personality*" (Mead, 1934, p. 143).

It should also be considered that Mead assumes that the society in which the individual is located is characterised by unity and structure. "*The unity and structure of the complete self reflects the unity and structure of the social process as a whole*" (Mead, 1934, p. 143). Should the social process thus lack unity or structure then this is likely to be reflected in the nature of the self located in such a social process. In particular, there may exist, what Mead referred to as the breaking up of personality due to the existence of multiple selves.

Relevance

As was the case with the framework of James, the manner in which Mead's framework is relevant to our considerations is fairly unambiguous. Mead's framework developed the notion that we rely on others to facilitate our experience of ourselves, that is, "... *there could not be an experience of a self simply by itself*" (Mead, 1934, p. 195). An individual who therefore relies on the reflected appraisals of others for the construction of the "Me" component of the self is likely to experience a certain degree of distress if such reflected appraisals are overwhelmingly or predominantly negative. The individual learns to view him/herself through the eyes of a group of people who are, to a significant degree, hostile to the individual.

But the negative impact is not only restricted to the "Me". Remembering that the "I" is: " *the answer which the individual makes to the attitude which others take toward him when he assumes an attitude toward them*" we can conclude that the "I" will mirror any negative attitudes received from interaction partners.

Mead (1934) acknowledged that the relative value of the "I" and "Me" is largely dependent on the situation. There are times when being a member of the community is most important given that it guarantees the individual's position, recognition, and dignity. Similarly there are times when the "I" is principal, such as when the individual asserts his/her individuality against the prevailing opinion.

Both of these considerations however, have only limited applicability in a situation such as that outlined in the previous chapter. This thesis proposes that it is possible that the individual police officer does not see himself as part of the community (the "Me" is not developed) and also has little chance to assert his/her individuality in a society (and organisation) that tends to not acknowledge the individuality of the individual inside the uniform. These considerations are relevant if we, like Mead (1934, p. 199), hold that: "*both aspects of the "I" and "Me" are essential to the self in its full expression*".

Our Progress Thus Far

The theoretical frameworks proposed by James and Mead agree on a number of key areas. Not only do both theorists acknowledge that the regard from others is important in the formation and maintenance of the self of the individual, but both James and Mead also argue that psychological well-being requires both a *positive sense of self* and a *consistent sense of self*.

James and Mead, however, do not stand alone and, indeed, their initial positions and frameworks have proved to be only the building stones for a host of other theorists (Rosenberg, 1979). The next two chapters will review the need for self-enhancement and self-consistency in greater detail, outlining not only how negative social feedback makes the attainment of both self-enhancement and self-consistency difficult but also what the psychological consequences of the non-attainment of these two needs are.

Introduction

Our review of literature has thus far focused on presenting evidence that police work in South Africa is characterised by negative feedback from communities and society; and that such negative feedback has a negative impact on the well-being of police officers. Also we have reviewed the frameworks of the self put forward by James and Mead that suggest that negative regard from others will impact negatively on the self and that a consistent sense of self is also a key requirement for psychological well-being. This chapter focuses on the first of these realisations – the need for self-enhancement. Given that our focus is primarily on workplace ineractions this chapter first establishes why workplace experiences are important for the fulfilment of the individual's need for self-enhancement, before discussing the self-enhancement motive in greater detail as well as some of the psychological consequences of not meeting this need for self-enhancement.

The Importance of Work to the Self

A number of reasons present themselves as to why an individual's experiences at work may impact on his/her self. Firstly, individuals tend to spend a large part of their waking lives engaged in work activities. Secondly, some of the social conventions that govern our non-work interactions may be suspended in the work environment. Individuals may receive very unambiguous feedback regarding their perceived performance from superiors; co-workers, and clients, whereas their friends and family may either ignore their perceived failings or draw attention to them in a more restrained fashion. Thirdly, and perhaps most importantly, work and occupational meaning is important in the creation of both personal meaning (Brief & Nord, 1990; Neikrug, 1982; O'Brien, 1992) and overall identity (Hochschild, 1981; Shamir, 1986; Sheeran & Abraham, 1994). As Casey (1995) notes: "*In modern society individuals have defined themselves, and in turn, have been socially defined, by the type of work that they do in the public sphere*" (p. 28).

Authors such as Goffman (1959) and James (1890) would also agree that work roles are important to the individual inasmuch as the global self is the sum total of all the roles that the individual enacts; a view that is also supported by Buhr (1995); O'Brien (1992); Park (1926, in McCall, 1987); Girodo (1984); and Sarbin and Allen (1984, in Allen & van de Vliert, 1984). Indeed: "*it is in these roles that we know each other; it is in these roles that we know ourselves*" (Park, 1936, in McCall, 1987, p. 134). As such the status of the occupational group is also important (Simon, 1999). Authors such as Rosenberg and Gara (1985) would even classify work roles as

superordinate roles, similar to family or religious roles; argueing that any threat to such a role threatens the individual's sense of continuity. Work can also be seen as an extension of one's self (Rosenberg, 1979) for three key reasons. Firstly, there is the subjective experience of work belonging to "me" or of being "mine". Secondly, there is the attachment to work of feelings of pride or shame. Third, is what Rosenberg labels *introjection*, a process that occurs when the individual sees the fate of his/her work and the fate of his/her self to be intertwined. As Rosenberg notes, expressions of hostility frequently manifest themselves at the level of these extensions of the self even though the blow is aimed at the opponent's self. A child destroys the sand-castle that another child has built, one person belittles another person's job or parents - all these serve to deprecate the self-extensions of the person one is attacking. The findings of Sheeran and Abraham (1994) and Shamir (1986) that the loss of a job results in lowered morale, anxiety, and lowered self-esteem also show that work can be seen as an extension of the self.

Individuals also seem to gain a sense of purpose, social relationships, and an enhancement of the self concept from work (Levi, 1981; Locke & Taylor, 1990; Nord, Brief, Atieh, & Doherty, 1990) and the inability to practice skills such as personal control and intimacy will also impact on the wellbeing of the individual outside of work (Casey, 1995; Kohn & Schooler, 1983a, 1983b; O'Brien, 1986) leading to what Neikrug (1982) refers to as *existential suffering*. According to O'Brien (1992) job content can thus significantly determine intellectual style; depression; self-competence; belief in internal and external control; and desires or needs for self-direction. For Sorokin (1927, in Casey, 1995, p. 81) the impact of work runs even deeper - *"all psychological processes of any member of an occupation undergo modification....greater is the occupational influence on the processes and on the character of one's evaluations, beliefs, practical judgments, opinions, ethics, and whole ideology"*.

The Self-Enhancement Motive

Both James (1890) and Mead (1934) implicitly highlighted the conscious and unconscious need of individuals to view themselves as favourably as possible. As such, these theorists initiated what is now referred to as self-enhancement theory (e.g. Epstein, 1973; Jussim, Yen, & Aiello, 1995). The influence of self-enhancement extends from the theoretical frameworks of the likes of Maslow, James; Baumeister, Epstein, and Steele to the therapeutic strategies of Roger's *client centred therapy* (Heine, Makus, Lehman, & Kitayama, 1999). Theoretical support for the importance of the self-enhancement motive has also come from the likes of Allport (1979); Gergen (1971); Jones (1973); Kaplan (1975); Rawls (1972); Rosenberg (1981); Shotter (1984); and Strauss (1997), all

of whom argue for the need of positive feedback from others in order to allow the individual to develop a positive sense of self and minimise the experience of negative self-attitudes.

Empirical support for this self-enhancement motive comes from a host of authors including: Baumgardner, Kaufman, and Cranford (1990); Blumstein (1991); Cheek and Hogan (1983); Doherty and Schlenker (1991); Hoorens (1995); Maddux, Norton, and Leary (1988); McFarlin and Blasovich (1981); Moreland and Sweeney (1984); Nezlek et al (1997); and Pelham and Hetts (1999), all of whom found that individuals have a need for approval from the social world in which they are located. This need appears to be particularly strong for individuals with low self-esteem (Jones, 1973; Tice, 1993) suggesting that affirmation is important in the formation of a positive self-concept.

Establishing a Negative Sense of Self

Most of the authors reviewed above (e.g. Cheek & Hogan, 1983; McFarlin & Blasovich, 1981; Pelham & Hetts, 1999) illustrated that a lack of positive regard from others results in a negative *affective* response in the individual i.e. sadness, social anxiety, and depression. The impact is however not only restricted to an affective response. The frameworks of both James and Mead suggest that negative regard from others will result in a negative sense of self i.e. a negative concept of the individual and the world in which he/she is located. The perceived or real negative regard of the generalised other is internalised by the individual via the process of reflected appraisals. The precise mechanism whereby negative regard from others impacts on the self has already been discussed and will thus not be revisited.

Direct empirical and theoretical support for the notion that individuals tend to see themselves as they are seen by others or perceive others to seem them has already been established by Allen and Van de Vliert (1984); Allport (1979); Andersen, Reznik, and Chen (1997); Bruner (1997); Coopersmith (1967, in Crocker & Blanton, 1999); Felson (1989, 1993); Gergen (1971); ; Hamachek (1978); Harre (1987); Kaplan (1975); Keith (1999); Kramer and Wei (1999); McCrae (1982); Oyserman and Markus (1993); Pelham and Hetts (1999); Rosenberg (1979, 1981); Rosenberg and Gara (1985); Sampson (1981); Schafer and Keith (1999); Strauss (1997); Swann and Read (1981); and Turner and Onorato (1999); as well as Miyamoto and Dornbusch (1956); Reeder et al (1960); and Sherwood (1965)(all three in Rosenberg, 1981). Schafer and Keith (1999), for instance, was able to link the self-esteem of individuals to the perceived estimation their spouses had of them.

Similarly, Shrauger and Schoeneman's (1979) review of 64 studies of symbolic interactionism showed that the self-conceptions of individuals agree substantially with the manner in which they believe that others view them i.e. the reflected appraisals of others. As put forward by Rawls, "*our self-respect normally depends on the respect of others*" (1972, in Rosenberg, 1981, p. 603).

Indeed, the key requirement for the formation and maintenance of a certain self-concept is the acknowledgment of the presence of others for our self can only exit *relative to others* (Simon, 1999, Bruner & Kalmar, 1998). Mead (1934) had also argued that "*the individual possesses a self only in relation to the selves of the other members of his social group*" (p. 164). We see ourselves as intelligent, kind, nurturing, aggressive, and trustworthy only to the degree to which we possess more or less of these characteristics than those others who we meet in social interactions (Hoorens, 1995; Shotter, 1984). If these interaction partner make it clear that they see us as in a fundamentally negative way then our *relative worth* is likely to be compromised. In the process of defining the self we thus do not only become aware our inner feelings toward ourselves and others but also position the self within the social world in terms of criteria such as status, gender, or group identity (Bruner & Kalmar, 1998).

The fundamental argument underpinning these findings is well summarised by Rosenberg (1979) who maintains that:

> *However much an individual may like to think of himself, attractive, or skilled in some way, in the long run he will actually believe he is so only of this view is substantiated by external evidence. One of the major sources of evidence is the response of others toward us (consensual validation).* (p. 48).

Key here is the claim that positive regard must be consensual. The greater the number of people that present a certain type of feedback to an individual the greater is the likelihood that such feedback will impact on the individual's sense of self (Shrauger & Schoeneman, 1979). Contrary to the initial position of James (1890) it appears that it is not only the reflected appraisals of significant others that are important predictors of self-esteem, but also those of strangers (Hortacsu, 1989) such as members of a community. Indeed, for Felson (1981), the reaction (real or imagined) of the immediate audience to a behaviour, such as the public, has as much impact on the formation of the self as the reaction of the generalised other (Mead, 1934) or significant others (James, 1890).

These findings are thus largely in line with the theoretical frameworks of James and Mead inasmuch as they suggest that social interactions form the manner in which the individual sees him/herself. Recent authors (Bruner & Kalmar, 1998; Freeman, 1993; Gergen, 1991; Michael, 1996; Oyserman & Markus, 1993; Rosenberg, 1981) however have also stressed the impact of social structures, contexts, power structures; and institutions as well as the historical context in creating a particular identity and sense of self. As such these authors acknowledge the direct impact that the status and culture of an organisation such as the SAPS has on the individual located in such an organisation.

A further development of this position is represented by Dodds, Lawrence, and Valsiner (1997) who argue that the self is not only developed through social interactions but also maintained and regulated by the same social interactions, as well as finding expression through social interactions (see also Jones, 1973).

Dodds, Lawrence, and Valsiner (1997) thus implictly support the view of Rosenberg (1979) that a positive self-concept requires *constant validation* in order to remain positive. Certainty regarding what and who we are eludes us (Campbell & Lavallee, 1993) and we are thus reliant on the appraisals of other to inform our opinions of ourselves. Indeed, *"the responses of others are required not only for confirmation but for the lifelong reconfirmation of our working self-hypothesis"* (Rosenberg, 1979, p. 49). While the individual may enter the police profession with a positive sense of self, such a *working self-hypothesis* will not be maintained in the face of feedback to the contrary, especially if normal social interactions dictate that feedback should, at worst, be ambivalent (Crocker & Major, 1989).

A contrary argument was made by Felson (1985), who argues in his brief review of survey studies that there is only mixed support for the importance of reflected appraisals for the self. Both Felson (1985), and Crocker and Major (1989) argue that the impact of reflected appraisals is limited due to the fact that individuals do not convey negative information to each other due to the restraining influence of social conventions. The tendency for social interaction to be an exchange of deference (Goffman, 1956) means that clear, unambiguous negative feedback tends to occur relatively rarely. In addition, an individual's dislike of another is mostly manifest through feelings of ambivalence rather than active dislike. Thus Crocker and Major (1989) postulate that negative stigma does not impact on self-esteem as in most social interactions:

> *The affective reaction that many people have toward them* [stigmatised persons] *are ambivalent rather than uniformly negative....Consequently, negative attitudes and feelings may be suppressed and not communicated either verbally or behaviorally to the stigmatized persons; hence they cannot affect self-esteem.* (p. 612).

Similarly, Felson (1981, 1985, 1989), and Jussim et al (1992) argue that in natural settings it can often be quite difficult to know what others are thinking about oneself, irrespective of whether this is positive or negative. When the appraisals of others are in any manner ambiguous then the individual is easily able to idealise the feedback and thus continue to think positively about themselves (Felson, 1985).

