



Confessional testimony and performance:
Exploring the rituals of gender as
experienced by former South African
Defence Force conscripts through
embodied storytelling

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Thesis accepted in fulfilment of the requirements for the
degree *Doctor of Philosophy in Visual and Performing
Arts with History of Art* at the North-West University

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Graduation: July 2026

SOLEMN DECLARATION

I, Andrew Peter Swanepoel, declare that the thesis hereby submitted by me, in compliance with the requirements for the Doctor of Philosophy in Visual and Performing Arts with History of Art at the North-West University Potchefstroom Campus, is my own independent work. I have acknowledged all material and sources used in its preparation, whether they are books, articles, reports, lecture notes, or any other kind of document, electronic or personal communication. I also certify that this assignment/report has not previously been submitted for assessment at any other unit / university / faculty and that I have not copied-in part or whole-or otherwise plagiarised the work of other students and / or persons.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

“Research is formalised curiosity. It is poking and prying with a purpose” - Zora Neale Hurston (1942:91).

The analogy of research studies being a journey is a good one. My journey has been shared by a number of travellers who have earned and deserve my heartfelt gratitude and appreciation.

To my research supervisor Dr Annemi Conradie-Chetty, words cannot express the gratitude I feel for you. You have been the North Star throughout my study journey, and you are the supervisor I myself aspire to be when I ‘grow up’. Much respect and much love.

To my family, my brother, David, and my cousin, Dallas. Your support, each in your own unique way has made the journey feel less lonely. Dave, thank you for the assistance and support, and interest. Dallas, thank you for being there to document all my craziness. To the memory of my mother. We all miss you, Mom.

To the former conscripts who bravely and selflessly agreed to participate in this research, thank you for sharing your experiences and lives with me. I believe that your contributions are valuable additions to the greater narrative regarding veterans and military institutions.

To my Creator. Thank you for the journey, as difficult and challenging as it has been. Thank you for the opportunity to make a difference.

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KEY WORDS AND ABSTRACT

Key words:

Confessional testimony, conscription, embodied storytelling, gendered institutions, intercorporeality, militarised masculinity, performative research, South African Defence Force, somatic memory.

Abstract:

There is a growing research focus on gendered institutions, driven by the need to understand and dismantle the pervasive gender inequalities that **constrain social, political, and economic equity, justice and flourishing**. Institutions such as family, education, media, religion, and government define societal norms and roles, and aligning them with power structures, deeply influence and shape how gender is understood and expressed within a society. The gendered nature of institutions matters because it creates and perpetuates unequal access to resources and opportunities, leading to negative material, social and psychological consequences. Military organisation, along with certain religious institutions, are some of the most gendered and the most male dominated, masculinised of institutions.

Between 1967 and 1994 the South African Defence Force (SADF) enforced the conscription of men only, and specifically white men, thereby ensuring that the military institution was a male-dominated, racially specific one. The military culture within the SADF was heavily influenced by hypermasculine values, and it othered Black and marginal masculinities, gay men, and women. In the conscription scenario, not only did one have to undergo military training as a result of being classified a man, but to be considered a man, one had to undergo military training. The link between white South African masculinity and the military was constructed, maintained and reinforced during Apartheid, both formally and informally. In institutions such as the military there are empirical manifestations of institutional power, including observable behaviour, codified rules, cultural and abstract symbols, and socially shared norms.

This interdisciplinary thesis investigates the SADF as a fundamentally gendered institution, examining how it systematically constructed and enforced hypermasculine norms during the conscription era (1967–1994). Moving beyond a purely racial or political analysis, the study makes three primary contributions to the field of military and gender studies. First, it reframes the SADF through the lens of institutional gendering, demonstrating how military service functioned as a mandatory rite of passage essential to the social construction of white South African manhood.

Second, the research assembles a unique corpus of confessional testimony from former conscripts. By translating their lived experiences into creative output, the project serves to visually archive an insight into a historically specific, multifaceted masculinity that is not foregrounded within the official military narrative. This ‘visual archiving’ through practice ensures that vulnerable histories are preserved in a medium that reflects their embodied nature.

Third, the thesis advances a hybrid methodological model in which qualitative analysis and performative practice are mutually generative. By positioning artistic process as a rigorous mode of inquiry, the study demonstrates how intentional physical exploration and ‘performing the archive’ uncover nuances of institutional power that remain inaccessible through verbal articulation alone. Ultimately, the methodology focuses on uncovering the embodied nature of both the gendering processes within the SADF and the research process itself, asserting the value of practice-driven methods in fostering authentic connections and developing new expressive frameworks within the academic discipline.

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION, OVERVIEW AND CONTEXT

1.1 Introduction

The intention of this interdisciplinary research study is to explore gendered institutions, specifically the Apartheid-era South African Defence Force (SADF), and the experiences of the men conscripted into the institution. The study's reliance on artistic processes and creative output as research is an indication of my intent to use practice-driven methods to concurrently develop the relationship between those activities and outputs, and the nature of research for the purposes of academia and my chosen discipline, visual arts. My studio praxis is an integral part of the research process and the source of new insights and knowledge. Here the physical act of practice (visual artmaking) is an exploratory process designed to answer the specific research questions. The title, *Confessional testimony and performance: Exploring the rituals of gender as experienced by former South African Defence Force conscripts through embodied storytelling*, reflects these foci; gender, the Apartheid-era military institution, embodied inquiry and performance. As such it is concerned with acknowledging, understanding and visualising untold narratives through scholarly engagement with and through creative practice.

I am aware that the narratives of former SADF members are not strictly speaking, 'untold'. There are a number of novels which deal with the Border War¹ and the South African Defence Force, such as Mark Behr's *The Smell of Apples* (1995) and André Carl van der Merwe's *Moffie* (2006). Then there are autobiographical accounts of lived experiences of conscripts involved in the conflict on the borders of what was then known as South West Africa (now Namibia) such as Clive Holt's *At Thy Call We Did Not Falter* (2005). Other sources also consider these experiences, as Jacqui Thompson (2006) does in *An Unpopular War*, her collection of former conscripts' recollections of their experiences as soldiers in the SADF. Karen Batley (2008:175), in an academic study, is similarly engaged with former SADF soldiers - as this research study proposes to do - in an attempt to investigate and understand the meaning of individual life experiences in South Africa's Border War. In her study Batley (2008:175) proposes to demonstrate the therapeutic value of personal writing, and believes that talking (and writing) about such events can be an act of catharsis. She quotes one of her participants, saying that unless the experiences are read or heard, the individuals remain "just a boy in a uniform, and just a number" (Batley, 2008:175). Just a number: 79431185. As a former conscript myself, and a member of the South West African

¹ From 1966-1989 South Africa was involved in a conflict known as the Border War. This war was over control of South West Africa (Namibia), which was effectively a South African colony, and Angola. An escalation of the struggle for independence in the southern region resulted in a standoff between the SADF and Angolan and Namibian liberation forces, and notably, Cuban armed forces. The growing threat of conventional warfare drove the SADF back within South African borders and the Apartheid State to the negotiating table (Baines & Vale, 2008).

Territorial Forces (SWATF) during this Border War, I can still recall my force number, more than forty years since it was initially assigned to me as a means of identification. 79431185. Just a number?

As Batley (2008:175) suggests, these accounts need to be recorded, because unlike official military records and historical accounts, soldiers' narratives offer rich, personal insights into the realities of conflict. These accounts capture the human cost, the daily struggles, and the individual consequences of war that might otherwise be lost to history as these generations pass on. Hearing the first-hand accounts of soldiers is likely to foster empathy and understanding for the sacrifices made, and the suffering endured. This can create a more compassionate public discourse around war and military service. Equally, there may be lessons learned regarding the consequences of waging wars.

In a critical analysis of the Ancient Roman term *saeculum*, historian Paul Hay (2023:8), posits that *saeculum* is a way to “narrativise history”. He defines the term as follows:

[I]t is a discourse that creates a larger framework for all historical events by organizing history into discrete units with qualitative characteristics. For example, when modern American historians refer to the ‘Atomic Age’, they envision a period of time beginning with the Trinity test bomb in 1945 and ending with the fall of the Soviet Union in 1991 (Hay, 2023:8).

Hay (2023:8) uses the example of the Atomic Age to illustrate how the discourse of *saecularity*, by imagining a period in time “with largely uniform characteristics and a limited focus”, creates a simple version of the past. He defines the term as a mode of thought through which one can create a broad historical narrative by organising history into distinct time-units (Hay, 2023:8-9). These time-units are determined by how the organiser perceives various phenomena and qualitative characteristics (Hay, 2023:8-9). Importantly, the term originally referred to human lifespans, that is, a generation of people, or “a period of time corresponding to an average human lifetime” (Hay, 2023:7). My embodied storytelling rather enriches and questions officially narrativised histories because it brings in the messiness of individual experience and perspectives. These histories are told and interpreted through artistic practice, which can lead to new, original insights. It occurred to me when I came across this term that this is essentially what I was doing with this research study, and for the generation of former SADF conscripts, ‘narrativising’ and archiving their history, our history, and my history. This ‘visual archiving’ through practice ensures that this vulnerable history is investigated and preserved in a medium that reflects their embodied nature. This is a generation whose lives, in the not-too-far future, will come to an end, as we are witnessing in the cases of the World War Two and Vietnam military veterans, and so the original source of that history.

The National WWII Museum in New Orleans indicates on their website that less than 1 percent of the 16.4 million Americans who served during World War II were alive as of 2024. The President and CEO of the Museum, Stephen J. Watson asserts that, “[p]reserving the stories of the men and women who served in World War II has been at the heart of our institution since its founding. We have the enormous responsibility to ensure that the memories and experiences of the war will not be lost as those who lived through it leave this world” (The WWII Museum, 2024). According to Statista (2024), as of 2020 there were 6.3 million Vietnam War veterans alive of the 8.7 million who served between 1955 and 1975. Regarding the veterans in South Africa, according to the Department of Military Veterans, the number of SADF veterans registered with them is 45 839 as of 2025. These numbers only account for the veterans who have applied for benefits along with nine other liberation organisations. The approximately 600 000 white South African men who served National Service will be between 54 and 66 years old at the writing of this thesis. What remains when these veterans are gone, when their bodies are gone and the memories of, and held by, those bodies are gone? In 30 years’ time, all that will remain of their lived experiences in the SADF will be the recorded memories that academic and biographic studies, blog posts and similar projects such as this one captured. What remains when the bodies are gone? This is a question of personal significance that has motivated my research.

This study seeks to explore the lived experiences of men who served as conscripts in the SADF, and hopes to contribute to research and the public discourse via a written research report as well as a creative artefact, that is, creating and reflecting on an ethnographic performance work. In addition to being the researcher, I am a former conscript with my own stories of the same institution. As such I am the link between this form of collecting people's stories, the storytelling that arises from it, and the storyteller: I become both the collector and the storyteller myself. In this it shares the characteristics of *saeculum* and Hay’s (2023:8) reference to ‘narrativizing’ history. The methodology focuses on uncovering not only the nature of institutional processes brought to bear on the bodies of its members, but also of the embodied nature of practice-driven research. I suggest that through intentional physical exploration and embodied practice, researchers can discover new ways of understanding and expressing ideas and histories that are difficult to articulate verbally, fostering creative exploration, and building authentic connections with research subjects.

1.2 Confessional Testimony

The title of this study uses the term ‘confessional testimony’ and it is therefore important to define and clarify what is meant by it. Participants in this study were requested to share recollections of their time in the SADF as conscripts. Karen Whitty (2005) notes that very few former SADF conscripts have come forward and spoken about their experiences. She believes that they are bound by “a sense

of honour to their fellow troops, and the patriarchy still espoused by white South Africa” (Whitty, 2005). Other reasons for their silence, as Baines (2008: 13) reports, are their fears of being dismissed as sympathy seekers or liars. It has been my experience that these men have invariably maintained, to a large extent, a code of silence regarding these experiences. It is my belief that as pertains to these former conscripts, that which is concealed is aided and abetted by two elements: a personal inability or unwillingness to speak about our apartheid-era identities and actions, and a disinterested public, unconcerned by our experiences. As conscripts, our identities are indelibly interwoven with apartheid and its military institution.

The United Nations General Assembly declared apartheid a crime against humanity in 1966 (Dugard, 2008:1). This was similarly determined by the Truth and Reconciliation Committee (TRC) (with the release of the first five volumes of its final report on Oct. 29, 1998). The South African National Party government was judged to be the major perpetrator of this crime between 1948 and 1994, with the support of its security forces, notably the SAP and the SADF. Therefore, I believe that the former conscripts' testimonies could be conceptualised as types of confessions. Judith Butler (2004:162) describes confession as a process whereby, “we say what it is we have thought or done, and that material becomes the material by which we are interpreted”. Confession is thus effectively the opening of the self as a field of indefinite interpretation. In considering the act of confession she also asks questions regarding the receiver of that confession. For Butler (2004:172-173), confession is an important moment to consider, because not only does it communicate the act committed, but in speaking, constitutes another act, while conferring a certain reality on the first. By confessing, the original act/deed is altered. The speaking becomes a new act or new life for an old act. To confess, it may be argued, is to constitute a truth of oneself through the act of verbalisation. What remains continuous is the body that commits both acts; the original act and the confession which follows.

This has particular relevance for my research study as my standpoint is that of a performance artist, functioning within practice-driven research. There is a presentation in speaking, of the body that committed the deed and is simultaneously committing another. The body is thus presented in reality and in action. Confession always comes after the act and is postponed until the speaker is ready for the sacrifice of the subject that speaking the words implies. The act may lead to catharsis as a sense of guilt may be finally attached to something. In fact, in the chapter, *Bodily Confessions*, Butler (2004) makes the connection between psychoanalysis and the act of confession by positing that the former is a historical descendant of the confessional. Importantly, the listener is also implicated through the act of confession. Finally, although Butler's (2004) chapter does not specifically deal with this, it certainly implies that confession offers a form of agency to the confessor. She believes that the act of confession requires the confessor to constitute a truth of oneself through the act of verbalisation itself, which implies agency (Butler, 2004:163). This process involves the sacrifice of the old self through

the act of verbalisation. This verbalisation relies on the performative force of spoken utterances, that is, Austin's performative utterances (Butler, 2004:163). As Michel Foucault (1978:179) puts it, "verbalisation is self-sacrific [sic]".

1.3 Performativity, resistance and agency

This study asserts that the body and the act of performance are primary sites of knowledge production and understanding. By foregrounding the researcher's and participants' physical, sentient, and emotional bodies the study reveals an often-overlooked element of the SADF and the soldier's lived experiences of the military institution and the organisations (units) they served in, agency and resistance.

Raewyn Connell (1995) follows Joan Scott's (1986) feminist proposition on gender (see section 1.5) and advocates the study of historically-specific masculinities rather than studying men as a homogenous group (Wedgwood, 2009:332). Connell stresses that when we speak of masculinity we are referring to 'doing gender' in a culturally specific way, that is, culture (and behaviour) associated with men, and the different ways of being a 'man' (Connell, n.d). This thinking is informed by Judith Butler's (1988) 'Performative acts and gender constitution: An essay in phenomenology and feminist theory'. In the essay, Butler (1988) states that performativity does not mean performance as in the act playing a fictional role. She does not mean, as is often assumed, that gender is a theatrical, freely selected performance. 'Performative' is different from 'performance' in that, as Butler (2011) puts forward in the video, *Judith Butler: Your behavior creates your gender*, it produces a series of effects: "we behave in ways that consolidate the impression of being a man or woman; we act as though being a man or woman is an internal reality, as if it were a fact about us". However, Butler (1988:531) believes it is in fact a phenomenon that is being produced all the time and reproduced all the time, that is, a continuous act. Butler (2011) summarises this notion as follows: "To say gender is performative is to say that nobody really is a 'gender' from the start." It is something we continuously become.

Butler's poststructuralist theory of performativity interrogates gender, deconstructing it through critical readings of structuralist and poststructuralist discourses. They believe that language and discourse do gender, whereby gender is an act that brings into being what it names (Salih, 2007:56). Butler (1988:520) references Merleau-Ponty² (1962) and his claim that "the body is 'an historical idea' rather than 'a natural species.'" They posit that there is no natural gender but that the body is a set of possibilities instead (Butler, 1988:520). In other words, Butler argues that there is no natural gender. How we perceive the world, and importantly, how we express ourselves to that same world is

² Merleau-Ponty's (1962) notion of the body as an historical idea determines that it gains meaning through a concrete, historically mediated expression in the world.

determined by our bodily situation. For the former conscripts their 'bodily situation' was encompassed by the closed institution of military conscription and the SADF. This is an ongoing physical and historical process, moment-to-moment, situation-to-situation within time, unique and specific to each individual. This aligns with the historically contingent gender theory of feminism. According to Butler (1988:521), since the body is a set of possibilities, this signifies that its appearance in the world is not predetermined by some manner of interior essence or spirit/soul. This predetermination relates to the argument regarding 'essential' attributes being assigned to specific types of bodies. For example, a muscular body is assumed to be masculine and male, and as a result, a specific behaviour and uniform is associated with that body. These are assumed to be natural and biological, and in Afrikaner ideology, determined by God. Butler (1988) is arguing that these are socially constructed and arbitrary. Rather, the body's concrete expression in the world must be understood as the taking up and rendering specific of a set of historical possibilities (Butler, 1988:521).

Butler's theory of performativity has its foundation in linguistic and speech act theory. It is informed by Austin's (1979) proposition that words are "performative utterances". They theorise that a performative utterance produces an effect rather than merely naming or acting as a statement. Implicit in the theory of performativity is the act of repetition which introduces the concept of ritual and ritualistic reproduction. The rituals and initiations, both formal and informal, which I experienced as a conscript were an integral part of the SADF and were filled with gender directives. This is of particular relevance when considering institutions as well as the praxis of a performance artist. Essentially what this means is that the saying and the doing create a gendered identity. This is reinforced and perpetuated through repetition (ritual); you are what you repeatedly do. Butler's (1988) notion of agency may be grasped in the simple fact that because these acts or actions are repeated, we can decide to not repeat them or perform them differently, that is, we can change this performance, and this is where agency may be found.

Connell (2000:27) agrees with Butler's theorising of gender as a social practice, referring to it as body-reflexive practices. She proposes that "particular versions of masculinity are constituted in their circuits [programmed] as meaningful bodies and embodied meanings. Through body-reflexive practices, more than individual lives are formed: a social world is formed" (Connell, 1995:64). Simply put, gender is a social practice that refers to bodies and what they do. Importantly, social norms and constraints are enforced on gender performativity by the consequences of any resistance. In the gendered military institution of the SADF, the social practices of the conscriptions were constrained, with these constraints being enforced by law and strictly policed. Identity is affirmed by repetitive, institutionalised social acts which are structured in terms of overt and covert rules (Hodgson, 2006:2). Butler (1988:520) argues that: "what is called gender identity is a performative accomplishment

compelled by social sanction and taboo". For the most part, individuals do not get to freely select a gender identity and then perform it, despite the existence of agency. Although gender performance is put on under constraint, policed by institutional powers and informal practices such as bullying, there is the opportunity for acts of freedom and resistance through subversive performances.

This possibility of agency is key for the purposes of this study. This agency exists despite the constraints imposed by societal norms and roles and institutional decree. For the white SADF conscripts there were very real consequences to any resistance or subversion of the masculine gendered performances the State enforced upon them. The consequences ranged from public humiliation and ostracism to real physical harm, legal prosecution, sentencing and incarceration. Nevertheless, Butler's inquiry into the embodied-performative aspect of gender underscores the potential for resistance to hegemonic practices, and introduces a space for contemplating agency. This possibility of self-awareness and agency offers a solution to some of the traumatic experiences of the white SADF former conscripts and the subsequent effect on their lives. It was my experience in the SADF that there were certainly conscripts, including me, who modified or even actively resisted the institution's gender directives. Crucially, although certainly haunted by the past, these men are not necessarily trapped in that past or by their previously assigned gender identities. For the purposes of this research study, the notion of agency was thus paramount. Insights into this were provided by not only by my research participants, but also my own experiences as former conscript. .

1.4 Context

The point of departure for my study is that generations of white South African males, at a very young age, are likely to have undergone difficult gender forming processes during the apartheid-era as military conscripts. Conscriptation was often against their will, as National Service was enforced by the National Party (NP) government. These men were socialised via gendered institutions such as schools, sports clubs, the Church, and the military, with the aim of getting them to conform to a very specific gender identity and expressions thereof. As a result of this, and because of the associated violence they experienced, many of these men suffered traumas which have been borne in silence to a large extent. This study hopes to contribute to breaking that silence. By utilising the phrase, 'breaking the silence', I am in no way claiming that accounts of these experiences do not exist, as I have indicated earlier. Along with novels, autobiographies and films, cyberspace has joined bars and braais (barbeques) as a place to swap and share 'war stories'. SADF veteran societies now use social media sites and dedicated web pages to tell stories, to express grievances or to reclaim memories that might be deemed irrelevant, out of fashion, or 'politically incorrect' in post-apartheid South Africa (Baines, 2008:11).

As a former conscript myself, I can personally attest to the coercive and often violent gender socialisation processes implemented by institutions such as the SADF. Yet despite the possible ramifications of not adhering strictly to the enforced institutional gender directives³ within the SADF, conscripts did modify and even resist them. Erving Goffman (1956:8) argues that “we all perform in ways that we hope will be favourably regarded by other members of society”. Performance artists, such as I, on the other hand, ask what happens if we perform in ways that are not favourable? Goffman’s (1956:132-151) theory of social interaction, referred to as a dramaturgical model of social life, accounts for community members’ understanding of what is meant to happen in a particular situation, what to expect from the others involved, and how they themselves should behave in that situation.

He refers to this in dramaturgical terms such as performance, audience, and regions; front stage, backstage and off- stage (Goffman, 1956:66-86). In each of the regions (see Figure 1), Goffman posits that an individual’s performance may differ. In the front region, conventions are likely to be adhered to as the performance is observed by a ‘formal’ audience. The ‘formal military’ audience or environment would be a highly structured and disciplined scenario characterised by uniforms, hierarchical command, and standardised procedures that are enforced by state and military law and doctrine. In the back region, the performer is likely to rid himself/herself of some of the pressures of socially sanctioned roles and reflect a truer version of themselves. Nevertheless, preparation for the ‘role’ continues in this region. The ‘back region’ might be in less formal spaces such as the barracks, and recreational areas such as base bars, or sports fields. Finally, in the off region the performer will meet individual audience members and other performers away from the main performance. The performance here will be specific to the person being met. It is these variances in the conscripts’ performance that my research explores, through the interviews, analysis thereof, and my own performance art. As an integral part of my practice-driven methodology the research findings as well as my reflections become a living canvas where culture, politics, and personal experiences are performed to challenge perceptions, provoke dialogue, and it is hoped, raise awareness and initiate actual change.

³ The gendered body not only acts its part in “a culturally restricted corporeal space” (in this case, the SADF), but enacts interpretations within the confines of already existing directives (Butler 1988:526). These directives form part of the institution’s regulations.

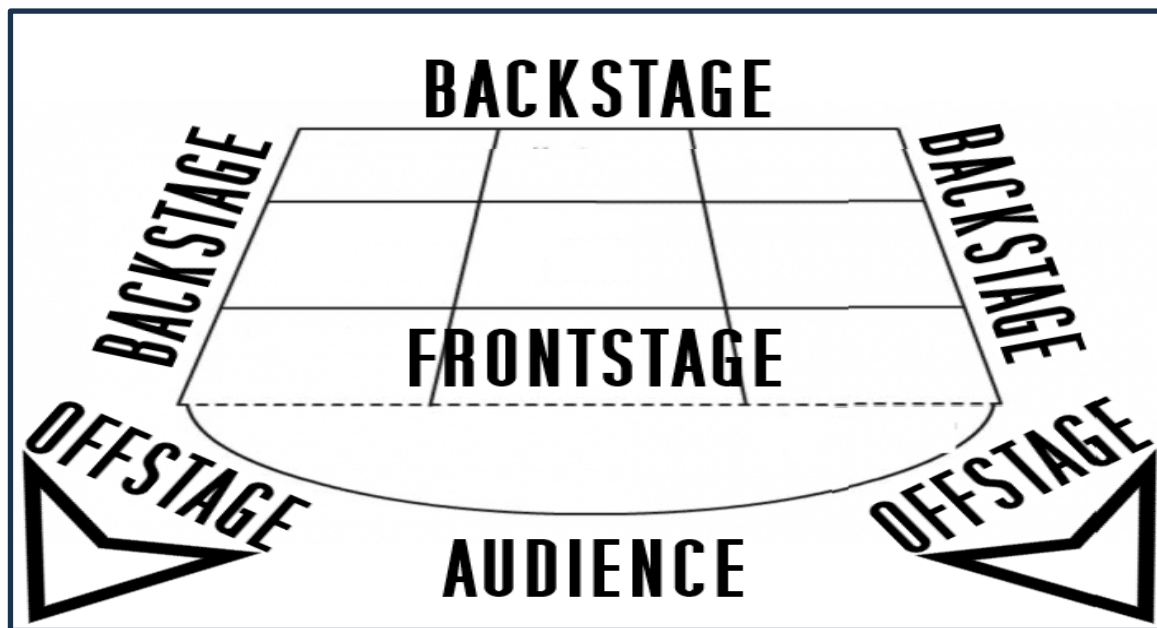


Figure 1: Representation of Goffman's (1956:132-151) dramaturgical model by Swanepoel (2025).

Like Goffman, Judith Butler (1988:521) similarly uses the dramaturgical analogy, and applying it to gender, states that “the acts by which gender is constituted bear similarities to performative acts within theatrical contexts”. An actor is required to place or position himself or herself, on pre-determined markers on a stage; this whilst performing a specific role which determines the actor's performance and character. Goffman (1956:8) refers to this as the pre-established pattern of action. Butler (1988:526) postulates that the gendered body not only acts its part in “a culturally restricted corporeal space”, but enacts interpretations within the confines of already existing directives. This is “a manner of doing, dramatising, and reproducing a historical situation” through conventions (or authoritative instruction) that sanction and proscribe how one acts one's gender (Butler, 1988:521-524).

The act that one does, the act that one performs, is, in a sense, an act that has been going on before one arrived on the scene. Hence, gender is an act which has been rehearsed, much as a script survives the particular actors who make use of it, but which requires individual actors in order to be actualized and reproduced as reality once again (Butler, 1988:526).

These existing “directives” are what I, in my praxis as a performance artist, explore and interrogate, along with *gender markers*. Butler's work has been influential not only in gender and feminist theory, but also in queer theory, where markers, such as social categories like ‘boy’, ‘man’, ‘girl’, ‘woman’ or ‘gay’, are questioned. These markers are socially constructed and reinforced, while directives are more active, prescriptive social pressures or rules. These prescriptive social pressures or rules compel individuals to conform to specific gender norms and identities often stemming from heteronormative power structures. They determine, amongst other things, obligatory norms associated with specific

types of bodies. These include how these bodies should behave/perform and what they should wear. The roles are pre-existing and on-going, and we are assigned them from the moment our sex is determined and named. What is important for the purposes of this study is that Butler's (1988) theory allows for agency, and the possibility of subverting the 'roles' we are assigned. Butler (1988:520) describes this agency as follows:

If the ground of gender identity is the stylized repetition of acts through time, and not a seemingly seamless identity, then the possibilities of gender transformation are to be found in the arbitrary relation between such acts, in the possibility of a different sort of repeating, in the breaking or subversive repetition of that style.

Butler (1988:527) references transvestism to illustrate their argument regarding agency. They argue that transvestites do more than simply express the distinction between sex and gender by dressing in drag, but actually challenge implicitly, "the distinction between appearance and reality that structures a good deal of popular thinking about gender identity" (Butler, 1988:527).

I will use an example of my own lived experience to further illustrate their thinking, and this concept of resistance. As a boy growing up in Apartheid-era South Africa, I attended an all-boys English medium school in Natal (KwaZulu-Natal). Due to the segregation laws of the time, it was also an all-white school, the only people of colour on the premises were the cleaners and grounds staff. On the surface it was representative of what was typical of a low to low-middle class, white South African suburb in the 1980s. Our parents were working-class, most employed by state institutions such as the Railways or the Post Office, very few of whom had completed high school, and even fewer had any sort of tertiary-level education. Rugby was venerated at my school, as it was in all white South African schools, and the sport established and epitomised the school's hegemonic gender ideal.

At the all-boys school we wore uniforms specific to our perceived or assumed gender identities and which reinforced established gender roles: male and masculine. On Wednesday afternoons we took part in paramilitary activities such as school cadets. In the mornings at assembly, we recited the Lord's Prayer and sang the National Anthem, *Die Stem* (the Call of South Africa). Our behaviour was monitored, and desired behaviour was enforced by our teachers and the school prefects through the threat of detention and corporal punishment. Transgressors of the myriad rules could be informally beaten in class by a teacher, or the matter could be escalated, and one could be sent to a department head, the vice-headmaster, or finally, the headmaster. Caning was the normal outcome of this process, ranging from two to six strokes, applied to the buttocks with a cane.

Despite this policing, and in contestation of the institutionalised forms of gender directives and the hegemonic ideal these directives supported and enforced, there existed resistance amongst the boys. At my high school, resistance found expression through listening to reggae music, and especially, by the Jamaican reggae singer, Bob Marley, as well as smoking marijuana, and exploring Rastafarianism. Marijuana symbols adorned school bags as well as the colours symbolic of the movement, green, red, and yellow. This was a widespread phenomenon amongst the boys at the school. It was aimed at the conservatism and restrictions of the school and state, but was also indicative of a deeper resistance to gender directives which dictated how men should be men. Raewyn Connell (1995:57) describes such resistant bodies as follows: “Not only are men’s bodies diverse and changing, they can be positively recalcitrant. Ways are proposed for bodies to participate in social life, and the bodies often refuse”. Sadly, many of these very same ‘rebels’ at my school would also torment and torture the boys who were judged to be effeminate and/or gay, forcing them to seek sanctuary in the school library during breaks.