Using Leary's (1990) classification system (see table below) these authors appear to propose that social feedback aimed at stigmatised groups (such as the SAPS) is, at worst, a case of passive or active exclusion.

Table 1

The Inclusionary-Status Continuum (from Leary, 1990, p. 222).

Maximal Inclusion	Others seek out the individual
Active Inclusion	Others welcome the individual (but do not seek out him or her
Passive Inclusion	Other allow the individual to be included
Ambivalence	Others do not care whether the individual is included
Passive Exclusion	Other ignore the individual
Active Exclusion	Others avoid the individual
Maximal Exclusion	Others physically reject, ostracise, abandon, or banish the individual

From the evidence reviewed in Chapter 2 we can however safely argue that many members of the South African public are not constrained by the conventions of face-to-face interaction, and practice what Leary (1990) would refer to as extreme forms of *maximal exclusion*. Under maximal exclusion, social feedback is so unambigous that it may attain greater valence when compared to the more ambiguous, and less often expressed positive feedback that is available to the police officers. As Jussim et al (1992) acknowledge, it is far easier to tale the role of the other

when the information that is being fed back is *clearly* negative (or positive). If as Crocker and Major (1989) suggest, social niceties are the only thing preventing stigmatisation to impact negatively on self-esteem then an impact on SAPS members is made more far more likely. The impact may however be tempered if individuals believe that negative regard from others is the result of discrimination or prejudice (Crocker, 1999; Crocker & Blanton, 1999; Turner & Onarato, 1999).

The Role of Memory

The social interactions which an individual experiences do not, of course, impact on the self in a once-off fashion. Memory has a primary influence on the formation of the self (Mead, 1934, Freeman, 1993) inasmuch as through memory the individual is able to relive interactions, positive and negative, long after they happened. Every time an experience is revisited in memory, the corresponding affective and cognitive responses are also reactivated and the impact on the self is thus continuously reinforced and repeated. It is however not only the reliving of past interactions that impacts on the self but also the fact that these past interactions are continuously reinterpreted through an interaction of memory and imagination (Bruner & Kalmar, 1998)

Not all information in memory is, however, equally accessible and the individual is thus likely to construct his/her self-conception predominantly out of those memories that are most easily accessible. The degree to which the memory of a particular social interaction is accessible is determined by the intensity and duration as well as the frequency with which similar interactions occur. The police literature reviewed earlier suggests that social interactions with the public tend to be both highly intense and frequent *and* that positive social feedback is largely absent.

The result is that memories of negative social feedback and hence negative information about the self are easily accessible and can thus be recalled easily, and perhaps even involuntarily. This increased accessibility of negative aspects of the self is likely to shift the self in a negative direction (Rhodewalt & Agustsdottir, 1986).Such negative memories about the self are particularly likely to be activated when the individual is in a similar situation to that in which the original negative feedback was received. Markus and Wurf (1987) refer to this as high *information immediacy* arguing that individuals *"will focus on whatever aspects of themselves are most distinctive in a particular social setting"* (p. 305). For SAPS members, the work setting is thus likely to trigger a negative self-conception. If, at the same time, positive feedback is experienced relatively infrequently it would also make it more difficult to change the negative

self-perception once it has been established in memory as the individual can access negative information about him/herself far more readily than positive information.

Similar to Markus and Wurf's (1987) idea of *information immediacy* is what Andersen, Reznik, and Chen (1997) refer to as *schema triggered expectancies* (see also Markus & Sentis, 1982). This refers to the tendency for past acceptance or rejection by others to be be mentally stored and, crucially, to be linked with the other (or the group to which the other belongs) in memory so that there is created an expectancy of rejection by this person (or others like him/her) in future interactions. The presence by the relevant other is thus likely to trigger an involuntary shift in the self of the individual. The presence of the individual creates an expectancy of renewed negative social feedback as well as making the negative aspects of the self more accessible due to increased information immediacy. Thus significant other representations are linked with, and trigger, self-representations in memory.

Consequences of a Negative Social Feedback

We have thus far referred to a "negatively impacted upon self" without having discussed in any detail the manifestations of such an impacted upon sense of self; that is, any reasons why we should be specifically concerned about any possible negative impact on the self.

It is important to begin by noting that individuals will react differently to the circumstances that we have outlined thus far. As Belle (1991); Cheek and Hogan (1983); Lazarus (1993), and Pearlin (1991) note, the impact of any stressful event on the mental health, performance, or general functioning of any individual is heavily dependent on individual differences. The impact of an event such as negative social feedback is determined by the discrepancy between the event and the individual's ideal state as represented by some internal schema as well as the individual's tolerance for variation around this ideal state. In the case of the experiences of the police in South Africa it is however likely that the discrepancy will be large irrespective of the variation in ideal states between individuals. The assertion that: "*what causes the stress reaction is not the environmental 'stressor' alone but also its significance as appraised by the person who encounters it*" (Lazarus, 1993, p. 13) therefore partially falls away given that the significance of events is likely to be high for all individuals.

Direct supporting evidence for the predictions made by Mead's symbolic interactionist perspective has been found by Felson (1980) as well as Sheeran and Abraham (1994) whose findings indicate that "*negative reflected appraisals were associated with poorer self-evaluation, poorer self-*

involvement, and greater inconsistency in the self" (p. 125). Negative reflected appraisals have also been linked to feelings of tension, depression, and distress (Dressler, 1988; Kaplan, 1975); low self-esteem (Crocker & Blanton, 1999; Jussim et al, 1992; Leary, 1990); hostility, jealousy, loneliness (Baumeister & Tice, 1990; Leary, 1990); social anxiety (Baumeister & Tice, 1990; Maddux, Norton, & Leary, 1988; Leary & Atherton, 1986; Schlenker & Leary, 1982); social paranoia (Kramer & Wei, 1999); and a general negative affective response (Jussim, Yen, & Aiello, 1995; Moreland & Sweeney, 1984; Sweeney & Wells, 1990). Crocker and Blanton also cite the empirical research of authors such as Abe and Zane (1990); Kuo (1984); Marsell et al (1975); and Ying (1988), all of whom illustrated that the discriminated-against groups such as the Asian American population have consistently lower self-esteem and higher incidences of depression than other groups.

A number of other authors have also been able to link negative self-views with negative psychological consequences. Kuiper, MacDonald, and Derry (1983), for instance, note how research conducted by the likes of Beck show that one of the primary characteristics of depression is the negative manner in which individuals view themselves. Interestingly, research by Kuiper and Derry (in Kuiper, MacDonald, & Derry, 1983) showed that even mildly depressed individuals have a self-schema that includes significantly more negative attributes than non-depressed individuals.

This argument finds support with Beck, Rush, and Emery (1979) and Kuiper, MacDonald, and Derry(1983) (both in Rhodewalt & Agustsdottir, 1986) who contend that a negative self-schema is a causative of the self-devaluation and self-criticism commonly witnessed among depressives. Similarly, Rosenberg (1979) cites a number of studies that establish strong correlations between poor self-esteem and depression, including Rosenberg (1965); Kaplan and Pokorny (1969); Bachman (1970); Crandall (1973); Beck (1967); Luck and Heiss (1972); Rogers (1951); and Turner and Vanderlippe (1958) (all in Rosenberg, 1979). Schafer and Keith (1999) also found that individuals with low self-esteem are uncertain of their abilities, perceive themselves to be unsuccessful and are more vulnerable to psychological disorders such as depression whereas Lopez (1982) established that low-esteem employees do not link productivity with job satisfaction. A generalised other that is critical of the individual can even suggest to the individual that he/she is mentally ill (Thoits, 1985) given that self-conceptions arise through social interaction.

If we accept that policing tends to produce a negative mood state (as suggested by the findings of Gulle et al, 1998) then the findings of Giligan and Bower (1984, in Salovey & Rodin, 1985) are a matter of concern for they were able to establish a direct positive relationship between the mood of a person and their general cognitive functioning (including thoughts, fantasies, interpretations, and judgments).

The negative social feedback experienced by SAPS members may also be interpreted as an attack on the group identity and may result in individual members distancing themselves from the group as a defense mechanism (Spears, Doosje, & Ellemers, 1997). While the reason may be to achieve an improvement in the identity of the individual, such action does remove the individual from one of the few sources of social support.

It would thus appear that a negative sense of self results not only in a generalised sense of negative affect but may lead to more specific cases of psychological dis-ease as well as a compromised relationship with the social world in which the individual is located.

A Vicious Circle

The individual's negative self-conception can easily become a self-fulfilling prophecy once established. Authors such as Bohrnstedt and Felson (1983); Rhodewalt and Agustsdottir (1986); and Salovey and Rodin (1985) developed a cyclical model that describes how behaviours, modd states, and the feelings of self are all interrelated and feed into each other, implying that negative self-feelings will perpetuate themselves once established. The authors found that the negatively affected self-image was communicated to others, even if they were not privy to the original situation. This, argue Rhodewalt and Agustsdottir, as well as Fazio, Effrein and Falender (1981, in Jones et al, 1981), suggests that a momentary negative change in the self-concept can be perpetuated via social interaction feedback and a self-fulfilling prophesy mechanism. For how long such an internalised self-concept change endures is not clear but if one considers that Higgins, Rhodewalt, and Zanna (1979, in Rhodewalt and Agustsdottir) showed that once-off, laboratory-induced changes remained for a number of weeks then we can assume that long-term, continuously and naturally occuring situational inducements are likely to result in more long-term changes in the phenomenol self - particularly if we consider that the authenticity of negative feedback is not called into question in a non-laboratory situation. Low self-esteem is likely to become even more entrenched in the presence of repressive coping (Elliot, 1986); a phenomenon that we were clearly able to illustrate in our review of police stress literature.

A similar self-fulfiling prophecy may be set up in the minds of the community inasmuch as the notion that police officers are corrupt, violent, and untrustworthy, may undergo a process of objectification within the community (Burr, 1995) whereby it is perceived to be an *a priori* fact rather than merely an opinion or social construction. This, in turn, may result in the expression of hostility toward the police.

Conclusion

The literature reviewed in this chapter suggests that the experience of negative social feedback in the work environment is likely to result in the formation of a negative self-concept which is continuously reinforced via the relative lack of validation received in the work environment and the role of memory in reinterpreting and reliving the social interactions that the individual experiences. The chapter has also outlined the negative implications that such a negatively affected sense of self has for the psychological well-being of the individual. Such negative consequences are made even more likely when the work environment is not only characterised by the absence of positive regard but the presence of *unequivocal negative regard.*

The next chapter will show that the negative impact of negative social feedback in the work environment is not only manifest in terms of the quality of the self but also in terms of the structure of that self.

Chapter 5: The Need For Self-Consistency

Introduction

We have thus far attempted to establish a theoretical basis, supported by previous research, for the dual claim that SAPS members face perceived or actual negative social feedback from others and that such negative feedback is likely to result in a negative sense of self. This claim is dependent on a number of assumptions: firstly, that the police are in fact exposed to such negative feedback; secondly, that our sense of self is strongly impacted upon by the regard, real or imagined, we receive from others; and thirdly that the experiences that characterise our work lives are so important to us that negative social feedback received during the course of work cannot simply be discounted by the individual concerned. The previous three chapters have established the validity of these assumptions.

It is however important to acknowledge that individuals are unlikely to receive negative social feedback throughout their day. Even if the work environment is predominantly characterised by negative social regard, it is highly unlikely that non-work interactions with friends and family will also be characterised by negative social feedback. A work environment that is characterised by negative social interactions represents a relative anomaly when compared to the type of social interaction to which most of us are accustomed and which SAPS members are likely to enjoy outside of the workplace.

At one level this realisation suggests that the impact on the sense of self of the individual will be positive inasmuch as positive regard received in non-work life should negate the negative regard received from the work environment. Our concern with the sense of self of SAPS members however derives not only from the apparent prevalence of negative feedback from the communities in which these members work and the resultant impact on the self, although this is the primary source of concern, but also with the presence of dissonant social contexts that characterise the lives of SAPS members.

This chapter presents the argument that individuals are not only characterised by a desire for a positive sense of self, but also by a desire for a consistent self-conception. It is thus not only the positive or negative self-conception that is important but also the *structure* of the self. This chapter will thus present evidence that suggest that the environment faced by members of the

SAPS is likely to result in the establishment of an inconsistent self-conception, and that such an inconsistency can be linked to a number of undesirable psychological consequences.

The Consistency Motive

We have already discussed how both James and Mead referred with concern to the *"discordant splitting of the self"* (James, 1890, p. 294) and the consequences of having two separate selves (Mead, 1934, p. 134). This realisation of the importance of having a consistent self-conception has been significantly developed by social psychological theorists and has been referred to as the self-consistency motive.

Simply put, the self consistency motive refers to the tendency for individuals to form a particular view of themselves, consisting of a congruent set of self-perceptions integrated into a whole (Baumeister, 1993; Gergen, 1965, 1971; Jussim, Yen, & Aiello, 1995; Lopez, 1982; Spencer, Josephs, & Steele, 1993; Swann, Griffin, Predmore, & Gaines, 1987) and that individuals are subsequently cognitively motivated to seek feedback from interaction partners that is consistent with this view of themselves (Schafer & Keith, 1999; Sheer & Weigold, 1995; Snyder & Campbell, 1982). Any information that does not fit into this self-hypothesis cannot easily be assimilated and may lead to the experience of discomfort (Elliot, 1986; Jussim, Yen, & Aiello, 1995; Gilbert & Jones, 1986) and may require a partial reformation of the self-concept (Elliot, 1986). Self-consistency is important in that it allows that individual to predict and control the nature of social reality (Mead, 1934). The desire for self-consistency is also derived from the fact that even the normal, everyday role transitions are experienced to be stressful (Allen & van de Vliert, 1984). The individual thus has a preference not only for information that is consistent with his/her self-conception but also is likely to have a preference for a stable, unitary self-conception.

Interestingly, this motive for self-consistency is also present when the self-conception is negative (Swann et al, 1987) for even a negative self would present the individual with a predictable, and hence desirable, social world. The explanation for this apparent contradiction with the self-enhancement motive is that a positive self-conception is primarily an *affective* need whereas self-consistency is primarily a cognitive need. Shrauger (1975, in Swann et al., 1987) in support of this view argues that individuals with a negative self-concept who receive further negative feedback would appreciate this information at a cognitive level (for being consistent with their own self-view) while finding it to be a negative affective experiences. This hypothesis was partially supported by the findings of Alloy and Lipman (1992); as well as Swann et al (1987) that indicate

that individuals with negative self-concepts who receive unfavourable feedback find it to be accurate and self-descriptive but were also: *"...more depressed, anxious, and hostile after they received it*" (p. 886). This desire to confirm a self-picture was also noted by Rosenberg (1981); Swann and Read (1981); and Tedeschi and Riess (1981).