We become, and are made aware of, from a very young age, that our social performances are monitored and even policed. There are repercussions for not conforming or adhering to gender directives, particularly if our behaviour is not deemed favourable. This has been my own lived experience as a boy and a man within various gendered institutions, including the high school I attended and the SADF. Further, it should be noted that there was an official, established link between schools and the SADF. For example, in addition to school cadets, in the year white boys turned sixteen, their induction process into the SADF commenced. Military personnel would visit schools and record the boys’ details. Between 1967 and 1992 an estimated 600 000 white men were conscripted into the SADF for periods ranging from nine months to the enforced two years during the height of what was known as the Border War and a number of States of Emergency⁴ (Edlmann, 2015). It is the experiences of these men that will be the focus of my research.

1.5 Theoretical framework

I am a visual artist, with a focus on performance art and the notions of the performativity of gender. An important part of this interdisciplinary study is therefore its practice-driven component. I am also an academic artist. By that, I mean both a teacher and scholar in tertiary institutions, who creates and studies art, its processes and meaning, and its integral place within academia. My aim is to contribute to the discourse on South African narratives, giving deeper insight into the complex histories that shape them. I am concerned with acknowledging, understanding, and visualising often-untold and hidden

⁴ In response to the growing opposition to the Apartheid government, a number of States of Emergency were declared in the 1980s. Essentially martial law, it eventually resulted in the deployment of SADF troops in the black townships to assist the South African Police (Cawthra, 1986:247-256).

narratives through scholarly engagement, followed by creative practice and visual artefacts, including performance. The ‘untold narratives’, in this case, will be those of the former conscripts. As a researcher, I am intrigued by the variances of performance I am able to present, and how these speak to the viewer and to methods of academic inquiry.

As part of this study’s performance work, I use my artist persona, *swany*, developed in 2011, and first used in my 2012 *Gaze*⁵ performance, which interrogated the concept of the male gaze and attempted to subvert that by presenting the male subject instead as the object of the gaze. My continued use of *swany* indicates my longstanding exploration of gender and masculinity as forms of performance and I build upon past artistic exploration in my doctoral study. The persona also operates as a signifier for the concepts of identity and self-representation. My practice was originally inspired by the critique of gender by feminist theorists as a conceptual tool to investigate hierarchical power structures within society. I similarly often use the *swany* construct to interrogate my masculinity, my lived experiences, and those of my peers. As with gender, it functions both as a noun and verb (as in the form ‘gendered’). *Swany* is performative, a doing or action, that oscillates between reflecting and subverting normative gender directives. For the purposes of this study, a cyclical research process is adopted where gender studies and queer theory provide a critical lens for practice-driven research, which, in turn, generates practical experiences and data that inform a more nuanced understanding and reflection on the theorised context.

The theoretical framework of this study is informed by gender and queer theory. Queer theory helps deconstruct norms of gender and sexuality, allowing the research to examine societal power structures and challenge assumptions, through creative and qualitative research, thereby producing new knowledge and insights. Gender theory allows for the interrogation of the multiple, shifting expressions of former conscripts’ masculinity in the context of the SADF, itself a gendered entity, and its gender directives

Through the work of Joan Scott (1986; 2008) amongst other gender theorists, gender has become a core historical concept for analysing and understanding social relationships, power dynamics, and the construction of identity across different times and cultures (Tosh, 2004:41). In her 1986 article, ‘Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis’, Scott proposes that gender may be used as a critical tool for historians and social scientists to analyse how gender operates in historical narratives. It is this notion of gender as a critical tool along with Hay’s (2003) notion of *saecularity* and the ‘narrativising’ of history that I use in my research study to analyse and represent the embodied stories

⁵ Information on this performance may be found in the attached Annexure H: Praxis Overview, pages 231-232.

shared by the participating former conscripts. The terms gender and narrativising are linked by the telling of 'stories' and analysis within a historical context. In Scott's (1986) conceptualisation it may be used to analyse the relationship between men's gender and their 'situatedness'⁶ within specific historical contexts, and the way their identities and behaviours are structured, and intertwined with various contexts, cultural practices, and socio-political forces (Tosh, 2004:41). Humans are not only physically situated, but also socially and culturally situated, and therefore, historically and geographically situated.

Scott (1986:1055-1057) views gender as both a concept and a theory; it is primarily a concept for understanding social relations, that is, socially constructed roles, behaviours, and identities, and their perceived differences. It is also a set of theories used to analyse and explain that concept. These theories enable the analysis of how power operates through gendered norms and practices, based on perceived differences, while revealing the social and historical construction of what is often mistaken for natural difference. This allows for a critical investigation of how meanings associated with sexed and gendered bodies are produced, deployed and changed, according to place and time, that is, according to their 'situatedness'. Some of these meanings might be the so-called biological 'truths' associated with the military conscripts' bodies. These 'truths', or essentialist attributes, also include those attributes associated with masculinity, such as aggression, competitiveness and self-reliance. These attributes were upheld and generally valourised within the SADF, while being enforced through gender directives.

Raewyn Connell ([1995]; 2005) focusing specifically on masculinities, examines their historical development and social dynamics, including how they are influenced by globalisation, class, race, sexuality, and power relations. Jeff Hearn (2012:4), amongst others, acknowledges the foundational work of Connell and her colleagues in the critical scholarship on masculinities (Connell, 1983, 1995, 2000; Carrigan et al., 1985; Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005). Nikki Wedgewood (2009) names Connell's theory of masculinity as the most influential theory in the field of men and masculinities. As such, for the purposes of this study, Connell's work strongly informs much of the discussion regarding masculinities. Connell provides a critical feminist analysis in her book, *Masculinities* (1995), presenting her theories regarding the construction of masculine identity. This, of course, is of particular relevance to this proposed study. She raises difficult issues for men and boys to consider, particularly in relation to a gender order which continues to privilege them in relation to women and girls. Connell (2001:7) posits that instead of attempting to define masculinity as an object, we should focus on the processes and relationships through which men, as well as women, conduct gendered lives. The point she makes

⁶ The term is attributed to psychologist and sociologist, Lev Vygotsky, and his concept that cognitive development is a social development (Lindblom & Ziemke, 2003). This theory of cognitive development stresses that individual intelligence emerges as a result of embodiment (Lindblom & Ziemke, 2003:80).

is that “gender is a way in which social practice is ordered” (Connell, 2001:7). Therefore, if we recognise gender as a social pattern, we are able to acknowledge it, not only as a product of history, but as a producer of history. Connell (2001:7) submits that structures of gender relations are formed and transformed over time. This adds a further call for nuance in this study’s analysis of the historical narratives as discussed by Scott (1986, 2008) and Hay (2003). This is because as products of history, our lives are profoundly shaped by the past, determining the languages we speak, the cultures we inhabit, and the political systems we live under, for example. However, as producers of history, we actively make choices and take actions that influence future events, and our future personal lives. Returning to dramaturgical analogy, the relationship is dynamic, with history providing the stage and the materials, while we act upon that stage, in turn shaping the history that will influence those who come after us.

In a chapter titled, *The Social Organization of Masculinity*, Connell ([1995]; 2005) provides a structure of social practice relations among masculinities where masculinity is not viewed as an isolated object but part of a larger structure. She proceeds to consider the practices and relations that construct the main patterns of masculinity: hegemony, subordination, complicity and marginalisation (Connell, 1995; 2005). My focus in this study is the spaces where these practices and relations are established, in particular, military institutions. Research points to the existence of gendered institutions, and a strong link between, on the one hand, men and masculinities as identities, and on the other, organisational culture as a producer and reproducer of those identities (Connell, 2008; Hearn & Parkin, 2003). This is of great importance considering the patriarchal nature of societies worldwide, the struggle of women and queer people to achieve social equality within these societies, and the violence associated with men and masculinities (WHO 2013:20; Vetten & Ratele, 2013). Feminist researchers and theorists have used the concept of ‘gender’ as a tool to not only raise awareness of the plight of girls and women within our societies, but to also critically analyse the hierarchical structure within which they find themselves located in relation to boys and men (Scott, 1986; Acker, 1989). This was achieved by examining gender-based differences and inequalities in diverse historical and geographical contexts, including South Africa. These analyses of gender inequalities have resulted in a raising-of-awareness and the problematisation of masculinities and male socialisation, and the gender-based inequalities and violence associated with them.

Although Connell’s work is central to understanding masculinity as a social practice, it is the sociologists Candace West and Don Zimmerman’s article, ‘Doing Gender’ (1987), which is accredited with introducing the concept of ‘doing gender’. The article, along with Judith Butler’s ‘Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist’ (1988), investigates gender

as a routine accomplishment embedded in everyday interaction, and ‘done’ in specific contexts. The perspective that gender is ‘done’ rather than being an inherent property, does not solely focus on gender expression and representation as forms of human interaction but includes power in its conceptualisation. It argues that power is embedded in both the material aspects of the organisational context, and symbolic aspects of the institutional context (Buchanan & Lawrence, 2018:480). I will go into more detail regarding the difference between organisations and institutions later, but an example would be that a school or schools are organisations, while education is an institution. The argument is that girls and women are disadvantaged in their organisational roles and the same applies for their positioning in institutions. This implies that these social structures, or organisations, treat them differently based on their bodies and gender. These organisations and institutions can be considered gendered as a result.

Acker (1992a:567) defines the term ‘gendered institutions’ as gender being “present in the processes, practices, images, and ideologies, and distributions of power in the various sectors of social life”. Institutions in patriarchal societies that have been historically developed by men, are symbolically interpreted from the standpoint of men in leading positions, and are defined by an absence of women, or absence from positions of power and influence (Acker, 1992a:567). Men still dominate many central institutions, despite the more inclusive nature and legal frameworks of many contemporary societies. Connell (2008:237) is in agreement with Acker, and proposes further that “understanding institutions is vital for understanding masculinities”.

Seeing social institutions as gendered provides a critical perspective for sociology, in which the relevant question becomes not why are women excluded but to what extent have the overall institutional structure, and the character of particular institutional areas, been formed by and through gender? Would there be a military establishment, a state as we know it, or a capitalist economy if gender were not an organizing principle? How are men's interests and masculinity of certain kinds intertwined in the creation and maintenance of particular institutions, and how have the subordination and exclusion of women been built into ordinary institutional functioning? (Acker, 1992a:568).

What is of interest in this study is how boys and men experience these gendered institutions and the associated gender directives, rituals and initiations, and how they perpetuate, modify and/or resist them. If institutions are structured by gender, then the results are different experiences and opportunities for boys and men and girls and women.

The gendered institution this research study focuses on is the South African Defence Force (1957-1994). A review of literature indicates that no studies focus on the institution as gendered, and that existing

research focuses largely on the Border War itself, the memories of the participants, and their lives after their military service (Baines, 2008:2). *Beyond the Border War: New Perspectives on Southern Africa's Late-Cold War Conflicts* edited by Gary Baines and Peter Vale (2008) is one of the most complete collections of research studies on the topic available. The collection of chapters deals mostly with the Border War within its various contexts; globally as a part of the Cold War conflict, regarding Namibian, and South African interests. Similarly, a more recent volume of articles, *In different times: The War for Southern Africa 1966-1989* (2019), uses the lens of the Border War conflict. The collection of chapters is divided into three sections: places and events, war and society, and finally, the soldiers' experiences. The editors, Ian van der Waag and Albert Grundlingh (2019:5), describe this collection as reflecting the three approaches of military history writing: the traditional, the new, and the war-and-society method. In both collections, a number of the chapters address the experiences of the combatants, with the militarised socialisation of the former conscripts, including gender, being touched on. None, however, purposefully focus upon the SADF as a gendered institution, and the conscripts' experiences of it as such.

1.6 Problem statement, research questions and objectives

Many white South African men were conscripted into the SADF at a very young age, often against their will. Here they were subject to often coercive, even brutal socialisation processes, including gender directives, and trained for, and inserted into conflict situations. The study intends to initiate this conversation regarding the SADF as a gendered institution, addressing this gap in research, while adding to the discourse, through performance art as a form of visual archiving.

This study is concerned with former conscripts' experiences of the SADF's gendered rituals, directives and markers. Two areas of focus arise from this. The first is the exploration of the experiences of the former conscripts in the gendered institution of the SADF, through forms of confessional testimony. The second, is how the use of my artist praxis, my practice-driven research, as well as ethnographic performance, may result in a creative and academic artefact which not only narrates the former conscripts' untold stories, but also provide critical insight into the construct of a gendered institution in the form of a visual archive.

The following research questions and objectives arise from the problem statement:

- Which gendered rituals, markers and directives were experienced by former conscripts in the SADF? *The objective was to critically investigate the gendered nature of institutions. In this way norms and points of comparison could be established.*

- How can the testimony of these experiences be collected and analysed? *The aim was to establish and implement suitable methodologies to collect and analyse the data. Former conscripts were invited to participate in the study. Interviews were undertaken with willing participants. Those who did not want to be interviewed but still wished to participate, could submit other forms of artefacts in the form of writing, video, journals and the like. The data was then analysed using coding, thematic analysis and artistic practice.*
- How did/do the former conscripts experience gender rituals, markers and gender directives during their time in the SADF? *This question was answered by the study of the participants' recollections and their confessional testimonies, the aim of which was to examine the gendered nature of the institution.*
- How may the former conscripts' testimonies be used to inform my performance practice as an artist, and result in a creative and academic artefact which operates as a visual archive? *The objective was achieved through a practice-driven research process, including experimentation, making, and the identification of artefacts which were used as visual clues or signifiers, to create a performance informed by the conclusions of the research conducted.*

1.7 Central theoretical statement

This interdisciplinary study reframes the South African Defence Force (SADF) as a fundamentally gendered institution through a hybrid methodological model in which qualitative analysis and performative practice are mutually generative. Central to this contribution is the assembly of a multimedia visual archive—comprising video-recorded performances, photographic essays, and installations—which serves to document, analyse, and preserve a corpus of confessional testimony from former conscripts. These testimonies move beyond 'sanitised' historical accounts to unmask the raw, internalised experiences of trauma, complicity, and resistance that defined white militarised masculinity. By treating the act of artistic practice as a primary site of knowledge production, the research demonstrates that the performative archiving of these 'thick descriptions' is essential for revealing the fluid and plural nature of masculinity, acts of resistance, and the role of gendered institutions in its constitution. Ultimately, the work establishes a new methodological approach and embodied knowing that integrates emotion and reflection into the historical and art historical record, thus finding ways to communicate these untold narratives in ways that cannot be facilitated by traditional research methodologies.