Two Separate Selves

This thesis takes the position that many SAPS members receive negative social feedback in the course of their work, but that similar levels of hostility are likely to be absent in their non-work interactions with friends and family. These disparate and dissonant social environments are likely to result in the development of correspondingly disparate and dissonant selves.

The Contextual Self

The proposition noted above is rooted in the realisation that the environment in which he/she is located impacts upon the individual's self-conception. This environment refers not only to the social, political, economic, and political circumstances of the country in which the individual is located, but also to the factors specific to a given location and situation. While some authors (e.g. McFarlin & Blasovich, 1981) still view the self as a relatively stable concept, this contextually contingent view of the self is widely accepted having been referred to by authors such as Andersen, Reznik, and Chen (1997); Jones, Rhodewalt, Berglas, and Skelton (1981); Markus and Nurius (1987); Markus and Wurf (1987); Rhodewalt and Agustsdottir (1986); Snyder and Campbell (1982); Turner and Onorato (1999); Turner and Billings (1991); Yardley (1987); as well as Cantor and Kihlstrom (1987) and Linville and Carlston (1994) (both in Andersen, Reznik, & Chen, 1997).

Markus and Wurf (1987) used the term "working self-concept" to explain this contextual nature of the self, defining this as: "*the set of representations which is accessible at any given moment and which are activated by the prevailing social circumstances and characteristics of the interaction taking place*" (p. 314). The key idea is that in certain situations, corresponding self-constructs are activated in the individual's memory that was formed through the social interactions that have characterised similar previous circumstances. As such the idea of the "working self-concept" is merely an extension of Mead's notion of the social construction of the self with the added recognition that the various social circumstances in which we find ourselves may result in a set of clearly distinguishable selves.

A slight refinement of the notion of the "working self-concept is what Andersen, Reznik, and Chen (1997) term the "*self-with-other*" or the idea that we are different with different people. While James already raised this notion in 1890, his reference appears to have been more in line with later ideas around impression management i.e. the notion that we consciously manipulate our portrayed self depending on the circumstances and/or interaction partners. The "working self" or "self-with-other" in contrast, is a largely subconscious phenomenon and thus represents a departure from James' original conception. The formation of these different "selves-with-other" can be traced back to the fact that the social interaction with different people is often person specific. With some people we are comfortable, with others we are not; from some people we receive affirmation, from others criticism; and some people we wish to impress while with others we have no need to impress. The result is that these different social interactions produce different selves.

The Split Self

If we accept that the individual's self-conception is strongly impacted upon by situational factors then it becomes likely that the police officer's self-conception when at work is fundamentally different to the self-conception when not at work; assuming that the work and non-work environments are characterised by a fundamental difference in the nature of social interactions. For our purposes, we will assume that the non-work environment is characterised by affirming feedback or at least not the same degree of negativity as the work environment. (Should this assumption not be met, a whole host of other concerns will arise regarding the well being of the police officer but a discussion of these lies beyond the scope of this thesis).

The resulting incongruence between work and non-work implies that we can indeed talk of a divided self given that the situationally determined selves no longer allow the individual to experience the *"perception of sameness"* (James, 1890, p. 334), that is, of having significant commonalities across situations. The dissonant social contexts also result in an unstable self-concept inasmuch as the individual is not provided with confirmation of his/her self-hypothesis. Thoits (1985) refers to this splitting between the socially valued self and the socially-derided self as *status inconsistency* and expresses concern regarding the interaction between these discrepant selves. The tendency for splitting of the self to occur between the private/family life and the public/work life was also noted by authors such as Bruner and Kalmar (1998); Elliot (1986); Strasser (1984); and Scheier and Carver (1983).

It is however, not only discrepant social feedback situations that lead to inconsistency in the self or a breakdown of the "*identity structure*" (Rosenberg & Gara, 1985, p. 90). Sheeran and Abraham (1994) found that negative reflected appraisals on their own lead to higher levels of inconsistency in the individual's sense of self; particularly when aimed at a role such as the work role that is important to the individual (Rosenberg & Gara, 1985).

The Consequences of a Divided Self

Given that this thesis is primarily concerned with the psychological well-being of members of the SAPS it is important to note some of the consequences of a self that is split between the work and non-work environment as outlined above.

Mead (1934) was one of the first to be concerned about the splitting of the self: "*Two separate 'me's' and 'I's' two different selves ... that is the condition under which there is a tendency to break up the personality*" (p. 143). Concern with the divided self had, of course, already occupied the likes of Foucault; Laing; Lacan; Sartre; Wilden; Kohut; Goethe; Hegel; Nietzsche; Kirkegaard; Freud; and Marx (Denzin, 1987). Hegel had for instance already argued that the divided self is characterised by: self-estrangement; withdrawal of emotional life; the reckless pursuit of desire; deep feelings of unhappiness; brooding; hollowness; emptiness; self-loathing and self destructiveness (1807, in Denzin, 1987). More recent research has tended to echo this concern regarding the consequences of a divided self for the individual concerned.

Mead's (1934) stress on the importance of consistency for the personality of the individual is echoed by Bromley (1993, p. 51) who defined personality as: "*... those personal characteristics that bring about consistencies and regularities in a person's behaviour over time and across different situations*". Accepting this definition we are then faced with the difficulty of determining what this consistent component is for an individual whose work environment is so very different to his/her non-work circumstances. It is unlikely that the individual will behave in a consistent manner over time and across different situations given that the situations that he/she is faced with are so very different.

The resultant constant role transitions between work and non-work are in themselves experienced as stressful and traumatic and may result in a splitting of the self, particularly in the absence of social support (Allen & van de Vliert, 1984; Boyanowsky, 1984; Bruner & Kalmar, 1998; Elliot, 1986; Hirsch & Jolly, 1984; Levi, 1981; van de Vliert, 1984). Van de Vliert (1984) was furthermore able to illustrate how role transitions repeated over an extended period of time bear a

very strong resemblance to inter-role conflict i.e. having to perform two roles simultaneously. Such repeated transitions and/or exposure to an unpredictable social world may interfere with the need for "*cognitive consistency*" (Pelham & Hetts, 1999, p. 118), a need that refers not only to the internal consistency of the self but also to the degree of predictability and controllability engendered in the social world in which the individual is located. Indeed, individuals with inconsistent self-concepts tend to experience a higher incidence of psychological distress, mood instability, and a greater tendency to engage in antisocial behaviour than those individuals with stable self-concepts (Campbell & Lavallee, 1993; Rosenberg, 1979).

The negative impact on the individual is most pronounced when a role is imposed on the individual by external influences e.g. work roles (Markus & Nurius, 1987). Given that the role of the police officer is influenced by not only the expectations and prejudices of the public but also organisational demands such a negative impact is likely to be experienced by SAPS members; and is then also likely to be transferred into other areas of life (Hochschild, 1981). Jones, Rhodewalt, Berglas, and Skelton (1981) referred to this as the *carryover effect* whereby a working self that originates in the occupational environment may be carried over into a context where it is no longer appropriate and a different self would normally be activated by the relevancy situational cues. Hochschild (1981) discussed in great detail how air-hostesses carry stress and behaviours built up in the workplace over into their non-work interactions with often detrimental effects on their own and their families wellbeing. This discrepancy between the two principal components of our lives, work and non-work, appears to be a common feature in contemporary western society. Authors such as Gergen (1965, 1991); Goffman (1959); and Hochschild (1981) have already discussed how we are entering into social relationships in our work environments that do not conform to the same rules and expectations as those we enter into in our non-work lives - making the experience of an "authentic self" (Gergen, 1965, p. 7) increasingly difficult. Problems similar to those discussed by Hochschild (1981) may thus also arise for SAPS members.

The relevance of our concern for the possible division within the self becomes even clearer if we consider the various forms in which the self can be divided or be at conflict with itself.

Higgins (1987), and Higgins, Klein, and Strauman (1987, p. 173) noted that there are three basic domains of the self: the *Actual* self or the attributes which you, or others, believe that you actually possess; the *Ideal* self or those attributes that you, or others, would ideally like you to have; and the *Ought* self or those attributes that you or others believe that you should possess e.g. sense of duty, obligations, responsibilities (see also Shaw, 1997). To illustrate the difference between the

ideal and ought selves, Higgins (1987) refers to the conflict that some women have between their own wishes to be successful professionals and some other persons' beliefs that they ought to be housewives and mothers.

Higgins (1987), and Higgins, Klein, and Strauman (1987) argue that any inconsistency between these three domains of the self will result in negative consequences – referred to as *"identity crises"* by Erikson (1968, in Higgins, Klein, & Strauman, 1987). A discrepancy between the Actual and Ideal self results in depressive symptoms i.e. an affective response given that the actual self of the individual does not conform either with his/her own expectations and standards or with those of significant others. The individual is thus faced with a situation in which someone's goals and hopes are not met - the result being an absence of positive outcomes and the accompanying feelings of sadness, dissatisfaction, and disappointment (see also Mikulincer & Peer-Goldin, 1991). Actual/Ought discrepancies result in a cognitive response characterised by anxiety, apprehension and worry. The simultaneous presence of both discrepancies appears to result in significant levels of anger and hostility. The continuous awareness of not living up to the desired self will result in self-consciousness with negative implications for self-consistency given that the individual is continuously attempting to adapt him/herself to the required standards (Elliot, 1986).

These cognitive and affective responses are made likely in individuals whose actual self, as constructed by negative social feedback, is likely to be very different from either the Ideal or Ought selves. Such conflict and contradiction between the various domains of the self is likely to further decrease the individual's sense of continuity and coherence.

In the same manner that the three domains of the self can be in conflict so can the three different audiences to behaviour; the generalised other; significant others, and the immediate audience, discussed earlier, be in conflict (Felson, 1981). Should feedback regarding a particular behaviour be negative from one group (e.g. the immediate audience such as the friends and family of an arrested suspect); positive from another (friends and family of the officer); and uninterested from the third (an indifferent society), then it is also possible that the individual will experience some splitting of the self and a lack of consistency between the various social selves constructed by these various "audiences" via social feedback.

Autonomy, Continuity, And Distinctiveness

Consistency is not the only structural component of the self that may be adversely impacted upon by the unusual working conditions faced by members of the SAPS. The ability of individuals to maintain their sense of personal autonomy; personal continuity; and personal distinctiveness may also be affected - three facets that are vital for the maintenance of a sense of identity (Apter, 1983). These three characteristics of the self are important inasmuch as "*the loss of one or more of these three aspects of the sense of identity is associated with the depersonalisation of psychotic breakdown*" (Apter, 1983, p. 76).

Using the terminology of Mead (1934) the loss of one of these aspects of identity can be said to lead either to a retreat of the "I" in an attempt to distance itself from the undesirable "Me" (Laing, 1959 in Apter, 1983) or the disintegration of the "I" (Apter, 1983). Apter succinctly describes the central mechanisms whereby the sense of identity, which is so central to mental health, is affected.

> *A strong and solid sense of identity requires firstly, that the individual sees himself as different from other people, as distinctive and indeed unique. Secondly, it requires that he sees himself to be self-consistent, displaying continuity in his attitudes, beliefs and actions. Thirdly, it requires that he conceives himself to be autonomous in the sense of being in charge of his life, making his own independent decisions, and not being "pushed around" by other people or external forces in general. By contrast, a person will lack a strong sense of identity if he sees himself to be anonymous, inconsistent and moulded by the exigencies of the external environment. And he will feel his identity to be threatened if he interprets his situation as one which might lead to the loss of one or more of the three essential components of his sense of identity.* (P.77).

It should be clear how these mechanisms may come into effect in an organisational environment characterised by negative social feedback such as the SAPS. Distinctiveness is threatened by a community that provides the individual with negative feedback based not on his individual characteristic but merely on the basis of his/her membership of the police organisation. The loss of distinctiveness or individuality denies the individual the key opportunity of creating an image for him/herself and thereby creating a degree of separateness or privacy (Apter, 1983; Brewer, 1991; Bruner & Kalmar, 1998). A lack of distinctiveness in a given social situation has been seen to result in distress (Apter, 1983; Brewer & Pickett, 1999).

The individual's sense of autonomy is affected in as much as the individual has little control either over the type of behaviour that is to be exhibited in the course of organisational life or over how this behaviour is interpreted by his/her interaction partners. Goffman (1959) noted that when an individual takes on a given social role, he/she usually finds that a particular social front has already been established for that role, and it is hence beyond the means of the individual to significantly impact on the manner in which he/she is perceived when performing that role. Similarly, such an individual has little influence over the self that is constructed by the reflected appraisals of others.

Lastly, the sense of continuity is harmed if the self created in the work environment is dissimilar to that created by non-work life.

Preventing the Self

The negative social feedback that we have been referring to may not only result in an inconsistency in the self with the associated affective and cognitive consequences discussed above but may also impede the coherent *development* of a self. Shotter (1983, p. 149) explains that: "*the idea of a moral order is implied in the concept of personhood for only within a relatively stable social order is the development of a conferred social competence, and thus autonomous and responsible personhood, possible.*"

A situation in which part of the society provides the police officer with repeated negative feedback that may be *non-contingent on behaviour*, while other parts of that same society (family and friends) support the officer, may lead to a situation in which the officer no longer perceives the existence of either a "*relatively stable social order*" or a "*moral order*". The result, according to Shotter (1983), would be the impaired development of personhood.

Conclusion

This chapter has established that negative social feedback from the work-environment may not only result in a negative sense of self within that environment, but may also result in a negative impact on the structure of that self. The inconsistency between the nature of social interactions found in the work and non-work environments produces incongruent contextual selves. As a result the individual is unable to satisfy his/her need for self-consistency, a result that tends to produce a number of negative consequences for the psychological well-being of the individual concerned.

The next section of the thesis focuses on the empirical investigation conducted by the author in order to establish whether or not the work circumstances described in Chapter 2 do in fact exist as well as what the impact, if any, such negative social feedback appears to have on members of the SAPS.

Chapter 6: Methodology

Introduction

The appropriateness of any methodological framework can be only be judged in relationship to that which it purports to investigate. Phenomena that can readily be observed, measured, and quantified warrant a quantitative, positivist research methodology. Phenomena that are essentially hidden, that cannot easily be measured, and whose nature is fundamentally subjective and personal to each individual require a methodology that reflects this nature. A discussion of methodology must therefore first consider the nature of that which is being investigated; in our case the impact of events and situations on the self of the individual; that is, the manner in which the individual interprets and experiences him/herself and the world in which he/she is located.

The Nature of the Subject of Investigation

The subject of our investigation, the self of police officers, can be characterised by a number of considerations that are relevant to the choice of research methodology. Firstly, from the review of literature on the self it can be concluded that it is the personal and subjective interpretation given to social situations, contexts, and events that determines the impact that these have on the self (e.g. Andersen, Reznik, & Chen, 1997; Felson, 1989; Mead, 1934; Strauss, 1997; Schafer & Keith, 1999). Furthermore we can argue that it is difficult, if not impossible, to directly observe the self in action (e.g. Gergen, 1971).

With regard to the nature of police work and culture we can similarly conclude, from our review of literature, that police officers tend to engage in repressive coping and a degree of "masculine" impression management - the "John Wayne" syndrome (Alkus & Padesky, 1980; Elison & Buckhout, 1981; Mulcahy, 1995; Reiser & Geiger, 1989; Sandler, 1989; Violanti & Aron, 1994). The average police officer is thus likely to experience difficulty and/or reluctance in directly accessing emotional and cognitive components of his/her experience. This is not only the result of the "masculine" culture that may frown upon any discussion of feelings and emotional responses but also due to the fact that the subject of investigation is one that few people consciously consider on a frequent basis.

These conclusions regarding the nature of the self and the nature of police work imply that it is required to utilise a general philosophical framework and specific methodology that acknowledges the inherently subjective, and elusive nature of the object of study; utilises method that overcome

the difficulties in accessing this object of study; is flexible and reflexive enough to explore and uncover the very personal experiences and interpretations attached to events. Most important however is that the utilised methodology minimises the stress and potential harm experienced by those participating in the research activity. The fact that different individuals are likely to experience the research activity to be stressful to different degrees implies that the methodology must allow the researcher sufficient flexibility to amend the specific data gathering process so as to minimise perceived harm *for every individual*, while not compromising the validity of data.

Similarly, the methodology whereby the data of the research activity is utilised must acknowledge the difficulty that research participants are likely to experience in talking directly about the impact that any experience may have on their sense of self.

Philosophical Framework

These consideration suggest that a qualitative interview methodology is most appropriate for an investigation of how social events such as negative social feedback impact on the sense of self of the individual. While quantitative approaches attempt to establish causal laws and relationships in an effort to explain (erklären) the world, a qualitative approach allows researchers to gain an understanding (verstehen) of the social world.

In particular it is important to gain an understanding of the very personal and subjective interpretations that individuals attach to the social encounters that they experience. Mead's (1934) concept of *reflected appraisals* imply that it is this subjective experiences and interpretation of social feedback that informs the impact on the self rather than the actual feedback. The researcher is only able to draw conclusions regarding the impact of social feedback if he/she is able understand the social world in which the police officer is located from the standpoint of the officer (Kvale, 1996). The need to therefore explore the private thoughts and feelings that characterise the self (Rhodewalt & Agustsdottir, 1986) as well as the meanings and emotions attached to events (Mouton & Marais, 1990) also recommends the qualitative interview methodology inasmuch as such a methodology is able to explore such personal constructs. "*The qualitative interview seeks to understand the world from the subject's point of view and to unfold the meaning of people's experience*"(Kvale, 1996, p. 1).

Qualitative data is characterised by richness and holism, making it particularly useful in discovering the meaning attached to events and processes by individuals as well as facilitating the

emergence of subjective meaning (Miles & Huberman, 1994). AS Shaw (1997) notes, the self-concept of the individual is presented through personal narrative. This emergence of meaning and theoretical constructs is particularly facilitated via semi- or un-structured interviews (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Cassell & Symonds, 1994; Mason, 1996), particularly if one's ontological position is that peoples' understandings, interactions, experiences, and interactions are important elements of that which is being studied (Mason, 1996). Similarly, semi-structured interviews are appropriate if one's epistemological position is that such personal interpretations and meanings are best accessed via a personal narrative (Kvale, 1994; Mason, 1996; Mishler, 1986). The semi-structured interview also allows contextual factors that the interviewer may be unaware of to emerge (King, 1994). The flexible nature of the semi-structured interview is relevant if the required information is relatively complex and cannot be easily accessed by the interviewee, requiring each interview to effectively be tailor-made on the spot (Mason, 1996). When researching subjects that may be difficult for interviewees to access or talk about there is a need for the researcher to listen for, and respond to cues as it is unlikely that the interviewee will be able to articulate him/herself easily in response to direct questions. This process of uncovering hidden information requires a methodological approach that is flexible and holistic, and a researcher who accepts the inherent subjectivity of the research process and is reflexive, non-argumentative, supportive and empathetic in his/her approach (Brenner, 1994; Cassell & Symonds, 1994; Kvale, 1996).

Another reason for using a qualitative interview methodology is that these emotions, thoughts, and feelings are unlikely to be accessed easily by police officers that are located by an intensely "masculine" culture in which repressive coping is dominant (Alkus & Padesky, 1980; Elison & Buckhout, 1981; Mulcahy, 1995; Reiser & Geiger, 1989; Sandler, 1989; Violanti & Aron, 1994). Even individuals who do not engage in repressive coping may find the interview experience to be unfamiliar and could thus experience a degree of discomfort or apprehension. Flexible and reflexive qualitative interviews are required to uncover these possibly repressed emotions and thoughts.

Sensitive Research

A related reason for utilising a qualitative interview strategy is that this approach is most able to minimise the potential harm to the participant. Research focusing on the self of police officers can be termed "sensitive research" that is: "*research which potentially poses a substantial threat to those who are or have been involved in it*" (Lee, 1993, p. 4). The first criteria whereby research can be termed "sensitive" is fulfilled if the research activity can be viewed as an "intrusive threat"

inasmuch as it deals with private, stressful, or sacred area (see also Kimmel, 1988). The second criteria refers to the danger that the research activity may uncover and reveal information that may be stigmatising or incriminating; while the third criteria pertains to the danger that the research process may impact on political alignments within the research domain (Lee, 1993).

The research discussed in this thesis could be seen as a threat along each of these dimensions. The self, emotions, and stressful experiences are certainly deeply private, while any information regarding mental wellbeing could be misused in an organisational setting. Similarly, any research activity is involved in the political activity of an organisation, particularly with regard to how access is gained, what information is revealed (and not revealed) in interviews, and the manner in which findings are used by the organisation.

The resultant need to minimise the real of perceived harm to the individual (Miles & Huberman, 1994) can be satisfied by the sensitive use of a qualitative interview strategy. The qualitative interview does not in itself, of course, imply that the threat or harm to the individual is minimised. What is required for both ethical and practical reasons is that the interviewer is sensitive to *any* possible threat to the participant and is able to adjust the interview process to minimise this threat (Cassell & Symonds, 1994; Lee, 1993). This requires not only that the traditional requirements of privacy, confidentiality, anonymity, and informed consent are met (Kvale, 1996), but that the participant also has a degree of control over the manner in which the information is collected and subsequently used. This need arises, in part, due to the fact that the mere suspicion that the privacy and confidentiality are not being maintained can cause the participant to experience severe anxiety and stress (Lee, 1993). Such a sharing of control over the interview process also allows for the establishment of a collaborative relationship, which facilitates the development of a degree of trust and hence the sharing of sensitive information in a manner that is non-threatening for the interview participant.

At the same time the researcher should not probe for information that may be deemed too sensitive. The exposure of private information to an interviewer can be a negative outcome for participants even if complete confidentiality is observed (Kimmel, 1988). The need for restraint and an awareness of the possible impact of having certain emotions or self-feelings aroused, but not resolved, is therefore also required in research settings exploring sensitive topics (Lee, 1993). The researcher must thus be sensitive enough to identify any possible sensitive issues that may arise as well as the ethical responsibility to act correctly once such issues have been identified (Kvale, 1996). As argued by McIntyre (1982):

The study of taboos by anthropologists and of privacy by sociologists show how important it is for a culture that certain areas of personal and social life should be specially protected. Intimacy cannot exist where everything is disclosed, sanctuary cannot be sought where no place is inviolate, integrity cannot be seen to be maintained - without protection from illegitimate pressure. (in Lee, 1993, p. 21)

Other Ethical Considerations And Concerns

In addition to these sensitive research considerations, a number of other ethical requirements must be fulfilled. Authors such as Huysamen (1994), Kvale (1996), Kimmel (1988), and Miles and Huberman (1994) have argued that researchers should ensure that their research is characterised by informed consent; confidentiality; and anonymity. Informed consent is ensured when research participants have been supplied with sufficient information regarding the purpose and format of the research before agreeing to participate. Confidentiality and anonymity are ensured by an agreement that others' access to certain research information is limited and that the participant cannot be identified or linked to any specific part of the data.

In addition, the study should aim to improve the human condition either in terms of direct benefits to the participants or in terms of theoretical contributions. Similarly, the reporting of the study should minimise possible negative consequences to the participants oand the organisation of which they are part (Kvale, 1996).

Process Followed

Choice of Organisation

The SAPS was selected as the research environment given the high suicide and absenteeism rates outlined by authors such as Nel and Steyn (1996) as well as the frequent criticism of the SAPS in the media (e.g. Goko, 1999; Schronen, 1999; Ensor, 1999; Friedman, 1999; Gifford, 1999). The general negative social feedback which police institutions appear to face all over the world (e.g Alkus & Padesky, 1980; Burke, 1993; Violanti & Aron, 1994; Violanti & Marshall, 1983; Waters & Martelli, 1989; Violanti, 1992) and the relative lack of research on this organisation in South Africa combined with current transformation efforts (find refs) also make the SAPS an attractive organisation to conduct research inasmuch as the research activity is likely to not only make a

contribution to police stress theory but may also help the organisation gain a greater understanding of the impact of working conditions on their employees.

The research process proceeded in two parts: firstly, interviews with police officers; and secondly, interviews with police psychologists.

Access to SAPS

Access to the SAPS was obtained with the assistance of Suzanne Wessels, a psychologist working for the Psychological Services of the SAPS. She was able to gain written permission for the research to proceed from the Director of Human Resources in the Western Cape, Colin Sheriff (Appendix A). Suzanne Wessels was also able to provide the researcher with a list of contact details for the Commanding Officers of the various police stations in Cape Town. Wessels also set up interview times for the second part of the research process – the interviews with the police psychologists.

Part 1

Access to Police Stations

Access to individual police stations was gained by contacting station commanders telephonically and setting up an appointment. At the appointment the purpose of the research was explained and permission requested to conduct interviews with police officers at the station. At all but one of the police stations visited permission was given to conduct interviews.

Sampling

Sampling was not random. Police stations were selected according to the perceived likelihood that police officers would experience negative social feedback from the community. As a result, police stations in predominantly non-white areas were chosen given that it was felt that the link between Apartheid and police (reviewed earlier) would result in higher levels of hostility in these areas. The police stations at which interviews took place were: Athlone, Guguletu, Grassy Park, Manenberg, Philippi, and Woodstock.

Sampling at an individual level was also not random. The reality of the organisation dictated that that, having gained access through individual station commanders it was left to these commanders to determine which police officers could be interviewed. The letter of permission to conduct research (Appendix A) also set out that police duties should not be interfered with and station commanders thus had to be relied on to determine who had time to be interviewed. A total of 13

formal interviews were conducted with police officers with a number of other informal conversations with other officers also taking place. A total of 11 men and two women were interviewed, with four interviewees being White and nine being Coloured.

Interview Content

The interviews all focused on a number of key issues: motivation for joining the police force; the nature of the police-community relationship; the individual's experience of this relationship; the impact of the relationship on the participant's non-work life; the experience of negative media coverage of the police; general workplace problems; and perceived solutions to the problems brought up.

The researcher made use of a interview schedule (Appendix B) but used the questions contained therein as a guide and allowed the interview to proceed in a flexible fashion allowing the researcher to probe some areas in greater detail, and thus facilitate the emergence of meaning (King, 1994). Mishler (1986) rejects the claim that all interviewees should receive exactly the same questions in the same order. Interviewing should thus be seen as a form of discourse in which both the interviewer and interviewer shape and organise the interview.

Interview Process

All interviews took place in offices in the individual police stations. Before the interview began a number of preliminary issues were dealt with: the purpose of the research and structure of the interview was explained to each participant; and each participant was assured of anonymity and assured that all information would remain confidential. Only then was each participant asked whether he/she wished to take part in order to establish informed consent. Once informed consent was established each interviewee was reminded that he/she was under no obligation to complete the interview or answer all the questions.

All interviews took place on a one-on-one basis; the rationale being that disclosure of potentially sensitive information would be inhibited by the presence of peers or colleagues (Mostyn, 1985), particularly in an organisation that is characterised by a culture of repressive coping and the "John Wayne" syndrome of impression management. Similarly, all interviews were once-off. Lee (1993) cites researchers such as Brannen, who found that participants often found it easier to disclose sensitive information in a once-off interview. Simmel (in Lee, 1993) also found that strangers "*often receive the most surprising openness - confidences which sometimes have the*

characteristic of a confessional and which would be carefully withheld from a more closely related person" (p. 113).

The actual interviews tended to last between an hour and an hour and a half. Once completed, each participant was given the opportunity to ask any questions pertaining to the interview or the research in general. Assurances of confidentiality and anonymity were repeated and the interviewee was thanked for his/her participation.

Part 2

The second part of the research process was concerned with gaining an understanding of how police psychologists perceived the problems under investigation as well as gaining insight into the type of problems that they encounter.

The rationale was that these psychologist had not only a professional understanding of the issues facing police officers as well as a broader overview but also came into contact with police officers over a longer period of time than was possible for the researcher. An added benefit was that some of the psychologists that were interviewed had worked as police officers and were able to link their own experiences to their own professional psychological knowledge. As such a degree of triangulation was possible inasmuch as the police psychologists would be able to confirm or challenge the researcher's own interpretation and understanding of the interviews that had been conducted with police officers.