1.8 Theoretical paradigm and framework

From the outset I have been convinced that performative research was the appropriate approach for a study focused on the lived experiences of men conscripted into a highly gendered institution such as the military. This approach is well-suited to capture the nuanced, embodied, and often unspoken aspects of these men's experiences that traditional, purely text-based methods might miss. A term that is linked to the notion of researcher reflexivity is the 'research paradigm', which defines a researcher's worldview (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017:26). Performative research has been proposed as an alternative or new research paradigm, embracing subjectivity and active engagement within a research study (Haseman, 2006). This suggests reflexivity, which demands that researchers critically and continuously examine their own assumptions, biases, positionality (social background, experiences, beliefs), and how these factors influence every stage of the research—from the initial questions to data generation, analysis, and dissemination of their findings. For the purposes of this study, the chosen paradigm assisted in defining the researcher's relationship with the subject matter as well as the participants.

This overarching perspective or worldview guides the study's research process, and the 'filtering' of knowledge and insights. In fact, due to the complexity of the areas of focus, a variety of interwoven paradigmatic perspectives were selected. These will be discussed in more detail in chapter four, but briefly, I selected pragmatic, interpretive, constructive, and transformative paradigms. These paradigms share key commonalities such as all rejecting the notion of a single, objective reality, while emphasising the importance of subjective experiences, social context, and the researcher's involvement. Further, the social, cultural, political, and historical contexts are considered crucial for understanding phenomena, based on the argument that reality and meaning are shaped by these contexts. While the body is a primary site of investigation in performative studies and arts-based research, the interdisciplinary nature of the field allows for a vast array of topics to be analysed through a performative lens. This includes the study of language and discourse in shaping social reality. For example, drawing on J.L. Austin's (1979) speech act theory and Judith Butler's work on gender (see section 2.6), performativity can refer to how certain terms, concepts, or identities are brought into being through the very act of their utterance or enactment, rather than describing a pre-existing state. As performative research, my study aligns with fields of research in which the body itself, that is, embodiment, the experience and material fact of having a body, is the central object of focus.

Finally, my choice of paradigms directly informed and guided my choice of theoretical structure, serving as the foundational philosophical worldview that determined which theories were considered relevant and appropriate for the purposes of this study. These are introduced in the context section of this chapter and will be discussed in depth in chapter two.

1.9 Methodology

The choice of paradigm(s) informed all aspects of this study, including the research methodology, design of research questions and questionnaires, data collection, and the interpretation of results. Qualitative and post-qualitative research methodologies were selected to answer the research questions I set by investigating the field of focus and validating the knowledge gained. The study's methodological framework contributes not only to the understanding of masculinities and gendered institutions, but also to historical research within and through the creative arts. As such, there is an attempt to establish reciprocity between theory, practice-driven research, and art making. Intrinsic to my research methodology and structure is the notion of complexity as a counterpoint to reductive essentialism. I identified theories that allow for complexity and ambiguity, and use it as the foundation for my research. Appropriate methodological tools were selected through a comprehensive study of current scholarship on masculinities, as well as performative and practice-driven research. I deem auto-ethnography and performance ethnography as eminently suited to this study. Methods to collect conscripts' stories include narrative questionnaires, and open-ended follow-up questions to collect personal stories in order to understand the former-conscripts' lived experiences and interpretations of the military institution and its various practices. These methodologies and methods will be discussed in detail in chapter four.

1.10 Ethical issues

The research involved the voluntary participation of members from the target population, former SADF conscripts. It acknowledged that these men may have experienced emotional and psychological trauma to varying degrees during their time in the military. There were therefore emotional risks to asking them to revisit the past as this research did. Mitigating strategies were put in place as a result. Firstly, participation was completely voluntary, with the participants being given full disclosure regarding how their experiences were used in the research and the aims of that research. Confidentiality and anonymity were assured. Their names and personal details, or any identifiable information mentioned in their testimonies, are not included in either the thesis document or the performance artefact. Each participant was assigned a pseudonym using the military phonetic alphabet. This allowed for distinguishing between participant voices but still maintains anonymity. The participants were assured of their control over their personal information and the authority to decide when information may be made public, what information they were willing to share confidentially, what information they were willing to share anonymously, and what information was not to be shared at all.

As a result of the sensitive nature of the context and content, the Basic and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee (BaSSREC) of North-West University determined that some distance was to be established between researcher and participants. It was stipulated that only online interviews were to take place. As a result, self-completion narrative questionnaires were used to gather data. The received material was analysed to extrapolate themes, rituals, processes and stories which were written up as part of the thesis and were converted into a creative performance piece. It was deemed that this interpretive work provided a further layer of anonymity and protection for the participants. The gathered data itself was stored on a laptop and external drive, both password protected. I had sole access to these storage devices.

Nevertheless, there remained a concern regarding the emotional safety of the participants. The men I worked with might potentially have been through traumatic experiences, and their participation in the study might call that up for them. As a result, access to counselling was necessary. A counsellor (and member of The Health Professions Council of South Africa (HPCSA)) was made available to the participants should they have felt the need to talk to someone after participating in the research. One paid-for hour long session with the counsellor was made available to each participant, if needed. After this, participants were free to continue speaking with the counsellor, but that would be for their own expense. None of the participants made use of the available counselling sessions.

Finally, I declare from the outset that I am not an Apartheid apologist. The fact that I am implicated in the Apartheid regime's policies through my participation in its military conscription programme continues to shame and trouble me. The eventual military presence in Black townships, regardless of the manner in which the government of the time attempted to spin this, is impossible to justify⁷. Further, I stress the fact that I am in no way attempting to claim the role of victim for the former conscripts but rather I emphasise the circumstances and their effects upon former conscripts such as myself.

1.11 Outline of chapters

The contentions of this thesis comprise of two main sections: the theory component which includes chapters one through to four; and the practical component and reflections which is chapter six. The dissertation concludes with chapter seven.

Chapter one introduces the field of study, the related context, the methodology and the structure of the thesis, providing an overview of the research study. Chapter two provides a detailed breakdown of the

⁷ The state's justification was that a secure environment was required in which to manage political reform, and in which negotiations between role-players might take place (Van der Waag & Grundlingh, 2019:7).

review of literature. Chapter three provides additional context in the form of a comprehensive study of the South African Defence Force and its origins. Chapter four discusses the paradigms and methodology used for the study. Chapter five critically analyses the data collected and provides its findings and conclusions. The theory component establishes the conceptual framework, exploring existing theories, methodologies, and literature that informs and underpins the research. It provides the intellectual scaffolding for the practical component of the research. Chapter six, the practical and reflections component, does not signify an actual division between two sections but is rather an interplay between theory and practice, where theory informs practice and practice informs theory. As a performative research study, it integrates the theoretical and practical components. The practical component involves the performance or creative work itself, which is a form of inquiry and a site for generating knowledge. This component enacts or tests the theory, and is not merely an illustration or performance of the theory. It is a primary means of investigation that actively contributes to the thesis, and for this reason includes reflection on the processes embodied experience, and outcomes of the practice. Chapter seven concludes the thesis, briefly recaps the main points and key findings of my research, showing how they connect to my initial research aims and questions. In addition, it highlights the research's anticipated contributions and suggests future research, while acknowledging its limitations.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW AND CONTEXT

In the first chapter of this research study, it is indicated that the study is exploratory in nature and will use a literature review to establish an 'orientating framework' for this exploration (Cresswell, 2014). A brief overview then highlights the main theoretical lenses of the study: gender and performance ethnographies. The first is to be used as a conceptual and analytical tool, and the second as a focus because empirical ethnographic studies of men's lives are an established and prevalent methodology in masculinities research. Further, linked to these are to be performativity, resistance and agency as proposed by Judith Butler (1986), and includes their concept of confessional testimony. Finally, the SADF as an institution, notably a gendered one, is discussed. This is carried out, not only to provide context, but in order to give insight into how the research questions were formulated, to highlight the relevant theories and related research studies, and to suggest the methodology that would be adopted for this research study.

2.1 Systematic review of empirical literature

Verifiable data regarding the SADF, its operations, and particularly its members, is notoriously difficult to obtain. The TRC report (1998:226) acknowledged the destruction of SADF records:

The former government deliberately and systematically destroyed state documentation over a number of years. This process began in 1978, when classified records were routinely destroyed, supposedly in order to safeguard state security. By the 1990s the process of destruction of records and documents had become a co-ordinated endeavour, sanctioned by the cabinet, with the aim of denying a new government access to incriminating evidence and sanitising the history of the apartheid era.

The TRC (1998:226) reports that the orders for the destruction of classified records of the South African Police (SAP) and the SADF came from the highest level, the then Prime Minister, FW De Klerk. In 1988, the bulk of the classified records of the South West Africa Territory Force were destroyed, followed by a systematic destruction of the National Intelligence Service (NIS) records, which continued until late 1994⁸. In order to assist the TRC, a South African National Defence Force Nodal Point was established by former SADF General Georg Meiring to facilitate access to information needed for its purposes. The irony was that the former SADF no longer existed and therefore no person could officially speak on its behalf, and yet the Nodal Point was entirely staffed by former SADF members.

⁸ During a camp in 1990 at the South African Intelligence School (SAINTS) unit, then based in Potchefstroom, I witnessed the destruction of records taking place.

To further exacerbate the difficulty in gathering verifiable information, it is standard practice that members of national armed forces are sworn to secrecy regarding the composition, movements or disposition of that country's armed forces. However, in the case of Apartheid-era South Africa, this practice was compounded by extensive censorship and secrecy (Baines, 2015:80). The Official Secrets Act (1956), the Defence Act (1957) forbade unauthorised disclosures relating to the SADF. The provisions of this legislation applied not only to civil servants and national servicemen, but also to the press (Baines, 2015:80). However, it should be acknowledged that some archival material may be found at the Department of Defence (DOD) Archives, where it has been sorted, arranged and catalogued (Van der Waag & Grundlingh, 2019:6). More and more of this documentation is steadily becoming available for public access (Van der Waag & Grundlingh, 2019:6). The records in the DOD Archives date from 1912 when the Union Defence Force was established. The archival records in the DOD Archives reflect the main business activities of all the components of the UDF, the South African Defence Force, the former Transkei, Ciskei, Bophuthatswana, Venda Defence Forces, as well as South African National Defence Force. The business activities relate to operational, administrative and technical aspects of the military forces and cover war and peacetime activities. Personnel records of military veterans that completed service before and up to and including 31 December 1969 are available (Department of Defence, n.d.). What can be deduced from this is that most of the data available is official correspondence and situation and incident reports relating to the general day-to-day running of the various bases and units, and the major operations. In other words, there is a lack of records of specific members and their service within their designated units, as the personnel records of military veterans are only available up to and including December 1969.

An argument has been put forward that this lack of specificity regarding most SADF members, due to the destruction of official records, has resulted in "the privileging of experiential knowledge" and oral history by war veterans at "the expense of other forms of (historical) knowledge", often amounting to the silencing of external commentators and critics⁹ (Baines, 2015:89-90). Whilst records of this sharing of experiential knowledge, that is, the narration of lived experiences are acceptable under the auspices of qualitative research, they largely do not conform to the constraints of quantitative research or lend themselves to its interpretative methods. In order to verify timelines, locations, units/forces and specific numbers in the case of personnel and arms, I chose to use systematic review methods. I did not use statistical analytical tools, instead, verification was most often achieved by cross-referencing secondary

⁹ The premise is that direct personal experience as a SADF soldier is the sole valid basis for comment or critique, and that those without this specific experience inherently "lack the knowledge and experience" to form a meaningful opinion.

sources with the data the participants provided. I used elements of this systematic analytical process¹⁰, as mentioned, to not only confirm statistics presented in various sources, but to also verify the data generated by my primary text-based research methods and those providing that data via the interviews conducted. As a result of this process, I also found myself reflecting on my own memories and understandings of things back then. Certainly, my understanding of the SADF and the context of my institutional experiences is far deeper and more informed. Prior to this process, using an analogy, I tended to see the trees rather than the forest.

2.2 Historic categories and racial terminology

Before proceeding, it is important to clarify the use of historic categories and racial terminology in this thesis. Firstly, the capitalising of a racial or ethnic group's name is not intended to elevate, but to situate. The capital letter for a racial identity acknowledges it as a legitimate cultural and historical group, rather than a generic descriptor, and removes the implication that a racial identity is a neutral classification. During Apartheid South Africans were legally racially classified, along with the racial term 'non-white', officially dividing White and everyone who was not. Sadly, these racial categories still, to a large extent, appear on official state documents some 30 years after the fall of Apartheid. The racial category 'Coloured', denoting a person of mixed racial ancestry in South Africa, rather than one who is Black, as it does in many other parts of the world, has become a contested term, rejected by some, reclaimed and celebrated by others (Adhikari, 2013:viii). Mohamed Adhikari (2013:xvii) notes that in South Africa, from the early 1990s onwards, there has been a resurgence of 'colouredism'. This is in stark contrast to the growing and vocal Coloured rejectionism which was fostered by the non-racial democratic movement of the 1980s during Apartheid (Adhikari, 2013:xvii).

Another racial category that has been equally contested is 'Bushmen', with the terms 'San' or 'San-Bushmen' alternatively being used in scholarship, activism and popular discourse. The Bushmen military unit I served in was composed of two communities or tribes. Although the Bushmen preferred to be identified or differentiated according to by their tribal¹¹ designations, they identified collectively as Bushmen, and took considerable pride in their mastery of the 'bush'. The word 'tribe' has also become somewhat contested, and yet some White Afrikaners proudly claim the name, the White Tribe

¹⁰ This form of analysis of literature reviews originated in the health sciences, where informing practice with scientific evidence required methods to review and synthesise the existing knowledge about specific questions of practical relevance to medical professionals (Lamé, 2019:1634). The concern was that historically health sciences mainly relied on 'narrative reviews' to synthesise research (Lamé, 2019:1634). As a result, the reviews would provide a general overview of a topic, and rely on the expertise of the author, without attempting to synthesise all relevant published evidence (Lamé, 2019:1634).

¹¹ The majority of 31/201 Battalion consisted of two San tribes, namely the Khwe and !Xun: the Baraquenias tribe came from Cuando-Cubango region of Angola and the Vasqueles tribe from the Southern regions of Angola and north-eastern South West Africa (Uys, 2015).

of Africa¹². Tribe refers to a group of people who share a common culture, language, and history, often living in their own societies. The use of the term 'Afrikaner' in this study denotes the White Apartheid-era 'tribe' of (self-proclaimed) '*volk*' and its ideology. The Afrikaner group of this context included only White Afrikaans speakers within its 'tribe'. Herman Giliomee (2003:369) describes one of Afrikaner's earliest champions and intelligentsia, C.J. Langenhoven, as defining Afrikaans as the "one and only white man's language which was made in South Africa". Nevertheless, despite its association with whiteness there were and are other races for whom Afrikaans was also their home language. In fact, based on the 2022 census, 50.2% of all Afrikaans speakers are actually Coloured, with only 39.5% being White, and the rest being Black, Indian or Asian, and Other (Stats SA, 2023).

I stress that I do not ignore or dismiss these facts presented, but because this study focuses on a historically and geographically specific period, I use terms specific to the period. Some of this is due to dated texts, articles and books being of this specific period of time, and which is reflected in the language of the authors. However, in some cases this use is due to my effort to reflect the *Zeitgeist* or the general intellectual, moral, and cultural climate of the era. This applies equally to countries which were referred to by their colonial designations until their liberation. The chief example is, of course, the use of the name, South West Africa, which became Namibia upon independence. Equally, the use of the terms 'Bush War' or 'Border War' should, as André Wessels (2017:24) proposes, rather be known as the Namibian War of Independence, or perhaps, the War for Southern Africa of 1966 to 1989. Nevertheless, I use the terms 'Border' and 'Border War' to refer to these ideological constructs and mythologies in a similar manner to that of the term 'Afrikaner' or 'non-Whites'. Their use reflects neither my personal beliefs nor preferences. As such, I make use of quotation marks and references to contextualise my citing of such terms from historic sources, and where necessary, scare quotes to indicate my awareness of their fraught nature.

2.3 Gender as a conceptual and analytical tool

It was established earlier that gender is to be used as a central conceptual and analytical tool, and it is necessary to define and refine the designations (and what is meant when they are used) of the focus of this study: men and masculinities within the context of a military institution.

¹² Associated with White Afrikaner nationalism, it reflected the conceptualisation that their very name and language referred to, and originated in, Africa.

The first point to take note of is that, while the two are often intertwined, men are not the equivalent of masculinities. Instead, the conceptual gender term, masculinities, taking its lead from feminist scholarship, concerns the position of men in a gender order. Therefore, to speak of masculinity is to speak about gender relations. The second point is that, as has been established by feminist research, in this structure of relations, masculinity and men are generally privileged. However, the use of gender, and in this case, masculinities, as an analytical unit refutes the essentialist presupposition conferred on men and women, that is, the presumed biological truths associated with their bodies. My research work and artist praxis challenge and strive to disrupt the notion of fixity and normativity associated with the term 'men'. The argument is that the use of gender when analysing social relationships and structures calls attention to how meanings are attached to physical difference, and the implications thereof within a patriarchal context.

Researchers such as Connell have drawn attention to the power relations that exist within masculinity, in particular the notion of hegemonic masculinity¹³ which is closely aligned to the patriarchal system. The term, commonly attributed to Connell (2009:149) refers to the advantages and benefits, such as authority, access to institutional power and higher salaries, given to some men in society, whose dominance is gained from an unequal gender order.

Hegemonic masculinity can be defined as the configuration of gender practice which embodies the currently accepted answer to the problem of the legitimacy of patriarchy, which guarantees (or is taken to guarantee) the dominant position of men and the subordination of women (Connell 1995:77).

Hegemonic masculinity conceptualises the hierarchy that exists among men, that some men are dominant and other subordinate, based on class, race, sexual preferences or orientation, and other categories. This is unpacked in more detail when discussing Nigel Edley's masculinity as an effect of power (pages 35-37). Connell and Messerschmidt (2005:830), whilst revisiting the concept and the applications thereof, acknowledge that it is a contested one, and attempt to reformulate it in more contemporary terms. They welcome most of the applications and modifications of the hegemonic masculinity concept as they contribute to the understanding of gender dynamics (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005:854). However, they reject those usages that imply a fixed character type, or an assemblage of toxic traits, such as, notably, toxic masculinity (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005:854). This study concurs and selects the conceptualisation of a hegemonic masculinity as a tool, along with gender and masculinities, for analysis purposes.

¹³ Connell's thinking is informed by Antonio Gramsci's (1971) theory concerning the cultural dynamic by which a group claims and sustains a leading position in social life.

Nigel Edley's *Men and Masculinity: The Basics* (2017) introduces the academic study of masculinity. In it Edley (2017), a self-proclaimed 'man-watcher'¹⁴ himself, outlines the key theories, concepts and research in the field, including the work of Raewyn Connell and Judith Butler. Under the heading, 'The Nature of Masculinity: Five Theses', he proposes five different approaches to understanding men and masculinity. Masculinity is described as: a) a function of biology; b) as a state of mind; c) as a trained response; d) as an effect of power; and finally, e) as a practical accomplishment or performance (Edley, 2017:25-50). These five theses were used as categories for the purposes of the thematic analysis of the data collected from my participants.

Here follows a brief explanation of each approach. Please note that the purpose of this exercise is to explore the diverse thinking concerning masculinity, rather than to provide exhaustive explanations of all. Masculinity is not a singular concept, instead of an exhaustive list of all views, and thus this exploration highlights several key domains or approaches of thinking.

¹⁴ Edley (2017) provides a series of observations, or what he calls 'man-watching,' wherein he discusses and demonstrates the ways in which the social world is manifestly gendered.

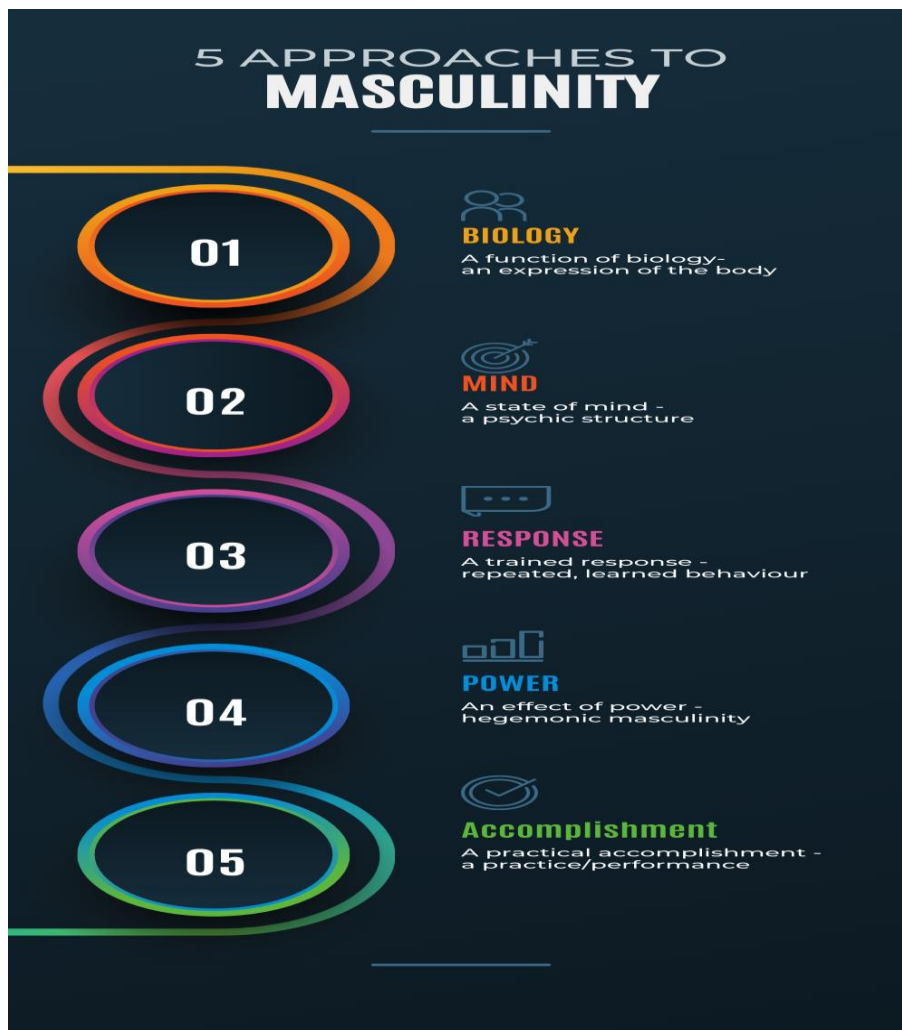


Figure 2: The Nature of Masculinity: Five Theses – Nigel Edley (2017:25-50). Design by Swanepoel, 2025.

2.3.1 Masculinity as an expression of body

The premise of Edley's first thesis is that at least a part of our personal sense of identity is derived from the bodies we inhabit. This results from our experience of our bodies, what others experience of our bodies, and what those bodies presumably signify in each context. The issue with this is that most modern societies assume that everyone should either be a male body or a female body, according to two sex categories. This study provides insights into an institution which adopted this stance in a rigorous manner which included its legislation, laws and structures, as well as formal and informal policing. The SADF further demanded and dictated a very specific type of expression of a very specific type of body. However, Edley (2017:26-27) argues that this is problematic because research has shown that biology is not as clear cut as male or female. There are different physical dimensions of sex: a) genital anatomy (penis/vagina); b) internal sex organs (testes/ovaries); and c) genetics (XY/XX sex chromosomes)

(Edley, 2017:27). In addition, there is a fourth dimension due to the growing call for one's sex to be a matter of self-determination (Edley, 2017:27).

This Postmodern interrogation of the body highlights the fact that our conception of what is natural, and what natural differences consist of, is a cultural construct. Critical approaches grouped under Postmodernism attempt to undermine not only the grand narratives of modernist social organisation, but suggest means to resist and refuse spheres of domination such as capitalism, patriarchy, colonialism, and heteronormativity (Cox, 2014). Further, Poststructuralism¹⁵ challenges the notion of fixed categories, deconstructing the very structures that impose these categories. This theory, or group of theories, concerns the relationship between human beings, the world, and the practice of making and reproducing meanings (Belsey, 2002). What is important regarding these theoretical approaches is that there is a process of questioning, because although the physical body exists, the meaning we attach to the body, and how we categorise and interact with it, is learned and constantly changing. Our understanding is influenced by social discourse and shared experiences. If we begin to question how the various bodily or physical dimensions might help shape or even determine the contours of masculinity, we arrive at a new awareness of the diversity and interconnectedness of plural masculinities.

A central argument within contemporary feminist, queer, and sociological theories of gender is that there is a distinction between the physical body and the (socially) gendered body that becomes a signifier of 'male' or 'female', while simultaneously acknowledging their conflation in everyday social life. Considering this notion of conflation, it may be argued the basis of gender identity consists of not only a social framework but also a biological framework and therefore, gender identity should be considered not only as social, but as biosocial (Boichenko, Shevchenko, & Pituley, 2019:12-13). However, challenging the assumption that biological makeup is the sole basis of gender is crucial for dismantling the idea that certain genders or behaviours are immutable and natural. It allows for a more nuanced understanding of human diversity and the role of social factors in shaping gender identity and expression. In patriarchal heterosexual cultural systems of gender, the existence of two oppositional and complementary gender identities is anchored in so-called natural and binary sex. This results in society reinforcing the differentiation of sex roles and sanctions against threats to it such as homosexuality and transgenderism. There is a cultural elaboration of the distinction between the sexes. Clothing is the most obvious example of the social marking of the natural difference, where women and girls are differentiated by wearing skirts, and men and boys by wearing trousers for example (Connell,

¹⁵ Poststructuralism covers a number of associated analyses of the relationship between power and knowledge, which have in common the view that knowledge is always contextual, partial, and fragmentary, but also is never neutral and shapes the power relations between individuals or groupings (Fox, 2014).

1987:73-79). This is evidence of a social process by which we construct a world of binaries, most notably for the two genders. Of relevance to this study is that in the military the design and regulation of uniforms often position a default, stereotypically masculine ‘soldierly body’.

For Edley (2017:28) the idea that specific genes control complex social behaviours is highly unlikely and has never been proven by any scientific medical research. He concludes that the penis or phallus, and testicles (to have balls) should be acknowledged as signs of masculinity rather than the source of it (Edley, 2017:28). The physical differences between the sexes are moderated by this perspective, favouring a focus on societal construction over their role in identity construction.

2.3.2 Masculinity as a psychic structure

After the body, Edley (2017:31-37) moves on to explore the idea of masculinity as a powerful state of mind. He begins by discussing Sigmund Freud’s (1856–1939) research and his theory of the unconscious, where Freud posits that from the outset, we are sexual beings, and motivated by irrational forces (Edley, 2017:32). Freud believed that these sexual and aggressive drives, and the same psychological mechanisms, were to be found in all cultures, but that they were moulded in different ways by different cultures (Lesser & Pope, 2007:50). The school of modern psychoanalysis, founded by Freud, argues that the early years of one’s life are crucial in shaping our characters. The trials and tribulations of childhood mark and mould the emerging personality, depending on the character of our parents and the nature of our family dynamic (Edley, 2017:33). This thinking informs much of gender studies and its use of ethnography to study life experiences (Warren & Hackney, 2011; Johri, 2023:193; Carrigan, Connell & Lee, 1985).

Freud’s theories have come under criticism, most notably, his concepts of ‘penis-envy’ and ‘castration anxiety’ (Hook, 2006:49). However, it has equally been argued that Freud, in fact, indicated the cultural over-valuation of the penis and masculinity within patriarchal societies in his theorising (Hook, 2006:52). Regardless, what is important about Freud’s research for the purposes of this study is that it further calls into question the notion of fixed character for the two sexes, male and female (Connell 1987:27). An example of this is Freud’s emphasis of ‘bisexuality’ in human emotions, whilst his peer, Carl Jung (1875–1961), builds on this premise, arguing that femininity and masculinity can co-exist in the same personality (Connell, 1987:209). Connell (187:209-217) does note the failings of these theories, observing that Freud’s provides a too mechanical view of personality, with a too limited view

of human possibility, whilst Jung and his use of archetypes is too schematic to be used other than as a starting point.

Edley (2017:35) focuses on a variation on Freud's psychoanalytic theory, the object relations theory. This theory explains psychic structure as evolving from the individual's relations with other people. In other words, human development takes place within the context of relationships (Lesser & Pope, 2007:58). Using the institution of the family, this theory proposes that as boys grow they have to not only achieve independence from their mothers but also imagine or identify themselves as different (Edley, 2017:36). In the terminology of the theory, they must dis-identify from their mothers while counter-identifying with their fathers. The two phenomena are interdependent and form a complementary series (Greenson, 1968:372). However, as Edley (2017:36) suggests, this act of identification and dis-identification, arguably results in what many believe is a central characteristic of masculinity – defensiveness. In this scenario, the male psyche is constructed around the need to reject anything and everything that is associated with women and girls, that is, the feminine (Edley, 2017:36).

This is a notable characteristic of masculine-gendered institutions such as boys' schools and the military. The thick descriptions gathered by this study provide insights into how the feminine was rejected and stigmatised within the SADF. Greenson (1968:372) describes these acts of rejection and repulsion of the feminine as a 'flight from the feminine'. Michael Kimmel (2008: 52) believes that Freud's theories have resulted in a belief that the key to boys' development is separation, where the boy must switch his identification from mother to father to become a man (Kimmel, 2008:52). Boys learn that a connection with their mother will emasculate them. A boy then achieves his masculinity by dis-identification, that is, repudiation and dissociation of the feminine, and then identification of the masculine (Kimmel, 2008:52). This idea of 'learning' is discussed under the following heading.