Sampling

A total of eight psychologists work for the Psychological Services of the SAPS. Five of these were interviewed based on their availability and willingness to participate. Suzanne Wessels was not formally interviewed due to her involvement in the research process

Interview Content and Process

The interviews with the psychologists were highly emergent. As in the case of the interviews with police officers, the researcher used an interview schedule as a guide (Appendix C), the content of which was based on theoretical findings, and the interviews conducted with police officers. The higher ability of the psychologists to discuss psychological phenomena as well as the fact that they were predominantly reflecting on the experiences of their client population meant that the researcher did not have to probe to the same degree as was the case when interviewing the police officers.

Data Collection

Interview data was collected through the taking of notes during all interviews and the writing up of the interview in a more expanded format directly after the interview. The researcher had originally planned to tape all interviews and to subsequently transcribe these. In reality however, all interviewees requested that interviews not be taped with, some even indicating that they would not be prepared to take part in the research if they had their voice recorded. Most participants were concerned that tapes would be listened to by police management or the members of the press. Similar problems in doing research in police organisations were also experienced by Young (1991), Reiner (1991), and Holdaway (1980)(all in Brown & Campbell, 1994); as well as Alkus and Padesky (1980). These practical consideration as well as the ethical concerns outlined above implied that interviews could not be taped. In interviews in which notes are taken the participant is able to claim inaccuracy in the note-taking should he/she ever be challenged regarding the content of an interview; an option that is not available for taped interviews. While the richness of data may be compromised, note taking ensures the peace-of-mind of participants.

Relying on notes and the memory of the interviewer has limitations due to the forgetting of details and the influence of selective memory (Kvale, 1996). At the same time, notes Kvale (1996), the interviewer's immediate memory includes visual information of the situation as well as the atmosphere of the interview that is largely lost in audio-tape recordings. Hence, "*the interviewer's active listening and remembering may ideally also work as a selective filter' retaining those very meanings that are essential for the topic and purpose of the study*" (p. 162) (see also Mostyn, 1985).

Data Analysis

The data yielded by all interviews (Part 1 and Part 2) was analysed using the framework proposed by Kvale (1996). For Kvale any information gained from interviews can be interpreted at three different levels. The first level is what the subject believes the meaning of his/her statement to be. The second level goes beyond the subjects' self-understanding and seeks to define broader themes that capture these self-understandings while still remaining within the bounds of critical common-sense understanding. In the case of this study this involved the grouping of level one statements into broader themes. The third level is fundamentally theoretical; it seeks to link the themes identified in level two with existing theoretical constructs and/or seeks to establish new theoretical insights and structures.

The results of the first two levels of analysis are contained in the next chapter with the link to theory being found in the discussion.

Both the grouping that occurs on the second level and the link to theoretical constructs at the third level requires the researcher to rely on intuition, inference, interpretation, and heuristic thinking (Mostyn, 1985; Mouton & Marais, 1990). As such the method of analysis is similar to the hermeneutic approach (Blaikie, 1993). The hermeneutic approach requires the researcher to immerse him/herself in the interview data; constantly increasing his/her understanding of the data as the various parts of the data are constantly related to each other and the complete data set (Kvale, 1996). The hermeneutic approach also requires the researcher to have a thorough understanding of that which is being spoken about in order to be sensitive to the nuances being expressed by the interviewees. As such the researcher does not enter the research setting without presuppositions. He/she cannot "jump out" out of his/her own theoretical understanding, and should not attempt to do so, but should rather be aware of his/her interpretative biases in order to ensure that unjustified meaning is not imposed on data. As such, the hermeneutic approach is not only a theory of understanding but also a theory of self-understanding (Smith, 1993).

The researcher is thus faced with the situation where he/she is required to engage in an empathetic, reflexive relationship to the interviewees as well as entering the research setting with a particular theoretical understanding and expectation, but at the same must remain objective enough to ensure that the findings retain their validity and are not simply a reflection of his/her own presuppositions (Gergen & Gergen, 1992). This is particularly difficult given that the qualitative methodology in general and Kvale's framework in particular does not strive for a strictly objective approach to data given that a degree of interpretation is required to uncover how individual's make sense of their world (King, 1994). The researcher must however remain aware of his/her horizon of meaning (Blaikie, 1993) and allow him/herself to be surprised by his/her data (King, 1994)

Weaknesses and Limitations of Methodology

Besides the already discussed issue of not being able to audio-tape interviews a number of other methodological limitations can be noted.

Firstly, the research focused on only a limited number of police stations located in largely non-white areas, whose relationship with the community is probably largely informed by the lingering association between the police and apartheid. The relationships between police and community in traditionally white suburbs were not explored.

Linguistic factors may have impacted on the interview findings. A common linguistic culture is helpful in obtaining a clear, unbiased understanding of the interview for both participant and interviewer (Mishler, 1986), and given that the first-language of most participants was Afrikaans some clarity may have been lost. Most participants however seemed well able to express themselves in English. Participants must also have the vocabulary to discuss the issue being investigated (Lee, 1993). Thus: "*...if our ways of talking are limited in any way, then our understanding of experience of ourselves and our reality experienced in interviews that require the individual to reflect on his/her own experience will, by the same token, be limited*" (Shotter, 1984, p. 173).

A further methodological limitation refers to the lack of random sampling. Senior officers determined who was to be interviewed and may have referred me to their "star" officers, given that they themselves were engaging in a type of impression management process. Having been referred to them by the HR Director may have made the commanding officers wary of having their station evaluated. On more than one occasion interviewees were introduced to me as one of their "top detectives" (or officers, constables etc).

The final limitation refers to the tendency for individuals to engage in impression management (Baumeister, 1982; Bozeman & Kacmar, 1997; Bromley, 1993; Leary, 1995; Leary & Kowalski, 1990; Schlenker, 1980; Schneider, 1981; Stevens & Kristof, 1995). Individuals are motivated to present themselves as being consistent and as having high self-esteem as this prevents them from being seen as unstable, unreliable and lacking in credibility (Tedeschi & Riess, 1981) particularly given that individuals tend to believe that all their personal characteristics should be attributed to internal causes (Jellison, 1981).

These limitations indicate that the findings of this research can only be applied to different police stations and police officers with caution. At the same it must be noted that it was never the intention of this research to be generalised in any way; rather the researcher attempted to gain an understanding of the manner in which specific police officers experienced the interactions with the specific communities in which they work as well as hoping to establish whether or not this relationship is *ever* a source of negative impact on police officers.

Reliability and Validity

Considerations of reliability and validity are often central to a discussion of a methodology's suitability. At the same these considerations can become too important. Brenner (1985), for instance, argues that an uncritical, quantitative approach to data collection is often incompatible with the actual psychological conditions in which data are collected. Deutscher (1966, in Brenner, 1985) goes even further, arguing that the adoption of the scientific model in the social sciences is fundamental misplaced. *"We concentrate on consistency without much concern with what it is we are being consistent about or whether we are consistently right or wrong. As a consequence we may have been learning a great deal about how to pursue an incorrect course with a maximum of precision"* (p. 147).

The reliability and validity of qualitative data can rarely be determined due to the one-off nature of the most qualitative research projects (Mostyn, 1985) and the fact that the interpretative action is itself located in a particular context. A change in context may result in a consonant change in interpretation.

It is furthermore likely that the lack of audio-taping will have reduced the reliability of the data but this will have to be accepted given the overriding importance of ethical concerns in any research setting, particularly in one in which potentially sensitive topics are discussed.

Reliability and generalisability is also likely to be affected in any research activity making use of volunteers. Kimmel (1988) argued that volunteers tend to be better educated, higher in social class, more intelligent, more sociable, and in greater need for social approval than non-volunteers; and are thus not representative of the general population. The primary purpose of this study is, of course, not generalisability across populations and contexts but rather the attainment of an increased understanding of how negative social feedback (if it exists) impacts on the experience of the individual of him/herself in the specific context in which he/she is located.

Conclusion

The methodology utilised in this research was selected to suit the specific research context and subject of investigation. As such it had to allow for the numerous ethical considerations that arise when doing any research in an organisation, particularly research that is considered "sensitive" by the research participant. In addition, the methodology had to allow for the emergence of subjective meaning and allow individuals to engage with the researcher in the process of interpreting and reflecting on experiences, given that it was the subjective experience of events and interactions that determines the impact on the sense of self and that also reflect that impact. These requirements have been satisfied by the flexible interview strategy chosen for this research activity.

Chapter 7: Results

Introduction

The results of the two sets of interviews: with police officers, and police psychologists, can be divided into two broad categories: the perception of the officer regarding the type of environment in which he/she is located, and the perceived consequences of being located in such an environment. Within each of these categories a number of themes emerged through the analysis of data, and it is the aim of this chapter to present these themes.

The inability to use a tape recorder in the course of the interviews, discussed in the methodology chapter, meant that relatively few direct quotes can be reproduced.

Perceptions of the Environment

The manner in which the police officers perceive the environment in which they are located can be divided into six categories: the hostility of the community; the lack of co-operation from the community; the lack of positive feedback from the community; their perception of their own reasons for joining the SAPS; not having their initial expectations of police work met; and the lack of support received from those they believe should be allied to them.

Hostility of the Community

All police officers and all psychologists interviewed acknowledged the presence of a hostile community. The manifestation of such hostility ranged from verbal abuse (*"they swear at you a lot, all the time, mostly the skollies"*) and being racially insulted, mocked (*"can you spell that?"*), or lauged at, to physical abuse (being spat at, shot at, having bricks thrown at, or being beaten). Ten officers argued that such incidences of public hostility occured on a daily basis, with only three maintaining that they occurred once or twice a week. Two officers illustrated the problem by explaining that to make an arrest up to 20 police officers had to be present in order to be safe in the face of hostile crowds.The hostility of the community was also confirmed by two community leaders that the researcher spoke to briefly, one of whom indicated that between 5% and 10% of the community in which she worked habitually aimed abuse at police officers.

Most of the longer serving officers indicated that the police-community relationship had gotten a lot worse in the past few years (*"look, 30 years ago you got respect as a policeman but now.... (despairing hand gesture) "*). The deterioration of the police-community relationship was also

acknowledged by all of the psychologists who traced it to the political and organisational changes since 1994 that created uncertainty in police officers regarding their function.

Almost half (six) of the officers indicated that the main reason why such negative social feedback is so difficult to cope with is the fact that the police officer is expected to remain courteous and polite at all times whereas the public rarely behaves in such a manner.

Five officers also indicated that it was sad that the community does not understand the reality of police work. This manifests itself in children being scared of police officers; being confused with traffic officers (*"they wanted to know 'can we park here'"*); and in having unreasonable demands placed on them. Nine police officers complained that one of the reasons for the hostility is that there is often only a single police car available meaning that some complaints cannot be dealt with effectively or on time.

Lack of Co-operation from the Community

About half (seven) of the police officers interviewed noted that they felt that the community in no significant way supported or assisted in their attempts to fight crime. One officer, for instance, argued that the only time that information is provided is in return for money (*"the only morals here are money"*). Anger was also expressed by some officers that the police is more committed to bettering the community than the people who actually live in the community.

Lack of Positive Feedback

About half of the interviewees indicated that it was not only the presence of negative feedback from the community that was difficult to cope with but also the complete lack of positive feedback in any form and the fact that the public is so difficult to satisfy (*"it's impossible to satisfy them"; "do what you like, they won't appreciate it"; "I can't be a marriage counsellor, social worker, pastor, and policeman"*). In rare cases where positive feedback was received, officers claimed that it was highly rewarding. *"It's very nice when people come and say thank you"*.Officers spoke warmly of instances were they had received letters of thanks; or where people had come in over Christmas to provide them with food, but also regretted that such instances were very rare.

Motivation for joining the SAPS

Eight of the thirteen officers indicated that their main motivation for joining the SAPS was one of fighting crime and thereby serving the community. Only one indicated that he was not sure why he joined; the rest citing the influence of relatives who were already in the SAPS.

Unmet Expectations

Six of the interviewees indicated that the expectations of police work and the SAPS which they had when recruits had not been met. These unmet expectations related mainly to the lack of resources, the administrative burden, and the hostility of the public. Some interviewees indicated that the excessive paperwork and overworked courts meant that they had to ignore petty crimes and that this was difficult to deal with. This problem was also acknowledged by the psychologists (*"when they join they want to change the world"*).

Lack of Support from Supposed Allies

An issue that was discussed by all police officers and psychologists that were interviewed was the fact that officers feel that they have been abandoned and betrayed by a number of groups of people or institutions that should in fact be supporting them.

1. Management - Almost all interviewees argued passionately that they felt that police management was not doing their job properly. The complaints regarding management included: lack of emotional support; incompetence; making excessively high promises to the public; taking the side of the community when allegations of misconduct arise; implying that all police officers in an area are corrupt; and not providing sufficient resources for the completion of policing duties. (*"They don't give the police enough resources and don't treat their subordinates with respect or care"*). A psychologist referred to a case where a officer suffering from PTSD was never phoned or visited by a superior despite being absent from work for a number of weeks. Similarly, another psychologist argued that police officers perceived the SAPS to no longer be a family and that police officers believed that management would drop then *"like a hot potato"* in a crisis whereas they would have supported previously.
2. Co-Workers - A few interviewees, including one psychologist, raised the concern that is was difficult to do one's job when a number of other officers were incompetent, unmotivated, and lazy. The complaint was that their job load was merely shifted onto others and that everyone looked bad.