2.3.3 Masculinity as a trained response

With the development of the understanding that masculinity and femininity were something social or cultural rather than purely biological, the sex role theory is underpinned by the principles of the social learning theory (Edley, 2017:37-38). According to the theory, we learn how to be our gender. Men learn to become manly through intense training; a regime of rewards and punishments that take place in a number of key institutions (Edley, 2017:38-39). Through this training young boys come to adopt 'sex appropriate attitudes and patterns of behaviour' (Edley, 2017:38). The first institution where this training takes place is, of course, the family. But other important ones are schools, sports, religious institutions, clubs, and the military. These institutions are all culturally, geographically and historically

specific. Historical contingency is a major tenet of gender as argued by Joan Scott in her article, 'Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis' (1986). Gender is inherently historical, whereby context and location are central to the formation of gender identities (Scott, 1986, 2008). This study identifies a specific military institution and through ethnographic research attempts to provide insights into an extreme example of intense, literal and figurative training within the institution and for the purposes of that institution.

Gender training is addressed by the socialisation theory, which posits that a newborn child has a biological sex but no social gender. As soon as the child's sex is identified and named, society provides a set of prescriptions, templates and models of favourable or required behaviour appropriate to the one sex or the other (Connell, 1987:191). Agencies of socialisation, notably institutions such as the family, school, sports clubs and the military, provide the settings in which they are appropriated, assumed, and internalised by the child (Connell, 1987:191-192). Some of the mechanisms of learning used by these institutions are conditioning, instruction, modelling, identification and rule learning (Connell, 1987:192). The social prescriptions are internalised to a greater or lesser degree, resulting in a gender identity that usually corresponds to the social expectations for that sex and body-type (Connell, 1987:192). Connell (1987:192) observes that there is, of course, a close affinity between socialisation concepts and Sex Role Theory. Both involve social prescriptions and a process of social learning. Equally, she is critical of both, stating they are not capable of providing a coherent social analysis of social processes (Connell, 1987:192). She finds this picture of consensual agencies acting on behalf of the social order as whole, flawed, referring to historical evidence of institutions, as well as close-up studies of the workings of contemporary ones (Connell, 1987:192). Connell (1987:192-193) observes that, in fact, institutions are rarely internally homogenous, consensual, or even consistent with the people being socialised. That institutions are heterogeneous is something my research study certainly provides evidence of. Connell (1987:193-194) argues that sociologists here are not recognising the complexities of the person, or the dimension of social power. Connell's thinking is an indication of why she formulated her own theory of hegemonic masculinity which will be discussed under the following heading.

What is pertinent for the purposes of this research study, and its focus on the SADF, is her acknowledgement that institutions can appear to be consensual, but warns that closer examination will likely show that this is because a great deal of effort has been put into overriding conflicts of interests to create a front of harmony and good order (Connell, 1987:193).

2.3.4 Masculinity as an effect of power

Edley (2017:42) posits that the history of masculinity is littered with examples of how power is both exercised and sustained by controlling the meaning of what it is to be a man. Certainly, this study focuses on one such example of an exercise in control regarding masculinity and what it means to be a man in a specific time and place within the SADF. Hegemonic masculinity is a useful conceptual tool and provides an overarching framework for understanding how gender inequalities are produced and reproduced (Jewkes, Morrell, Hearn, Lundqvist, Blackbeard, Lindegger, Quayle, Sikweyiya & Gottzén, 2015:123). It also serves as an analytical instrument to identify those attitudes and practices among men that perpetuate gender inequality and discrimination (Jewkes et al., 2015:113).

Edley (2017:43) intimates that key to understanding the nature of masculinity is to see it as an ideology¹⁶. As indicated in Chapter 1, Connell (1985) is the leading voice regarding the concept of hegemonic masculinity, the keystone to her gender order theory. In a seminal article regarding men, masculinity and the issue of social power, 'Toward a New Sociology of Masculinity' (1985), Connell, along with fellow researchers Tim Carrigan and John Lee, describes hegemonic masculinity as the culturally exalted form of masculinity within a particular context. Hegemony does not mean violence, although it can be supported by force. Instead, it refers to the ascendancy achieved through culture, institutions, and persuasion, where consent is most common, without the need for blatant coercion (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005:832; Gramsci, 1971).

The concept has been widely used and debated in gender studies since the 1980s, and over the years it has been further refined (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005). Rachel Jewkes and Robert Morrell (2012:40) describe it as:

a set of values, established by men in power that functions to include and exclude, and to organize society in gender unequal ways. It combines several features: a hierarchy of masculinities, differential access among men to power (over women and other men), and the interplay between men's identity, men's ideals, interactions, power, and patriarchy.

Regarding the relations amongst masculinities, Connell (1995, 2005) goes on to argue that hegemonic masculinity can be further defined in relation to types of masculinity, namely, subordinate, marginalised

¹⁶ Terry Eagleton (1991:5) notes, while arguing that there is no single adequate definition, that ideology often has to do with not only belief systems, but with questions of power. This body of ideas and beliefs characteristic of a particular social group or class may assist in legitimating a dominant political power, and includes the process of producing meaning, signs and values in their social life (Eagleton, 1991:1).

and complicit. Essentially, she is arguing that there are many, different masculinities, each associated with different positions of power. Importantly, they are positioned in relation to many different femininities.

With respect to subordinate masculinities, as hegemony relates to cultural dominance in society as a whole, then logically where there are dominant masculinities, there are subordinate masculinities. The example Connell (2005:79) uses is homosexual men, who are subordinated to heterosexual men. However, they are not the only subordinated masculinity since some heterosexual men and boys are also expelled from the circle of legitimacy, often depending on intersecting hierarchies of class, race, and ability (Connell, 2005:79). In the era that this study focuses on, the white heterosexual Afrikaans man was considered the hegemonic ideal. This therefore excluded white English-speaking men, for example. In addition, as it stipulated race, black, coloured and Indian men were also excluded. But even within the circle of legitimacy itself, some white Afrikaner men would not measure up to the physical and mental/psychological characteristics demanded of the hegemonic ideal. For example, some might be gay, display characteristics considered feminine, have disabilities, and some might even openly resist the prescriptive model.

The number of men rigorously practicing the hegemonic pattern in its entirety is likely to be small. Men who receive the benefits of patriarchy without enacting a strong version of masculine dominance, Connell and Messerschmidt (2005:832) posit, could be regarded as showing a complicit masculinity. Since they benefit from the advantage of patriarchy, men in general gain from the overall subordination of women, and they are complicit in the system even if they are subordinate to dominant men in their context. Connell (2005) names this the patriarchal dividend.

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Connell (2005:81) emphasises that these masculinities discussed are not fixed character types but are rather configurations of masculinities generated in particular situations in a changing structure of relationships. For the purposes of this study, these configurations are Apartheid-era South Africa and within the SADF. She identifies two types of relationships, one being hegemony, domination and subordination; and the other, marginalisation and authorisation (Connell, 2005:81). There was a form of consensual dominance of one group through cultural and political leadership, and the subordination of others, including other men, in South Africa, and, as a result, in the SADF. This dominance was resisted and contested to varying degrees which resulted in the application of coercive tactics, authorisation being one such tactic. Laws were established by the state which allowed them to legally apply force if state and institutional domination was resisted. This resulted in a power relationship between dominant and subordinate groups where those in power granted or withheld authority or validation to others, leading to marginalisation.

Masculinity as an effect of power provides a framework in which specific masculinities can be analysed and offers an analytical instrument. However, Connell (2005:81) notes that any theory of masculinity must give an account of the process of change because to recognise gender as a social pattern requires us to see it as a product and producer of history. In their testimonies, the former conscripts provide insights into this notion of being both a product and producer.

2.3.5 Masculinity as a practice

Edley (2017:46), who, when observing that masculinity has much to do with ideas and ideologies, makes the point that masculinity is also about practice, the actual doing. What is being done or made, specifically, are the coherence, intelligibility, and liveability of one's social relationships, in other words, the meaning and logic of an individual's life. This is something that I found my participants were reflecting on and questioning, and I found true of myself. In particular, and of relevance for the purposes of this study, was the meaning and logic of our time as members of the SADF. Social relationships were also often referred to.

Discussing gender as a structure of social practice, Connell (2005:71-76) posits that gender is a way in which social practice is ordered. Further, while it is a (social) practice that constantly refers to bodies and what they do, it is not social practice reduced to the body (Connell, 2005:71). It is social practice which responds to particular situations and is generated within definite structures of social relations

(Connell, 2005:72). Edley (2017:46) concurs, submitting that when feminists talk about patriarchy and the subordination of women, they are, in fact, invoking an entire range of practices. These practices include, for example, not only the relegation of women to the domestic sphere and institutional discrimination but also practices of personality. In other words, how a person's personality is shaped by their social environments and the people they interact with; personality being a collection of interrelated behavioural, cognitive, and emotional patterns that are unique to that person. Therefore, the structure of personality is not the structure of an object, it is a particular, ongoing unification of diverse, and often contradictory practices (Connell, 1987:222). I believe that insights into this notion are to be found through the data gathered from the participants of this study.

Connell (1987:219-237) introduces further complexity to the concept of gender practice by introducing personality. However, she does warn that it is important to take into consideration that, though the focus on individualism is necessary, structural and institutional analyses should be considered when studying life experiences and analysing gender (Connell, 1987:220). This research study focuses on both the individual (former conscripts) as well the institution (SADF). Combining the logic of life history with the logic of institutional analysis allows for the most penetrating case-study research (Connell, 1987:220). This type of research shows that history is not cyclical, and personal history does not unfold, but that it is a construction, something made (Connell, 1987:220). Because personality is a field of the dynamics of social relations, its construction must be affected by the formation of social interests, the functioning of social interests and the mobilisation of power (Connell, 1987:229).

Finally, Connell (1987:222) believes that the concept of personality is logically co-ordinated with the concept of institution, as both are empirical unifications of practices. She goes on to posit that in the context of a theory of practice, personality is one of the major sites of history and politics (Connell, 1987:223). But, she stresses, although it is connected with other sites such as institutions, it has its own configuration (Connell, 1987:223). She defines personality of practice as follows:

Personality is what people do, just as social relations are what people do, and the doings are the same. Personality is practice seen from a particular angle, which I will call the perspective of history. Psychologies of personality that have stressed the case study as the basic form of understanding are thus an important resource for social analysis (Connell, 1987:220).

In a broad sense, social analysis is what my research study does. Each of my participants reveals their individual personalities through their thick descriptions of how they 'did things', "practice seen from a particular angle" (Connell, 1987:220). However, it should be noted that my study and interviews are not focused on the personality of the former conscripts, but rather memories, experiences within and of

the institution. Personality is shaped by contexts (including patriarchy), but detailed exploration of this is not in the scope of my study. The study has included Connell's conceptualisation of the personality because of its link to practice and therefore the link to institutions, the SADF being its focus. As she posits, the concept of personality is logically co-ordinated with the concept of institution, as both are empirical unifications of practices (Connell, 1987:222).

In conclusion, for the purposes of this study, the argument that is being made is that, regardless of how much detail is known of a given life, personal life becomes unintelligible if the structural bases are not kept in view (Connell, 1987:221). While structure and context are not keys to meaning and truth, we need to be asking organising questions about the structure and context, that is, the circumstances or parameters of that life. My study will attempt to do just that, by critically analysing pre-1994 South Africa, and in particular, the SADF, from the perspective of its former conscripts. Edley's five theses provide a discursive framework for what Hearn (2014) describes as a way to locate oneself within a critical study on men and masculinities.

2.4 Gender and the institution

The research presented in the previous section provides a broad review of gender literature, with a specific focus on men and masculinities, and approaches to the critical study of them. It should be kept in mind that this study argues that institutions themselves are gendered and that gender references those social and cultural processes actively responsible for the construction of identity at specific times and locations, and within specific ethnicities. This section attempts to give insight into, and to underline, the complexity of the military institution identified as the South African Defence Force. The feminist theoretical notion of gender as historically and geographically contingent, as espoused by Joan Scott's (1986) foundational article, 'Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis', is key to this study. In the article, Scott (1986) posits that gender is not constant, but specific to a certain time and place. I have approached my secondary research into the SADF informed by this consideration of historical and geographical contingency. The research attempts to highlight those political, social, economic and cultural processes actively responsible for the construction of identity at a specific time, between 1957 and 1994, a specific location, South Africa, within a specific ethnicity, white South African males, and a specific institution, the military institution of the SADF.

James Henslin (2014:4) provides insight into why this approach is of value by referring to sociologist Charles Wright Mills' 1959 allowance that perspective enables us to grasp the connection between history and biography. Henslin (2014:4) clarifies that the use of history means that each society is

located within a broad stream of events, and which gives each society specific characteristics, such as, importantly, its ideas about the proper roles of men and women. The use of biography, on the other hand, refers to our experiences within the historical settings which give us our orientations to life (Henslin, 2014:4). Henslin (2014:4) argues that people think the way they do, behave the way they do, and do what they do, because of the society in which they are raised, and their particular location in that society. His contention that external influences, that is, their experiences, become part of their thinking and motivation, is integral to this study (Henslin, 2014:4). As I highlighted earlier, informed by Frankel's 1984 study, I am not only concerned with the political behaviour of South African soldiers, but also with the way in which their behaviour reflects the social tendencies and forces ingrained in and by the apartheid South African system of the time. Karl Marx, in his comparison of the 1848 and 1789 revolutions in 1852 (2006), argued that "[M]en make their own history, but they do not make it just as they please; they do not make it under circumstances chosen by themselves, but under circumstances directly encountered, given, and transmitted by the past". The former conscripts certainly encountered circumstances and an institution not of their own making.

2.4.1 Institutions and Organisations

Before proceeding to explore and analyse South African military institutions through my secondary research and some of my personal experiences and observations, the difference between institutions and organisations should be discussed. The two words, 'institution' and 'organisation', are often used interchangeably. The roots of the term 'organisation' point to a group of people organised together for a specific purpose or to achieve a specific goal. The Collins Dictionary (1981:590) describes it as an organising or being organised, or any unified group such as a club or union. Joan Ackers (1990) regards organisations as social structures, but inherently gendered social structures.

Defining 'institution' is, however, more challenging, because it refers to a wide range of phenomena: it can be applied to describe an organisation, that is, an entity in the real world, and to an established practice or recurrent pattern of human behaviour, for example, the institution of marriage. Researchers North (1990) and Hodgson (2006) have argued that institutions are the rules that organise social interactions and relations. The Collins Dictionary (1981:441) defines it as an instituting or being instituted, that is, an established law or practice; an organisation having social, educational or religious purpose; and/or the building housing it. This implies that there are both abstract and concrete elements to it, which the term 'organisation' does not. A group of men may form a rugby team to compete in a local league, for example. This would most likely be defined as an organisation. However, it should be noted though that sport itself, and therefore, rugby, is in fact, institutionalised. Rugby has, along with

its overt rules of engagement, many covert rules relating to things such as gender, class, and, at one stage in South Africa, also race. Therefore, although the rugby club may be considered an organisation, it is an institution and is institutionalised. This is illustrated by Hodgson's (2006:8) argument that institutions are simultaneously both objective structures and subjective springs of human agency, linking the ideal and the real.