3. Courts - The lack of support from the courts was another issue raised by nearly all (eleven) officers interviewed. This perceived lack of support ranged from lenient sentences; a low conviction rate; being kept in court on their-off days; and being treated like a criminal by the courts. three officers also referred angrily to a recent court ruling which allegedly stated that police officers must endure verbal abuse from members of the public as it is part of their job despite the fact that it is allegedly a criminal offence.(*"the court said that policemen have no dignity and must just take it"; "am I part of the constitution, the bill of rights, and the system?")*
4. Government - The main complaint regarding government including the perception that government was undermining the police by implying that it was corrupt and inefficient; passing poor laws; and enforcing unwanted change on the organisation. One interviewee also cited the example of police officers finding out via newspapers and television that they would have to appear before the Truth and Reconciliation Commission rather than being personally informed.
5. The Law - The recent introduction of stringent guidelines regarding the use of firearms by police officers in the carrying out of their duties was another almost universal complaint. Officers complained of having been disempowered completely by these new guidelines which, alledgedly, make policing more dangerous and difficult (*"the police has been castrated"*). One officer illustrated this by saying that if he walked in on a shop being robbed he would not draw his weapon to shoot the suspects as a murder docket would be opened against him and any promotion would be placed on hold until the investigation was completed. This particular complaint was voiced by nearly all officers interviewed (ten of out thirteen). Feelings of anger, exasperation, and incredulity were expressed by all interviewees. (*"The police is treated more like a criminal that the criminals"*).
6. The Media - Media coverage of the police was generally perceived to be biased. Only one officer felt that the exposure of corrupt police officers was justified and fair. The rest felt that all officers were being painted with the same brush and that public hostility and lack of cooperation was only increasing as a result of the predominantly negative media coverage. Two officers stated that they experienced the media coverage as so traumatic that they do not even watch television news or read newspapers. One officer recalled how she had broken down in tears in front of the television when the police were being portrayed as incompetent and corrupt; another stating that: *"I hate the media"*. This impact on police officers was confirmed by the psychologists who argued that it became very difficult to show enthusiasm for one's work when was

continously criticised by the media (" *you are damned if you do and damned if you don't"*).

Remuneration

About a third of the interviewees spontaneously voiced their concerns regarding what they perceive to be inadequate remuneration for their work. Most of the psychologists interviewed also argued that this was one of the biggest stressors for officers some of whom took home only R200 at the end of the month after home loan, and medical and life insurance. Other officers however argued that remuneration was adequate.

Perceived Consequences

This section of the results can also be divided into a number of sections. These are: the immediate response to the hostility; changes in the individual; impact on non-work life; and attitude toward the problem of poor police-community relations.

Response to the Hostility

The immediate response of police officers can in turn be divided into three categories. The first response admitted to by some officers, was one of fear. *"I was really afraid. It was good that there was someone else in the charge office"; "We had to run for our lives"; "you can't walk here on your own"*. The second response, felt by all officers, was one of anger. The third response, also discussed by nearly all officers, is the tendency to repress all emotional responses to hostility from the public. (*"You just have to tip your hat and smile at them or laugh it off";"We don't talk about it - it's part of the job")* The psychologists also noted this tendency to attempt to repress emotion attributing both to a "macho" culture and a lack of trust in the Psychological Services (*"I'm not seeing what I should be seeing"*).

Changes in the Individual

Eight of the police officers and four of the psychologists that were interviewed indicated that some type of change had occurs in officers by becoming a member of the police force. Most of the police officers and all of the psychologists interviewed linked such changes, at least in part, to the continuous negative social feedback received from the public. The types of change that individuals perceive to have occured varied fairly widely and many officers appeared to find it difficult explaining what the impact was and could only explain the impact in general terms (*"it is*

very difficult when the community hates you"; "it sits in you, and you don't want it to come out"; "I carry a lot of frustration in my heart"; "it's a nice feeling when people support you but not lekker when people don't"). Two of the psychologists had first-hand experience of public hostility toward police officers and both acknowledged that it was very difficult to cope with (*"public opinion got to me"; "So much energy is wasted in keeping up your integrity; that you can't fight any other stressors").*

The most common changes mentioned by police officers included behavioural changes such as: increased smoking, drinking, aggression (*"...some just trigger off (get angry)")*, swearing, attending fewer church activities; as well as attitudinal/cognitive changes such as: laziness; tiredness, suspiciousness; "becoming harder" (*"I no longer care about crime victims"*); questioning the value of police work; (*"why am I still doing this?")* and lowered respect for the SAPS and the community in which they work. (*"I've become more hard and suspicious").* Most of these behavioural changes were also referred to by the psychologists that were interviewed, some of which, such as laziness, lowered respect for community, and lowered committment, were thought to occur as a direct consequence of hostility from the public. All psychologists noted that morale in the SAPS was very low with one noting that a certain degree of paranoia has set in as a result leading to even more repressive coping given that they do not believe that they can confide in or trust anyone.

Affective changes referred to by police officers included feelings of sadness and helplessness (*"the police officers is here to serve but constantly gets a rrough time"; "the policeman constantly gets it in the back - he does not know where to turn for help").* The psychologists also referred to increased feelings of helplessness amongst officers as well as the behavioural changes noted above. In addition, the psychologists noted a tendency for officers to engage in spousal abuse, and develop emotional bluntness; a external locus of control; a lack of self-respect and lack of self-belief (*"if you are told negative things about yourself 10 times a day then after a while you start to believe it yourself"*); as well as a tendency to become desensitised to hostility and violence. One officer thought that hostility from the public contributes to police suicides. He thought that officers ask themselves "*what is wrong with me?*", when receiving insults, particularly when they are trying their best.

Impact on Non-Work Life

The interviewees can be divided into two groups with regard to the impact of negative social feedback and other work stressors on the non-work life of interviewees. The first group, eight out of thirteen, maintained that work stressors, such as relationship problems with the community, did

not impact on their non-work life. Most of the individuals in this group argued that they consciously avoided talking about or even thinking about problems related to work when away from work, although most of these individuals maintained that this split between work and non-work was difficult to maintain. Three individuals went so far as to refer to having "split-personalities"; one in terms of his work and non-work life, one in terms of the two persona's that they have to maintain when interacting with hostile and friendly members of the community, and one in terms of both these cases. The psychologists also referred to this tendency of having two completely separate lives.

The individuals in the second group, five out of thirteen, said that they found it difficult not to take their work problems with them and that they often took it out on their families and friends. Examples of this included shouting at children, being overtired, and having to be physically restrained by parents and brothers because work related anger is expressed toward the family. Psychologists also referred to the difficulty of *"not taking stuff with you"*.

Both psychologists and police officers referred to the intrusion of police work into private life. This mainly took the form of being treated like a police officers even when off work, and being faced with possibility of being called to work at any time. One interviewee recalled an occassion when a colleague was called to work as he was about to drive away on holiday with his family; another said *"when you sign up with the police you become the property of the state"*;and a third recalled how he had been verbally abused in a pub merely because someone recognised him as a police officer.

Attitude toward problem of Police-Community Relationship

All of the interviewees indiciated that they see little hope for an improved relationship between the SAPS and community in which they work, at least in the short- to medium-term (*"what can you do?"; "maybe if we get to the children, we need a new generation"*). A high number of officers (six) expressed concern that parents were teaching their children to be hostile toward the police by setting a bad example. The absence of positive role-models; socio-economic factors; historical factors such as the role of the police in enforcing apartheid; and the hero-worship of gangsters in many communities were also acknowledged by interviewees as reasons for the dislike and open hostility that is displayed toward the SAPS.

A Vicious Circle

A number of officers and psychologists explained how a number of factors (poor pay, negative social feedback, poor management) were leading to a sense of apathy amongst police officers which in turn results in further negative reactions from the community who see the police as being ineffective, corrupt, and lazy.

Use of Psychological Services

The police officers indicated, without exception, that they would not use the Psychological Services of the SAPS. Most indicated a suspicion of the confidentiality of any information disclosed to in-house helping services (*"if you go you're marked)*, and a dislke of the stigma attached to such services (*"everyone thinks that you are mad")* while some also indicated that they long waiting period made such help ineffective. This lack of trust was also freely acknowledged by all psychologists interviewed.

Mediating Factors

From the interviews two factors could be identified that mediate the impact of the negative social feedback on the individual: race; and the length of time spent in the SAPS.

Race

The interviews indicate that the four white police officers (all male) that were interviewed all claimed that the negative social feedback from the community does not impact on them in a too significant way. Non-white officer all spoke of emotional responses to negative feedback and the difficulty of coping with such feedback. One white officer argued that coloured officers *"get down to their (*the community) *level"* and that for him *"the community does not give me stress - the police force does"*. One of the psychologists also indicated that black officers in general and white officers working in non-white areas suffered the most under the verbal abuse aimed at the police.

Length of time spent with SAPS

The impact of negative social feedback tended to be lower for those officers who had been with the SAPS for longer. The newest member, a reservist, appeared genuinely distressed by the level of hostility aimed at her whereas some officers who had served between 7 and 15 years claimed that they impact was not particularly great, although nearly all of these longer-serving officers referred to having changed since joining the SAPS. One of these also argued that new officers

"become lazy after a few weeks of working". Some of the psychologists also referred to the high degree of disillusionment among new police officers

Observational Factors

Two key additional factors emerged from the interviews; although neither was often explicitly stated by the interviewees.

Unwillingness to be Audiotaped

All of the officers interviewed were clearly uncomfortable with being taped (discussed earlier). A few claimed that this was the result of being embarassed to have their voice recorded but the majority indicated that they were afraid that any recorded material would be used against them at some future dates. The main concern voiced by individuals regarded the possibility that either police management or the media would gain access to the tapes and that the individuals would suffer as a result. Similarly, most officers would not provide me with their surnames (*"I would prefer not to tell you"*).

Difficulty Accessing Affective Components of Self

With two exceptions, all the officers, exhibited great difficulty accessing and discussing their emotional, and even cognitive, responses to situations of negative social feedback. This difficulty extended to both the immediate and long-term responses. Questions had to be repeatedly rephrased and the interviewer was required to engage in much probing to uncover these responses.

Chapter 8: Discussion

Introduction

Like a number of other researchers who have investigated the police (e.g. Alkus & Padesky, 1980; Violanti & Aron, 1994; Waters & Martelli, 1989), this author found that police officers tend to experience the interaction with members of the public to be characterised by hostility. Most of these researchers however suggested that such negative feedback is merely experienced as stressful by the individual officer whereas the findings of this research also indicate an impact on the sense of self of the officer experiencing such negative feedback. This impact is manifest both in terms of the quality of the self as well as the structure of that same self. These conclusions can be drawn from both the interviews with police officers and those conducted with police psychologists.

This chapter will focus on illustrating that negative social feedback significantly restricts the ability of the police officer to experience both *self-enhancement* (e.g. Epstein, 1973; Jussim,Yen, & Aiello, 1995) and *self-consistency* (e.g. Gergen, 1971; Swann, Griffin, Predmore, & Gaines, 1987; Jussim, Yen, & Aiello, 1995). These conclusions are drawn from the manner in which police officers spoke about their work experiences; themselves; the communities in which they work; the SAPS; society as a whole; and their non-work lives is indicative of a self that is characterised by a number of negative features. Kuiper, MacDonald, and Derry (1983) emphasise that the self is involved in the interpretation of events as well as the transformation and organisation of the information derived from these interpretations. A negatively impacted upon sense of self should thus manifest via a change in the manner in which events are both interpreted and organised in memory. Both of these impacts appear to have occurred.

Following on the discussion of these two main concerns, this chapter will also discuss a number of secondary findings. These include the support given to the theoretical frameworks proposed by James (1890) and Mead (1934); the mediating impact of race; job expectations; and length of service on the impact on the sense of self, as well as the confirmation of a number of factors that prevent the police officer from coping effectively

with the negative social feedback encountered by him/her in the course of work e.g. repressive coping, and social isolation.

Impact on the Quality of the Self

The findings of this research allow one to conclude that police work in general, and negative social feedback specifically has impacted negatively upon the quality of the sense of self of individual police officers. The need for self-enhancement is thus frustrated. As such these findings are in line with those of, for example, Anderzen, Reznik, and Chen (1997); Felson (1989); Rosenberg (1979, 1981); and Turner and Onarato (1999), who found that individuals tend to see themselves as others see them.

This impact was manifest in the interviews in four key ways: the immediate emotional response to instances negative social feedback; changed behaviour patterns; changes in the manner in which individual police officers feel and think about both themselves; and changes in the manner in which police officers feel and think about the community, the society, and the organisation in which they are located.

Immediate Affective Response

The immediate affective responses indicated by police officers when confronted by face-to-face hostility and negative media reports included feelings of anger, fear, and frustration (e.g. "*I was really afraid…*" and "*we had to run for our lives*"). As such these findings are similar to those of Alkus and Padesky (1980; Burke (1993); Violanti and Aron (1994); and Waters and Martelli (1989). All three of these emotions indicate a short-term change in the manner in which the individual perceives the social context in which he/she is located at that moment. Such momentary changes in the way in which the social world is perceived may, if repeated regularly, become internalised to the degree that police officers experience these emotions whenever in a work situation; referred to as *schema triggered expectancies* by Andersen, Reznik, and Chen (1997) (see also Markus & Wurf, 1987). These emotions may include a consistent sense of fear that hostility may be experienced at any moment or a generalised sense of frustration with the lack of co-

operation received from the community. This internalisation is made particularly likely if such emotions may not be expressed as and when they are felt as is the case with police work.

These emotional responses to situations of public hostility are also indicative of a sense of helplessness inasmuch as individuals tend to respond in an active, and not an emotive, manner when they perceive that the situation can be impacted upon (Lazarus, 1993). Most of the officers that were interviewed did not believe that the negative relationship with the community can be impacted upon by them.

Behavioural Changes

The behavioural changes referred to by police officers i.e. higher incidence of drinking, smoking swearing, higher levels of aggressive behaviour; and changes in religious activities (see also Munshi, 1998), may be interpreted as coping mechanisms, but can also be interpreted as a changed self-conception inasmuch as some officers indicated that they would not previously have engaged in such behaviour. Similarly, the behavioural changes referred to by the psychologists, such as increased levels of spousal abuse (see also Marks, 1995), also suggest a change in the self that underlies the behaviour engaged in by police officer (Rhodewalt & Agustsdottir, 1986).

Changed Cognitions Regarding the Individual

Police officers tended to feel that they had undergone significant personal changes since joining the SAPS and where able to assign the cause in part to the hostility from the community and the media. References to increased emotional "hardness"; and feelings of sadness and helplessness all suggest a change in the manner in which the individual perceives him/herself (e.g. *it is very difficult when the community hates you"; "it sits in you, and you don't want it to come out"; "I carry a lot of frustration in my heart"; "I no longer care about crime victims").* Similarly, the references of some psychologists to low levels of self-esteem and morale; emotional bluntness; and a lack of self-belief, all suggest that the sense of self of police officers has been negatively affected. The claim that such

changes in the self are at least partly caused by negative social feedback was backed up most of the psychologists interviewed.