As a researcher, my choice to use the term 'institution' rather than 'organisation' is informed by institutionalism and its investigation into the realist 'mechanisms' (those 'rules') by which local structures conform to wider models (Meyer, 2008:805). The institutional theory of organisations puts institutions at the core of the analysis of organisations' design and conduct, with organisations being seen as or described as "local instantiations of wider institutions" (Berthod, 2018:1). My experience of the two units I served in, the South African Intelligence Corp (SAINTS) and 201 Battalion, supports this conceptualisation of organisations and institutions. At a basic level they operated as organisations, members organised together as a single entity with a common purpose. However, as members of a larger or wider (military) institution, our understanding of our purpose and the behaviour required from us, was also informed by institutional thinking, processes and conventions. Essentially, our behaviour was shaped by directives, norms and incentives, and these social construction processes involved were and are particular to not only the SADF, but the military institution as a whole.

The distinctions I have identified and defined are important for the purposes of this study because white South African men's identities during the Apartheid-era were constructed and affirmed by repetitive, institutionalised social acts, structured in terms of overt and covert rules, and notably, in the military as conscripts (Hodgson, 2006:2). In the first chapter of this thesis, I argued that researchers and historians studying the SADF have largely focused on the Border War rather than the military institution itself. This critique is supported by researchers such as Barton Hacker (1994:833), who suggests that historians consistently fail to distinguish war from military institutions as the object of analysis. This study aims to remedy this by making the military institution the focus of analysis.

2.4.2 Military Institutions

In chapter one I briefly discussed institutions and stressed their importance when considering gender. This section will expand on what was covered, focusing specifically on the military institution and its characteristics, purpose and function. Key to this discussion is William Scott's (2014) conceptualisation of the three pillars of institutions which was used as the key tool of analysis, with the pillars being selected as the main themes to be used in my thematic analysis of the ethnographic data collected from

the participants. The relevancy of Michel Foucault's 1977 critical examination of punishment and discipline in institutions, particularly in the military, as well as critical perspectives from gender theory, are also applied to the discussion of Scott's (2014) three pillars concept.

Scott (2014:56) defines the institution as consisting of "regulative, normative and cultural-cognitive elements" that, together with associated activities and resources, provide stability and meaning to social life. Douglas North (1991:97) describes them as "humanly devised constraints" that structure political, economic and social interaction. The constraints are both informal, such as sanctions, taboos, customs, traditions, and codes of conduct, and formal, such as, constitutions and laws (1991:97). In his history of the modern prison and its attendant institutions, North (1991:97) goes on to pose an intriguing question; what makes it necessary to constrain human interaction with institutions? In answer to that question, I earlier described institutions as having a social purpose; they are created by and for our societies, mediating the rules which govern behaviour within that society. In other words, institutions give stability and predictability to social behaviour, whilst presumably enduring as we individuals come and go. Societies require stability and predictability in order to function. They require their members to work together for a 'common good'. Grand narratives or discourses, such as progress and capitalism, that can be said to sustain hegemonies, such as class hierarchies or political elites, along with institutions, persuade, convince or even coerce its members into compliance, ensuring these things happen in order that their societies might survive and even prosper.

In Foucault's *Discipline and Punish* (1977) the foci are torture, punishment, discipline, and finally, the prison (an institution) itself. This is particularly relevant for a study of the SADF, as it was a highly regimented and disciplined institution. Foucault's (1977:135-169) argument is that discipline creates "docile bodies", which was, I would argue, a goal of the military institution. These "docile bodies", unquestioning and obedient, were perfect for the purposes of the apartheid regime, functioning in its school classrooms, factories and, of course, its military, as instructed. This study, through its study of the lived experiences of conscripts, provides insights into these so-called docile bodies.

Foucault's (1977) conceptualisation as well as the organising relations of gender, were applied to Scott's (2014) analysis of institutions in this study. Scott (2014:57) argues that institutions are comprised of regulative, normative and cultural-cognitive elements: regulative: they control and govern our behaviour; normative: they dictate what the norms in society are; and finally, cultural-cognitive: they embody and establish the ideas and customs which inform social behaviour. Scott (2014:59) identifies these as the "Three Pillars of Institutions", and as the vital ingredient of institutions (see Figure 3). They are independent of one another but function simultaneously within an institution.

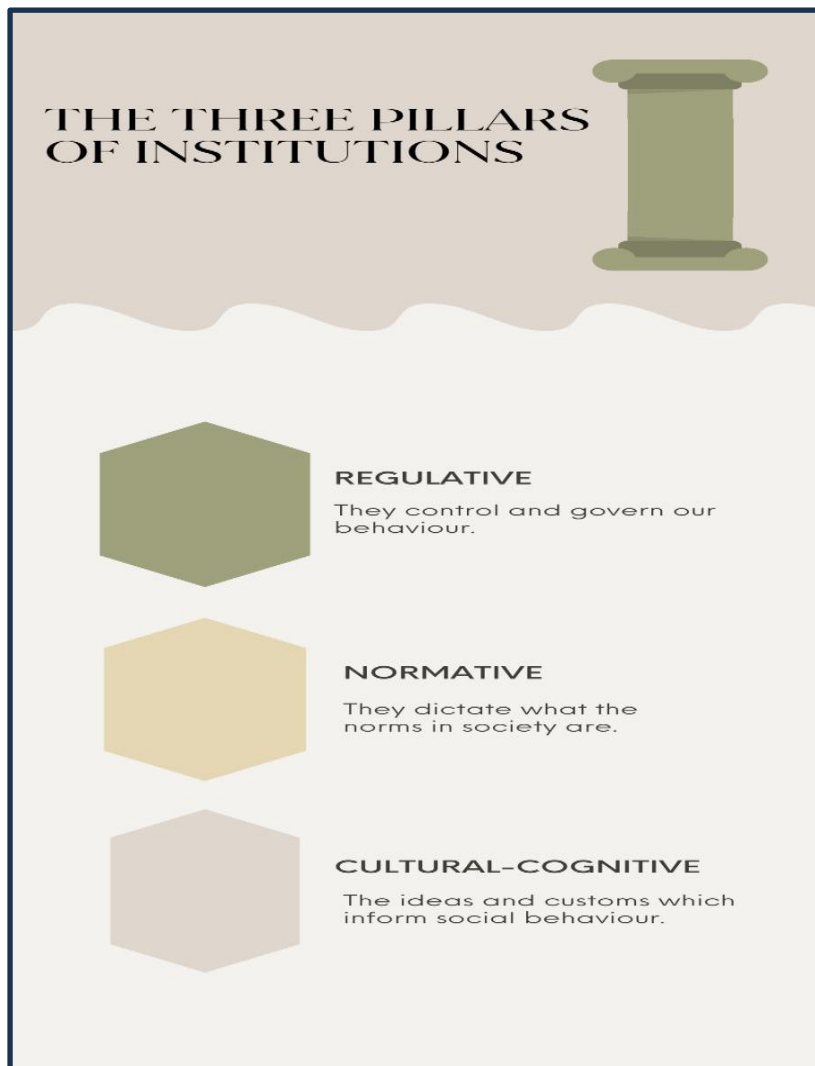


Figure 3: William Scott's (2014:56) Three Pillars of Institutions. Design by Swanepoel (2025).

The Regulatory Pillar involves the capacity to establish rules, to inspect others' conformity to them, and apply sanctions, rewards or punishments, when and if necessary, in an attempt to influence future behaviour (Scott, 2014:59). Within the SADF, discipline often took the form of the public punishment that Foucault describes (1977:3-32) so that members of the organisation, particularly the conscripts, could witness the absolute power of the SADF, and thereby learn to obey. All the participants of this study described incidents of this, using the Afrikaans slang terms *afkak* and *opfok*, to describe the varied forms of extreme physical punishment, disciplinary drills, and the general harshness of military training they experienced. The terms translated respectively mean to 'shit off' (*afkak*) or to suffer in an extreme manner, and *opfok* can mean to be 'fucked up' by others, or to fuck someone up by using violence or giving them an extremely hard time. In the military this was done by those in a higher rank, generally training corporals.

At 3 SAI (South African Infantry), during 2nd phase we were constantly in a “*Afkak / Opfok*” situation, or so it felt. If one guy did something remotely stupid or not as it should have been, we were all punished. This was mostly running or double time marching (Participant Charlie).

The term Foucault (1977:7-8) uses to designate a particular kind of power that operates directly and indirectly on individual bodies, is “disciplinary power”. This is a power which manages to control bodies without direct confrontation. Simply put, these are the regulations that govern the operations and actions of the institution, both internally and externally, and which Scott (2014) describes as falling within the sphere of the Regulative Pillar.

The military, as most gendered institutions arguably do, uses both informal mechanisms involving the shaming and shunning of member behaviour, as well as formal mechanisms, such as the military police and military courts which police and enforce acceptable behaviour. In these matters, the SADF was rule maker, referee and enforcer. Effectively individuals in positions of power within (and beyond) the institution, craft laws and rules that they believe will benefit and advance the interests of not only the institutions and the larger society, but themselves also (Scott, 2014:62). Individuals in turn conform to the laws and rules because of the attendant rules and to avoid the accompanying sanctions (Scott, 2014:62). An example is the then Minister of Defence, PW Botha’s¹⁷, extension of National Service to two years to advance the military’s capabilities and his Total Solution Strategy. In turn this was accepted by many white South Africans and conformed to by conscripts as a way of ensuring the status quo whereby they benefitted from Apartheid legislation whilst avoiding societal censure and incarceration.

The Normative Pillar involves normative rules, which introduce a prescriptive, evaluative, and obligatory dimension into social life (Scott, 2014:64). These systems involve both values and norms, whereby standards are used to compare and assess existing behaviours, and specify how things should be done (Scott, 2014:64). Effectively it is a socially shared belief system. Some norms and values apply to all the members of the institution, whilst others only apply to selected types of actors or positions (Scott, 2014:64). In the military there is a hegemonic ideal that all soldiers are expected to aspire to, and which is accompanied by a strict code of conduct. However, as a rigidly hierarchical regulatory institution, roles as well as ranks are assigned to its members. These determine the specific behaviours expected from individuals, which are both informally and formally monitored and enforced. Normative systems impose constraints on social behaviour whilst, ironically, also empowering and enabling social

¹⁷ Compulsory military conscription for white South African males was introduced in 1967, requiring nine months of service, which was then extended to twelve months in 1972, and finally two years in 1977 (Grundlingh, 2019:197).

action (Scott, 2014:64). According to Scott (2014:64) they confer rights as well as responsibilities, privileges as well as duties, and licences as well as mandates. This is certainly characteristic of the military, with the establishment of a code of acceptable behaviour and the maintaining of this code being central.

Finally, the Cultural-Cognitive Pillar stresses the central role played by the socially mediated construction of a common framework of meanings (Scott, 2014:70). Scott (2014:67) explains that the term emphasises that internal interpretive processes, that is, the cognitive, are shaped by external cultural frameworks. Symbolic systems such as cultural-cognitive beliefs are central ingredients of institutions, and are an important way to transmit messages. Symbols, in the form of words, signs and gestures, shape the meanings attributed to objects and activities within institutions (Scott, 2014:67). In other words, symbolic processes work to construct a social reality, representing abstract ideas or concepts to those who understand the particular system of signs (Scott, 2014:67). Acknowledging the importance of cultural-cognitive processes and symbolism, upon taking control of South Africa in 1948, the National Party government immediately set about restructuring the Defence Force and remaking it in the image of its Afrikaner Nationalist agenda. The five-pointed Castle of Good Hope¹⁸ outline was selected to replace the British Crown as a badge of rank, indicating the end of the Union Defence Force, and the introduction of its replacement, the SADF, in 1957.

Bisset (1979:5) comments on the fact that its symbolic importance is derived from the logistical achievement of constructing it (the Castle) so far from Europe on the African continent, akin to planting a flag on the moon. He points out that the fact that the fortress is based on a European design and was built with a combination of imported and local materials suggests South Africa's military self-sufficiency (Bisset, 1979:5). This is also closely linked to Dutch colonial heritage and, notably, the *kommando* system. It is an example of the cultural-cognitive processes at play within complex institutions such as the military.

¹⁸ The pentagonal castle shape was used on South African Defence Force flags, and formed the basis of some rank insignia from the rank of major upwards.



Figure 4: SADF Army flag with the four arms below it. Source of images:

https://www.loeser.us/flags/south_africa2.html. Design by Swanepoel (2025).

As a result of the processes set in motion by these regulative, normative and cultural-cognitive elements, institutions exhibit stabilising meaning-making properties (Scott, 2014:57). Consisting of symbolic elements, social activities, and material resources, they appear relatively resistant to change, but do over time, as my research into the Union Defence Force and the SADF has provided evidence of (Scott, 2014:57). Although institutions such as the SADF function to provide stability and order, they do undergo change, both incremental and revolutionary (Scott, 2014:58). This change is predicated on the fact that institutions are inhabited by people and their actions. However, although this is true, institutions tend to change the behaviour of the individuals who work within them more so than the individuals changing the institutions. Research on institutions, and in particular, gender research, tends to focus on the institution's capacity to control and constrain behaviour by defining acceptable and unacceptable behaviour, and imposing restrictions. But the rules and norms of an institution must be preferably backed by sanctioning power and cultural beliefs if they are to be effective (Scott, 2014:58). In addition, those who possess the sanctioning power will strive to ensure that it is seen to be authorised and

legitimate (Scott, 2014:58). The use of the Total Onslaught¹⁹ concept by the military leaders of the SADF was an attempt to legitimise their use of the institution's sanctioning power (Scott, 2014:58).

Finally, institutions can cultivate a culture by establishing a set of values, beliefs, and practices, which in turn will guide the behaviour of their members. The military institution has a unique organisational culture and subcultures (Nagel, Spears, & Maenza, 2021:4). These reflect those shared and learned values, beliefs, and attitudes of its members, to which Scott (2014) refers. Masculinity and beliefs about the masculine characteristics that supposedly make the ideal soldier and man are central to this military culture (Nagel, Spears & Maenza, 2021:4) Further, in the SADF, this ideal included race and ethnicity, that is, white and Afrikaans.

2.4.3 Military Culture

Stuart Hall (2013:xvii) describes culture as being about “shared meanings”. He goes on to explain that in his field of expertise, that is, social science, the word ‘culture’ is used to refer to what is distinctive about the way of life of a social group, people, community or nation (Hall, 2013:xviii). In other words, culture refers to the shared values of a group or society. Hall (2013:xviii-xix) argues that although culture encompasses feelings, attachments, emotions, concepts and ideas, rather than being a set of things, culture is a process, that is, a set of practices. Mats Alvesson (2002:24) opines that those researchers, who treat culture as a variable in their studies, recognise that organisations produce “distinct cultural traits such as values, norms, rituals, ceremonies, and verbal expression, which affect the behaviour” of their members. He continues, arguing that instead of considering that culture is something an organisation has, these researchers proceed from the notion that an organisation is a culture (Alvesson, 2002:24). This thinking champions the importance of analysing the culture of institutions in order to fully understand them and their impact on their members and greater society. I am in agreement with this argument, confirmed by my secondary research and due my own experience of the military but also.