Changed Cognitions Regarding the Community

Police officers tend to view the communities in which they work as fundamentally hostile toward them and see themselves as being psychologically isolated from these communities. Many officers believe that they are being "maximally excluded' (Leary, 1990, p. 222). This belief is caused not only by the experience of verbal and physical abuse but also by the complete lack of assistance given to police officers in their attempts to reduce crime within the various communities. As a result officers also feel unappreciated and experience a sense of helplessness, despondency, as well as reduced motivation (e.g. *"it's impossible to satisfy them"; "do what you like, they won't appreciate it").*

It is also noteworthy that police officers do not only perceive parts of the community to be hostile toward them but also perceive the rejection of them to be almost completely consensual (e.g. *"look, 30 years ago you got respect as a policeman but now...."*) a perception that makes a negative impact on the sense of self more likely (Rosenberg, 1979; Shrauger & Schoeneman, 1979). Most police officers appear to accept that some hostility toward the police is inevitable but many of them also expressed disbelief at the complete lack of co-operation from any members of the community. Many police officers also resented the fact that their work was characterised by a high degree of subservience to the public (see also Gaines & Jermier, 1983). Similarly to Fischer's (1984) findings these results indicate an intense disturbance of the police officer's sense of social order and sense of community. The belief that there exist shared values and beliefs appears to have been undercut.

Cognitions Regarding Society

The perceived isolation of police officers extends beyond the boundaries of the specific communities in which they work. The degree to which officers spoke negatively of their experiences with the media is similar to the findings of White, Lawrence, Biggerstaff, and

Grubb (1985) who showed that negative press accounts were ranked among the top police stressors (see also Brown & Campbell, 1990; Flanagan & Vaughn, 1996). Although negative media reports on the police can be interpreted as being just another source of negative feedback, it can also be seen as having a significantly different impact to that of the hostile face-to-face interaction experienced by police officers. References made by police officers regarding the impact of the media and their attitude toward the media indicate that police officers feel that society in general does not understand or appreciate the work that police officers do and has isolated them unfairly. Some officers even went so far as to say that they no longer felt that they were part of the entire social system due to the negative experiences that characterise their experiences with the courts, media, and the government. The belief in a shared system of beliefs has thus been undercut.

The intense dislike of the media voiced by nearly all police officers and the often voiced fear that information provided to the researcher would be published by newspapers are may be symptomatic of entrenched feelings of paranoia and extreme defensiveness as well as a general sense of abandonment. The officer appears to see him/herself as being the victim of a sensationalist media and a general public that sees all officers as being alike. It is also likely that the type of suspiciousness shown toward the researcher will also characterise their interaction with other outsiders (Alkus & Padesky, 1980; Brown & Campbell, 1994).

Changed Cognitions Regarding the SAPS

This belief in the existence of shared values has not only been undercut with regard to the community and society in general but with regard to the organisation as well. As noted by a number of psychologists, police officers no longer see the SAPS as a family or a close knit community. The perceived lack of support from co-workers and management as well as the imposition of organisational changes such as the Affirmative Action and new guidelines governing police behaviour have created a perception among some police officers that they no longer enjoy significant support from significant others within the organisation (e.g. *"They don't give the police enough resources and don't treat their subordinates with respect or care").*

Conclusion Regarding Self-Enhancement

Overall police officers view the social world as being fundamentally hostile to them; which indicates a changed perception of their position in this social world. Officers clearly see themselves as unfairly isolated, feared and despised, and completely misunderstood; a degree of paranoia that was also found to exist in police officers by the likes of Kirkham (1975, in Alkus & Padesky, 1980). As such these findings are in line with the conclusion drawn by Beutler, Nussbaum, and Meredith (1988) that *"police service is associated with adverse psychological changes among officers"* (p. 506) and those of Patterson (1989), and Violanti and Marshall (1983) who noted a shift toward a more cynical attitude toward life among police officers.

All these changes that were found to have occurred regarding the manner in which police officers view themselves and interpret the world in which they are located suggest a fundamentally negative shift in the sense of self. The loss of respect for themselves, the SAPS, the community and society in general indicated by police officers suggests a profound shift in the way in which the individual sees the world. The fact that working conditions caused this negative sense of self is supported by the fact that almost all police officers indicated that they had joined the police force with a great degree of optimism, motivation, commitment, and desire to serve the community (see also Berold, 1999). The lack of continuous validation for this positive sense of self does not however allow this positive self to be maintained (Rosenberg, 1979; Dodds, Lawrence, & Valsiner, 1997). The positive self is thus rapidly replaced by one that is more cynical and negative toward work, the organisation, and the communities in which the individual works. This is particularly the case given that the continuous nature of the negative feedback makes negative information about the self far more accessible to the individual, particularly when located in the environment in which the negative feedback usually occurs.

This negative impact on the self at work is of particular concern given that for most of these police officers (and reservists) police work is a super-ordinate role (Rosenberg & Gara, 1979). The do their work in order to help the communities in which they work and

their work is thus as important to the manner in which they see themselves as was suggested by authors such as Brief and Nord (1990); Hochschild (1981); Neikrug (1982); O'Brien (1992); and Shamir (1986). Individuals tend to seek a sense of purpose, social relationships, and an enhancement of the self-concept from work (Locke & Taylor, 1990; Nord, Brief, Atieh, & Doherty, 1990) but these needs appear to be frustrated in the environment in which the participants work.

It is furthermore important to note that the feelings toward self and society are characterised by more than the general sense of ambivalence that, according Crocker and Major (1989), is in itself indicative of a negatively affected sense of self. The issues outlined above indicate that the attitude toward self, community, society, and organisation are *actively negative rather than merely indifferent.*

Impact On The Structure of the Self

The findings of this research allow one to conclude that the negative social feedback experienced by police officers has not frustrated their need for self-enhancement, but has also contributed to an inconsistent sense of self for at least half of those police officers that were interviewed. The references to different behaviour patterns and cognitions when at home as opposed to work, made by some police officers and psychologists indicate that individuals have not attained a *particular* view of themselves and that the structure of the self is no longer characterised by consistency across time and situations. The "*inner unity*" referred to by Harre (1987, p. 42) is absent, resulting in the possible breakdown of the "*identity structure*" (Rosenberg & Gara, 1985, p. 90).

Roughly half of all officers that were interviewed indicated that the purposefully did not talk about their work experiences when away from work and that they were different persons at home than when at work. The contextual nature of the self referred to by authors such as Markus and Wurf (1987), Turner and Onorato (1999), and Rhodewalt and Agustsdottir (1986) and the "self-with-other" idea of Andersen, Reznik, and Chen (1997) was thus confirmed.

The fact that two officers went so far as to talk about having a "split-personality" indicates that some officers are unable or unwilling to maintain a consistent set of behaviour or cognitions i.e. a consistent sense of self. This splitting of the self also noted by authors ranging from James (1890) to Bruner and Kalmar (1998), Elliot (1986), Strasser (1984), and Scheier and Carver (1983) has been linked to feelings of emptiness, self-destructiveness, withdrawal of emotional life, deep feelings of unhappiness, and the reckless pursuit of desire; similar to some of the issues which police psychologists reported police officers to be experiencing. A number of authors have established that the absence of adequate social support makes such a splitting of the self even more likely (e.g. Allen & van de Vliert, 1984; Boyanowsky, 1984; Elliot, 1986; Bruner & Kalmar, 1998).

In particular it would appear that the work self is not only characterised by a greater degree of negative emotion and behaviour but that the non-work self sees the expression of many of the emotions built-up at work. Termed the "carry-over effect" by Jones, Rhodewalt, Berglas, and Skelton (1981), this may occur when individuals are unable to disengage from their "working selves" and carry the associated behaviour and cognitive patterns over into an environment in which they are no longer appropriate. These emotions, expressed away from work, are repressed at work due not only to a culture of repressive coping but also due the fact that police work does not allow the expression of emotion as and when it is evoked (Alkus & Padesky, 1980; Elison & Buckhout, 1981; Melville, 1999; Mulcahy, 1995; Munshi, 1998; Reiser & Geiger, 1989; Sandler, 1989; Violanti, 1992; and Violanti & Aron, 1994).

References to the frustration of not being able to satisfy the expectations of the community also indicate that some police officers experience a discrepancy between their ideal or ought self and their actual self (Higgins, 1987; Higgins, Klein, & Strauman, 1987). This conclusion is backed up by the fact that the resultant feelings of sadness, anger, dissatisfaction and disappointment predicted by these authors was evident among police officers and also referred to by police psychologists.

Support for Frameworks of James and Mead

Although the findings indicate both the presence of high levels of negative social feedback and a relatively negative sense of self among police officers, a direct causal link between the two is difficult to establish. Indeed, many of the negative impacts on the self could also be explained in terms of other theoretical perspectives such as social identity theory, or equity theory. As indicated in the findings, few police officers were able to explain the effect that the type of repeated negative feedback that they referred to had on them in any detail – a finding that is not surprising given that the mechanisms underlying the frameworks of the likes of Mead are largely subconscious. At the same time it should be noted that the police psychologists tended to agree that the abuse and hostility aimed at police officers from the various sources discussed tends to result in lowered self-esteem and a poorer self-concept; a conclusion that finds support in some of the statements of police officers who indicated that the constant negative feedback causes them to feel disillusioned, unhappy, cynical, and frustrated. Simply put, individuals come to see themselves as they believe others to see them (Allport, 1979). If social feedback indicates that society i.e. the generalised other, perceives the individual negatively then he/she will internalise a similar conception of him/herself

Support For William James

The findings indicate clear support for the general position taken by James. Not only is positive regard from others i.e. the community, management, the courts etc, important to police officers in a purely cognitive way but it also to the degree that it determines the manner in which the police officer feels about him/herself and the environment in which he/she is located. The impact on the self has however manifest not only the level of the social self. The stable attributes and self-feelings that characterise the spiritual self in James' framework have also been impacted upon.

The idea of social splitting or of having multiple social selves, is also clearly illustrated by these findings. Although not occurring for all officers, there appeared to be two types of social splitting. The first of these is the split between the work and non-work self; the

second being the split between different work selves, that is, having a different self for two different communities. This splitting of the self suggest also an impact on the pure ego given that there is no longer an "unbrokenness in the stream of selves" (James, 1890, p. 298).

Contrary to James' position however, these findings indicate that it is not only the feedback from significant others that impacts on the sense of self of the individuals, but that the opinions of relative strangers also impact on the self; a finding that was also made by Hortacsu (1989).

Support For George Herbert Mead

It is difficult to establish support for the precise process proposed by Mead whereby the self is formed and maintained given that is largely a sub-conscious process. At the same time these findings clearly support Rosenberg's (1981) position that social experience and interaction as well as the individual's location in the social structure are important influences on the self. The frustration, sadness, hopelessness, and sense of isolation experienced by police officers was linked both by themselves and police psychologists to the negative regard they receive from the public, the media, and the police organisation.

Besides this realisation that the feedback from others is crucial in the formation of the self, a number of other key concepts of Mead's also appear to find support in these findings. Most notable amongst these is that of "reflected appraisals". The low self-respect referred to by psychologists and police officers was clearly partially caused by the lack of respect from others. It is this lack of respect from the generalised other that is leading to a negative "Me" which is then inspected by the "I".

Similarly, Mead's concern with the consequences of a split self such as that found among some police officers is echoed by these findings. The references made by some police officers to a "*split personality*" are similar to Mead's concern regarding the "*break up of the personality*" (p. 143).

As such these findings support the theoretical frameworks of Mead, James, and others outlined earlier that propose that negative regard from others will impact negatively on the self-perception of the individual receiving such feedback. In addition however three other findings, relevant to these theoretical structures, emerged from the research.

The Impact of Race

It would *appear* that white police officers were impacted upon less by the negative feedback from the largely non-white communities in which the research took place than their non-white colleagues. While this may be the result of a higher degree of repressive coping among white officers, a more likely explanation can be found in the frameworks of James and Mead. It is likely that for white officers the non-white community does not represent a "significant other" (James, 1890) and their negative regard is thus relatively less important in terms of impacting on the sense of self. In terms of Mead's framework the negative regard from the community would therefore not enter into the "generalised other" that is internalised by the individual in the formation and maintenance of the self. For non-white officers, many of whom live in the communities in which they work, the negative feedback source would however represent a "significant other" and their negative regard would thus be internalised via the generalised other to a greater degree than for white police officers.

An Absence of Support

While the impact of negative regard from the communities in which police officers work appeared to depend on the race of the police officer, the perceived absence of support from those who, it was felt, should be the police officer's ally impacted on all officers, irrespective of race. Indeed this was one of the most significant findings of this research – officers clearly believe that there is a total absence of support from "significant others" such as government, police management, co-workers, the courts, and the media. But not only is there a perceived absence of support but a simultaneous presence of negative regard from these groups. Most officers indicated that they felt abandoned and betrayed by these "significant others" whose approval and support is important to the police officer – findings that were also made by Anstey and Stanley (1994), and Munshi, 1998).

It is likely that negative regard from the community could, at least in part, be discounted if juxtaposed with a supportive organisational culture and sound, supportive relationships with other important interaction partners such as the courts and government. In the absence of support and the presence of criticism from these quarters, the negative feedback received from the community appears to be validated inasmuch as it appears to be consensual across the entire spectrum of interaction partners. Only outside of the work environment is the police officer thus likely to receive significant amounts of affirmation; and even here there are instances where police officers are insulted and attacked for being members of the SAPS.

The tendency to internalise the negative conceptions of others is thus made even more likely if there is a simultaneous absence of positive feedback to counteract negative feedback, but made almost certain in the face of consensual negative feedback from all "significant others" in the workplace context.

Historical Change

The impact of the perceived lack of support from government, the courts, and police management is particularly large given that police officers could, during the Apartheid era, rely on unconditional support from these parties. The negative feedback directed at the police during this time was thus counteracted by positive, affirming feedback from a source about whose opinion many, particularly white, police officers probably cared for far more than the opinions of the black and coloured communities in which they worked. This relatively unconditional support has however fallen away, leaving the police officer with a relative lack of positive regard and feedback at the workplace. The negative sense of self, once established, is thus continuously and consistently validated from all feedback sources. The police officer is thereby unable to discount the negative feedback he/she receives from the community as merely being the opinion of a minority.

The Impact of Expectations and Intentions

The findings indicate that the impact of negative social feedback on the sense frustration and disillusionment is strengthened by the fact that many of the police officers that were interviewed joined the police force in order to serve the communities in which they lived (two of the interviewees were unpaid police-reservists) and worked long hours in order to do so. It is likely that such officers expect and hope for a degree of appreciation for their efforts. The presence of indiscriminate hostility toward the police officer is therefore likely to lead to even higher levels of disillusionment, and lower levels of morale; a conclusion that is supported by the statements made by officers (e.g. "it's impossible to satisfy them"; "do what you like, they won't appreciate it"; "why am I still doing this?").

Presence of Factors Hindering Coping

Besides the direct evidence for a negative impact on the sense of self, the findings of this research also confirm the presence of a number of factors that make it less likely that police officers are able to successfully cope with the experiences of negative social feedback and other workplace stressors. Indeed, most of the factors that may hinder effective coping discussed in the earlier review of police literature were also found to exist for those officers interviewed.

Lack of Social Support

The lack of social support and social isolation experienced by police officers was illustrated both by the perception that police management is unable or unwilling to assist police officers with the various workplace stressors, and the fact that many of the police officers that were interviewed said that they did not feel that they could talk to their families about their work experiences (see also Marks, 1995). This unwillingness to speak to their families, together with the intense desire not to be taped, and the universal claim that the help of a psychologist would never be sought is also indicative of both a well-established cult of masculinity and a high degree of repressive coping.

Repressive Coping

The tendency to engage in repressive coping found by the likes of Alkus and Padesky (1980); Elison and Buckhout (1981); Melville (1999); Mulcahy (1995); Reiser and Geiger (1989); Sandler (1989); Violanti (1992); and Violanti and Aron (1994) was found to exist among those police officers that were interviewed. Both the claims by police officers that they try not to think too much about their work problems, and the organisational requirement to maintain composure in the face of public hostility; as well as the difficulty that many police officers appeared to experience in accessing the affective, and to a lesser degree, cognitive, reactions to negative social feedback are indicative of a change in the self. The organisation of memory (Kuiper, MacDonald, Derry, 1983) may have changed to the degree that such components may not easily be accessed. The information immediacy of emotions is thus generally low.

Using Helping Services

Nearly all police officers indicated that they would not make use of helping services such as the Psychological Services of the SAPS but would rather try to distract themselves or talk to friends if they felt troubled. This distrust of the helping professions was also found by Munshi (1998), and is indicative of repressive coping, suggesting that police officers would be unlikely to cope effectively with instances of negative social feedback or the experience of any other stressor.

Burnout

Besides the impact on the sense of self, these findings are also indicative of high levels of psychological burnout inasmuch as the police officers are experiencing negative personal changes (Burke, 1987). These findings also comply with the definitions of *emotional exhaustion* and *depersonalisation* (Wallace, Roberg, & Allen, 1985); being respectively *"the feeling of being emotionally overextended... and no longer being able to function at an adequate psychological level"* and *"a dislike of the clientele being served; in extreme cases, attitudes becoming so negative that employees believe that clients deserve their troubles"* (p. 550). Particularly feelings of *depersonalisation* were illustrated by the anger

expressed toward the apathy of communities and the lack of appreciation for the work of the police.

Burnout is made even more likely, in terms of Malloy and Mays' hypothesis (1984), given that negative social interactions are characterised by high intensity, are relatively closely spaced in terms of space and time, and are provided by a high number of people.

Second Round Impact on Psychological Well-being

Besides the direct impact of a sense of self that has been negatively affected both in terms of the need for self-enhancement and the need for self-consistency that has already been discussed in this chapter and the relevant literature review chapter, a secondary impact is also likely. Simply put, police officers appear to be faced with a situation in which "*so much energy is wasted in keeping up your integrity, that you can't fight any other stressor*" (from interview with psychologist) – a tendency that was also noted by Spencer, Josephs, and Steele (1993). These stressors of course, do not only relate to issues encountered in the course of work but also to non-work stress factors such as family problems and time pressures (see Gulle, Tredoux, & Foster, 1998). It is these stressors that may then impact directly on the physiological and psychological well-being of the police officer given that an individual with low self-esteem or a poor self-conception is far less able to deal with stressors in a constructive and assertive manner.

The fact that the negative social feedback appears to be non-contingent on behaviour also means that the only manner in which such negative regard can be minimised is through withdrawal from the job – either physical or psychological. This may explain the high levels of absenteeism as well as the closedness of police culture in South Africa (Ensor, 1999; Goko, 1999; Schronen, 1999; Steinberg, 1999).

Suggestion for Future Research

These findings open up a number of different possible avenues for future research, particularly with regard to the impact of police working conditions on both the quality of the self and the structure of that self.

A longitudinal approach would be able to trace the possible changes in self-conception over time as police officers enter the organisation. Such research may simply engage in a pre-entry and post-entry comparison of data on the values, attitudes, beliefs, or even personality structure of the individual. Of course, such research does not have to be confined to police organisations. Almost all occupations may have the type of impact on the individual illustrated by the likes of Hochschild (1981) for air-hostesses.

Given that the existence of the "working self" or "situational self" is one of the assumptions of this thesis it would have useful to interview police officers in their non-work setting as well. Interviewing officers at work may have resulted in only their work self being activated, particularly given the apparent difficulty experienced by most officers on reflecting on their lives and experiences.

Direct observation of the interaction between police officers and members of the public is also likely to be valuable in gaining an understanding of the working conditions facing police officers. Such participant observation, or case study approach would also make it easier to establish the immediate police response (behavioural, affective, cognitive) to instances of negative social feedback. In addition such a more immersed approach may also increase the degree of trust between police officer and researcher.

A greater focus on the possible impact of variable such as race, gender, length of service, and the source of feedback, may help to design effective ways of either preventing or coping with the impact of negative social feedback. A more quantitative methodology and analysis may help uncover the precise nature of such complex, possible interaction-effects.

Conclusion

These findings are significant inasmuch as they not only support some of the theoretical predictions made by significant social psychological theories but also because they have direct implications for the treatment and prevention of psychological distress among members of the SAPS.

Simply put, these findings suggest that police officers in the Western Cape tend to be characterised by a negative sense of self characterised by a predominantly negative view of themselves, the SAPS, the community, and society as a whole. In addition, many police officers are also unable to form a consistent conception of who they are. The affective need for self-enhancement and the cognitive need for self-consistency are thus not met by a work environment that is characterised by consistent negative social feedback.

These two findings are however, perhaps not the most significant in terms of the implications for the SAPS. The key finding for the SAPS is that this negative impact on the individual is not only the result of the lack of support that police officers perceive themselves to receive from the communities in which they work, but that this negative impact on the police officer is significantly strengthened by the *perceived* absence of support from the SAPS organisation as well as other significant sources of feedback such as the media, the courts, and government. Whether this perception represents reality or not is relatively immaterial, for the impact on the individual is determined by his/her subjective interpretation of the social world in which he/she is located, and not by the reality of this social world. The same social world that, according to Mead and James, constructs our self has also rejected that self.

As such these findings are also relevant for minimising the threat to the individual police officer's sense of self. Although the entrenched fear and dislike of the police felt by many South Africans toward the police make it difficult for police management to easily impact

on the relationship between community and police other sources of negative regard can probably be impacted upon more easily.

Rather than focusing all available resources on debriefing and providing officers with training in various coping techniques, it would be useful to address the perception that support for police offices from police management, the courts, and government is not forthcoming. Greater support and better communication from these groups would not only remove these sources of negative regard but would also counteract some of the negative regard received from communities inasmuch as the negative feedback would no longer be consensual. Police offices could thus more easily discount the negative feedback from communities as being the result of stereotyping, and prejudice. In addition, the subsequent positive effect on self-esteem and self-perception would probably allow the individual police officers to cope more effectively with the myriad of other stressors encountered in the course of police work.

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Appendix A: Letter of Permission

G.P.-S. 002-0222

SUID-AFRIKAANSE POLISIEDIENS SOUTH AFRICAN POLICE SERVICE

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10 September 1999

Mr Marcus Crede
7 Walmer Road
WOODSTOCK 7925

Dear Mr Crede

APPLICATION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN THE SOUTH AFRICAN POLICE SERVICE

With reference to your letter of 24 August 1999, pertaining to your application to conduct research in the South African Police Service, I wish to respond as follows:

The particular research topic and hypothesis, as indicated in your letter, are very relevant in modern-day policing, particularly during the transformation phases that the South African Police Service is currently going through. In order to understand the stress that police officers face in carrying out their work, it is important to investigate the impact of negative feedback from clients.

I therefor grant you permission to conduct your research in the South African Police Service, subject to the following conditions:

- ❑ Your research must not interfere with policing duties. Your envisaged research group may therefor not be taken out of their normal line-function;
- ❑ The permission is restricted to police officials serving under the command of the Provincial Commissioner of the Western Cape. If you need to expand your population group beyond the boundaries of the Western Cape, you will need to obtain permission from that particular province;
- ❑ Unless your research is based on an interrupted time-series design, the names of the police officials in the experimental group and the control group, respectively, must be provided to this office upon conclusion of the research. The reasoning behind this condition is that, in certain cases, the unique intervention done on the experimental group needs to be continued on the control group at a time that it will not influence the original variables;
- ❑ A copy of your final research paper must be made available to this office upon conclusion thereof. This is purely a control mechanism, and copyrights on your paper will be respected at all times.

Any further enquiries in this regard can be directed to this office. I wish you all of the best in your research.

Yours faithfully

COLLIN SHERRIFF

Appendix B: Interview Guide Used For Interviews With Police Officer

Reproduced below is the interview schedule used in the course of this research. It is important to note that this schedule was used merely as a guide given the flexible nature of the topic. The researcher frequently probed certain issues in far greater depth than is suggested in this schedule and attempted to conduct the interview as a conversation rather than merely a question-and-answer session. As a result the schedule was not stuck to rigidly but served more as a reminder to the interviewer of the areas that needed to be explored. The methodological reasons for this flexible, semi-structured approach are discussed in detail in Chapter 6.

Issues To Be Covered Before Start Of Interview

1. Researcher introduces himself (name, institution etc)
2. Outline purpose of research:
    - · Focus on work
    - · Focus on how work can be stressful
    - · Focus on negative social feedback (insults, media)
    - · Explain that the results may help in understanding the work of police officers
3. Outline what the interview will be about (give the structure)
4. Stress confidentiality
5. Stress that the participant does not have to answer questions that he/she may find uncomfortable and that the participant can ask questions at any point.
6. Stress that there are no right or wrong answers and that the researcher is merely trying to get an idea of how the participant experiences his/her work.
7. Try to obtain permission to use the tape-recorder (otherwise take notes)
8. Give the participant the opportunity to ask questions before commencement of interview

Topics To Be Covered In Interview

General Work Issues

1. How long have you been a member of the SAPS?
2. What type of work do you do?
3. What does you daily work routine look like? What did you do yesterday for example?
4. What was your reason for joining the SAPS?

Section On Negative Feedback

1. Does it ever happen that you are insulted, assaulted, criticised etc by members of the public?
2. How often does it happen?
3. Can you remember the first that it happened? What happened?
4. How did you respond?
5. How did you feel?
6. Ask the participant to describe other, more recent, incidents of negative social feedback and how he felt/responded.
7. Does it also happen to other police officers?
8. How do they feel about it?
9. Do they talk about such problems?
10. Why does the public treat you in this manner?
11. What do people think of the police?
12. How do you feel when you are at work (happy, sad, etc)? Why do you feel this way?
13. Do you often think about the manner in which you and the police are treated by the public?

Section Of Impact On Rest Of Life

(Explain that you would like to ask questions about the participant's non-work life because it is often difficult to separate work and non-work issues)

1. Do you ever think about work problems when at home or away from work?
2. Do you take anxieties with you or can you leave them at work?
3. Do you think that the poor image of the police impacts on the way in which you are treated away from work e.g. by friends and family.
4. Do you think that you are different at home as opposed to how you are when at work?
5. In what ways are you different/in what ways the same?

Other Issues

1. Do you feel that you have changed since becoming a police officer?
2. Do you ever regret having joined the SAPS? Why/Why not?
3. Do you believe that the problem of poor police/community relationships can be solved?
4. What are the most stressful things about being a police officer?
5. How do you deal with stress?
6. How are you expected to deal with it?
7. Do you feel that there is support for you? Why/Why not?
8. Would you ever go to the Psychological Services for help? Why/Why not?

Wrap Up

1. Thank the participant for his/her help and co-operation
2. give the participant an opportunity to ask further questions
3. Stress the confidentiality of the interview material again

Appendix C: Interviews with Police Psychologists

Reproduced below is the interview schedule used in the course of this research. It is important to note that this schedule was used merely as a guide given the flexible nature of the topic. The researcher frequently probed certain issues in far greater depth than is suggested in this schedule and attempted to conduct the interview as a conversation rather than merely a question-and-answer session. As a result the schedule was not stuck to rigidly but served more as a reminder to the interviewer of the areas that needed to be explored. This was specifically the case for interviews conducted with police psychologists given that they discussed issues far more freely than was the case for police officers. The methodological reasons for this flexible, semi-structured approach are discussed in detail in Chapter 6.

Issues To Be Covered Before Start Of Interview

1. Researcher introduces himself
2. Describes area and purpose of research
3. Outlines reason for interview: to gain a broader understanding of the psychological problems confronting police officers and;
4. To establish whether the police psychologists encounter the type of problems that are being researched here; and
5. To establish what their professional opinion is regarding the impact of negative social feedback.
6. Stress that all information will remain confidential

Topics to be covered in interview

1. What type of work do you do?
2. What type of psychological problems do you encounter in the course of your work?
3. What are the biggest stressor/problems for the average police officer?
4. How would you describe the average SAPS member?
5. What is their normal coping style?
6. How would you describe morale and self-esteem among police officers?
7. What is the cause of any low self-esteem/morale that you come across?
8. Do they ever talk about being insulted, mocked, or negative press articles?

9. Is negative social feedback a problem for police officers?
10. Why/Why not?
11. Are they different people at home as opposed to at work?
12. Why/Why not?
13. Do police officers change after joining the SAPS?
14. Do officers come to the SAPS voluntarily or are they referred?
15. Do gender, race or other factors impact on the degree to which officers can cope with police stress?
16. Discuss the specific responses of police officers as well as the general findings of the interviews with police officers e.g. complaints about the courts; police management; lack of resources; sense of isolation.

Wrap Up

1. Thank the psychologist for his/her help and participation.
2. Give the psychologist a further chance to ask questions.
3. Stress confidentiality again.