Martijn Kitzen (2012:3) opines that military culture can be used to not only explain the unique character of a nation's armed forces, but also about how it thinks about itself. Van Der Waag (2015:3-4) concurs, explaining the importance of understanding military culture succinctly:

¹⁹ In 1977 the concepts of the Total Onslaught and Total Strategy were introduced by the then Minister of Defence, P.W. Botha. This proposed that southern Africa, and in particular, South Africa, were under attack from Communism on a number of fronts, including military, economic and political fronts. In order to combat this Total Onslaught, a Total Strategy was required.

Military culture, traditionally elitist, is influenced by a complex of intersection and interacting factors and in South Africa has, for all the obvious reasons, been the focus of competing interests based in large part on military competition and contested histories. Military culture is important, for it is a crucial indicator of how armed forces think, how they prepare for war, and how these wars are fought.

By managing culture, institutions provide a sense of identity to their members and facilitate commitment to their purpose. In doing this, institutional stability is ensured, which is necessary for a society to function effectively (Alvesson, 2002:24). Institutional culture serves as a “sense-making device”, which can guide and shape the behaviour of members, as well as motivating them to do the ‘right’ thing (Alvesson, 2002:24). This cultural dimension permeates institutions and is central to all aspects of organisational life (Alvesson, 2002:1). How people in an institution think, feel, value and act or behave are guided by ideas, meanings and beliefs which are of a socially shared, or cultural, nature (Alvesson, 2002:1). A sense of common taken-for-granted ideas, beliefs and meanings were necessary and often vital, particularly amongst its conscripted members, for the ongoing organised activities of the SADF in Apartheid South Africa. In the SADF, often the implementation of this culture was a combination of suggestion and directive. During the transformation of the Union Defence Force into the South African Defence Force, the new National Party (NP) government in 1948, consciously aimed at capturing South African institutions and shaping them to accord with Afrikaner ideology. Emphasis was placed on allegiance to the National Party, Afrikaner identity, and the military culture and traditions of the old Boer Republics (Van Der Waag, 2015:221).

The *kommando*, a powerful socio-cultural institution in its own right, was selected by the NP architects of change because it was felt it best represented the multiple aspects of Afrikaner culture and identity (Frankel, 1984:20-21). The *kommando* had operated as one of the main integrating forces in the Afrikaner community during the time of the Boer Republics, engendering the notion of the nation-in-arms and disseminating individualistic ideals. Its roots are to be found in 1652, with the establishment of the Dutch East India Company’s (VOC) supply post at the southern tip of Africa for its trade ships (Giliomee, 2003:1). The principle of compulsory service by all able-bodied males came into force soon after its establishment. This principle and the system to which it gave rise, namely the *kommando*, was a central feature in burgher society around the Castle, and one which the trekboers and the Voortrekkers took with them to the republics they went on to establish in the hinterland (Giliomee, 2003:59). Living away from the original Cape settlement, the Boers had to exist in a constant state of preparedness to defend themselves. Essentially a peoples’ militia, the *kommando* served as a defensive system for the Boer communities living in relative isolation, protecting the members and their homes from possible attacks by wild animals or African warriors (Van Der Waag, 2015:80). As a result, the *kommando*,

with its accompanying social structure, and along with religion (another institution), unified the communities. In the NP's hands, this *kommando* system became a metaphor for, and representative of, Afrikaner nationalism. This was disseminated to white South African society chiefly via a national conscription system. Evidence of its implementation beyond the SADF barracks was the 'siege' or laager mentality that permeated Apartheid South Africa's *Zeitgeist*, accompanied by the militarisation of its society. The growing sense of isolationism and need for 'circling the wagons' aligned with the Afrikaner sense of settler heritage.

The military are "some of the oldest and most prominent institutions" existing in the world today (Kozina, 2019:45). The institution has its origins in pre-historical times when humans first banded together in social groups for the purposes of hunting, foraging and protection. Essentially sharing resources, these social bonds ensured human survival and progression, and resulted in expanding, increasingly complex social networks. The military provides for a society or civilisation's most basic need of protection and security, and in contemporary times, national security. As human societies have become increasingly complex so has the institution of the military. Military institutions are now constituted of a number of groups and organisations such as the Army, Navy and Air Force. Militaries, although existing within a larger society, have their own cultural values and norms. Andrija Kozina (2019:45) states that culture is a contextually dependent concept, and that military institutions are specific working environments with their own distinctive cultures (Kozina, 2019:45). The point she makes here is that although the military institution has a uniformly recognisable purpose, as well as recognisable characteristics across societies, each, like gender, is contingent on its historical and geographic context. The British Armed Forces and the SADF may have shared broadly the same purpose or function, as well as certain foundational characteristics but they differed considerably on many others, such as the *kommando* ideology and the context of its deployment. As Kozina (2019:55) observes, "military culture is formed by the national culture" of a country, and factors such as the geopolitical position and historical experience that have influenced the respective national armies.

In the military, soldiers adhere to a strict dress code, behave according to a rigid set of rules, and observe the protocols of a hierarchical structure. The act of enlisting, or being conscripted, into the military implies that a soldier's private life is subordinate to the institution's demands. From the outset individuals become part of a culture in which individualism is suppressed, the performance of assigned military tasks and missions takes priority over personal problems and desires, and sacrifice for the presumably higher goals of the institution and greater society, is part of everyday life (Kozina, 2019:50). Military culture becomes the lens through which the members of the institution ideally view and perceive the world. Along with official uniforms which identify soldiers as the members of a specific

culture, reflecting their rank, surname, specialty, the military school they attended, and their medals, Kozina (2019:51) lists the following as characteristic of the military:

Military organisations require a great deal from their personnel: 24-hour availability, specific work shifts, a strict schedule of daily activities, mandatory reporting to superiors, unconditional respect for deadlines, demanding physical fitness requirements, strictly regulated conduct, prohibition of public appearances, frequent relocation, prohibition of organization of unions etc. For soldiers, non-commissioned officers, and officers, military knowledge and skills are not sufficient; they must be linked together with values such as courage, loyalty, obedience, subordination to the units, and the possession of high moral principles.

The entire culture of the institution is rooted in respect for common, shared values, and the subordination of oneself to the needs of the institution and country (Kozina, 2019:51). It emphasises discipline, loyalty and solidarity. Military culture can be said to represent the intellectual and spiritual capacity of the institution to “come to grips with the business of preparing for and executing war” and the potential and reality of the harm associated with this (Murray, 2014:135). However, as previously discussed, the base institutional culture in each military institution is then influenced by context, by factors such as history, geography, the professional ethos, recent military experiences, and the social (internal and external) environment within which the institution operates (Murray, 2014:136). In addition, there are also subcultures existing within the main institutional culture of each military institution. The traditional main branches of the military, the navy, the air force and the army, have their own cultures, as do the individual units existing within each of them.

Writing on the subject of military mental health, Eric Meyer (2015:2) states that military service dramatically shapes and, to a certain extent, defines an individual’s culture. He posits that “through indoctrination, military culture overlays and often replaces previous cultural beliefs” (Meyer, 2015:3). This process of acculturation, that is, the assimilation of this dominant culture, will reduce, but not entirely eliminate, many disparities that exist within civilian culture (Meyer, 2015:3). Meyer (2015:3) concludes that “immersion in military culture can be such an indelible experience that veterans will identify with it more than any other cultural influence, even decades after leaving active-duty service”. My research into the experiences of former conscripts of the SADF certainly highlights this proposition and finds evidence thereof.

2.5 Gendered Institutions

In the first chapter, the term gendered institution was explained as a social institution in which gender is an integral part of its ongoing cultural processes. Acker (1990:146) believes that to say that an organisation is gendered means that “advantage and disadvantage, exploitation and control, action and emotion, meaning and identity, are patterned through, and in terms of, a distinction between male and female, masculine and feminine”. Militaries, along with certain religious institutions, are the most gendered and the most male-dominated, masculinised of institutions. Strategists, politicians and militarists have suggested that, in warfare, men are seen as anonymous and interchangeable and are the only real ‘wealth’ (Gresle, 2005:52). This is an indication that national military institutions are quintessentially masculine constructs, relying on the notions of men as the protectors and women as the protected (Haring, 2020:90).

National militaries are set up to optimise men’s participation and rely on patriarchal social structures where women perform traditional family duties centred around caregiving while men go to war, raising the men’s families and supporting the organization through the exploitation of their free labor. Within this conception, there is no room or accommodation for women who want to join national militaries. The result is that when women have joined, they have generally been confined to support roles, are rarely the focus of recruiting efforts, are not promoted at the same rate as men and suffer from marginalization, discrimination and harassment (Haring, 2020:90).

Haring’s (2020:90) observation is an apt description of the apartheid-era military scenario. While white South African women were encouraged to join the military to fill support positions, their main purpose was to provide ideological and emotional support for the soldiers and the military's actions. The SADF enforced the conscription of men only, and specifically white men, thereby ensuring that the military institution was a white, male-dominated one. In addition, bearing in mind that institutions are effectively systems of social rules which structure social interactions by both constraining and enabling behaviour, the actions and mechanisms implemented by the SADF were in the form of gender directives and institutionalised policing which established and entrenched social relations dominated by particular expressions of militarised masculinities within a rigidly hierarchal structure (Hodgson, 2006:2).

Michael Drewett (2008:94) argues that for the Apartheid government, “the articulation of gender binaries was a critical foundation upon which to build support for the war”. In gender binarism, gender is classified as either masculine or feminine. The classifications are distinct and in opposition to one another and are used to describe what each is not. The gender classifications are then attached, or associated with, a specific body type or biological sex. Boys and men, and girls and women, are then

positioned within a gendered hierarchy according to their perceived relation to a socially constructed and institutionalised hegemonic ideal. Hegemonic masculinity refers to “the socially dominant construction of masculinity in a hierarchical gender order” (Connell & Messerschmidt 2005:832). The construct of the ‘military man’ was central to the state’s white male-only conscription propaganda, and as such, an integral component of the ideal masculine male or hegemonic masculinity, within the greater South African society (Drewett, 2008:95). Beginning with registration at the age of sixteen, and initiated with induction into National Service units and basic training, this construct of militarised masculinity became so ingrained in the conscripts that being a soldier became their male identity rather than some sort of temporary occupation even after they had completed their military obligations to the State at the age of sixty-five.

In apartheid South Africa, the processes of gendering and militarisation were inseparable (Drewett, 2008:95). A clear gender division, attached to biology and supported by Calvinist Church teachings, separated masculine from feminine and assigned them roles in the South African war effort. The defender role was assigned to boys and men and the supporter role to girls and women. This mirrored the division of the home and the workplace, with men being traditionally assigned the role of protector and provider and women being assigned the role of homemaker, child-bearer and caregiver (Drewett, 2008:95). The clearest indication of the state implementation of these roles is, once again, the fact that only white South African men were conscripted into the SADF. These expected gender roles were then propagated at institutional level throughout South African society via families, schools, sports clubs, churches and the military (Drewett, 2008:95). The Christian National Education System presented military training as “a given part of white boys’ coming of age” (TRC 1998:226). As Conway (2012:60-61) argues, “the entire military service experience, from induction to completion, was designed and constructed to engender” the sense of a transformative rite of passage from the military experience. Further, it was presented to white boys and men as their moral duty to defend order and morality, that is, Christianity, against the forces of evil and chaos, that is, Soviet-inspired Communism (TRC 1998:226). The link between masculinity and the military was something that was “constructed, maintained and reinforced” by the State, with masculinity effectively being militarised (Eichler, 2014:83).

The military culture within the SADF was heavily influenced by hypermasculine values, and it ‘othered’ marginal masculinities, homosexuals, and of course, women. The institution was comprised of layered internal gender regimes which instilled, repeated and re-enforced rules of (gendered) behaviour. Attitudes, values and beliefs were connected to the certainty of the superiority of the masculine over the feminine with the masculine holding a place of “symbolic authority” (Connell 2005:70). In this

scenario, the feminine was strictly excluded from the institution, and during training and in the barracks, used as an insult. Women were seen as weaker and less than men, and therefore any indication of the feminine within the institution, and particularly in its soldiers, was severely sanctioned. An aggressive process played a crucial role in ensuring that the conscripts were not only physically removed from civilian life but psychologically fully integrated into the military institution and its culture and practices. This brutal training process aimed at turning the men into compliant weapons of the State²⁰. It involved verbal, physical and mental abuse from those in official positions of power, as well as those with seniority, that is, power accrued due to time already spent in the military. In addition, trainees equally policed their fellow trainees and applied corrective measures if it was deemed necessary. As a result of these processes, we can speak of a specific kind of masculinity being “embedded in the gender regime of an institution” such as an army (Connell, 2000:29).

The SADF was clearly constructed as a profoundly gendered space occupied by men performing masculine acts (Drewett, 2008:102). In order for South African white boys to become men, and be accepted as such by the Republic, their families and communities, they had to submit to military service, as not only their duty as men, but also as a rite of passage to become accepted as men. In other words, in the conscription scenario, not only does one have to undergo military training as a result of being classified a man, but in order to be considered a man, one has to undergo military training. The link between white South African masculinity and the military was something that was constructed, maintained and reinforced during Apartheid, both formally and informally.

These ‘military masculine-making processes’ have been the focus of a number of my previous performance pieces, notably, my *Blou Steen/Blue Stone* (2018) and *Untitled (This is my rifle, this is my gun)* (2019) performances (Figure 5). The performances were inspired by the film *Full Metal Jacket* (1987), and a moment of epiphany I experienced viewing it three to four years after having been subjected to similar practices myself during my training and deployment. A scene from Stanley Kubrick’s film (1987), where he portrays military training practices, wrenched me back to the South African Intelligence School (SAINTS) barracks at Discobolos, Kimberley, when I was an eighteen-year-old undergoing basic training there. In the film, we are privy to one of the most pervasive military rituals, the weaponisation of the penis. As conscripts we were taught that our penises, although not rifles, were guns, in other words, weapons: “This is my rifle, this is my gun! This is for fighting, this is for fun!”. We were regularly called on by our platoon leaders to repeat this cadence, slapping our rifles and grabbing our crotches at the appropriate times. It is this ritual which Kubrick (1987) recreates.

²⁰ A commonly used phrase at the time was that the ‘army’ turned boys into men.

There were severe repercussions for calling one's rifle a gun. Although both were to be considered weapons, one's rifle was a gun, not one's penis.

The first evidence I found of the ritual which was drilled into us during basic training, and which Kubrick (1987) references, is in Leon Uris' (1953) book, *Battle Cry*. It deals with a group of men and their experiences of the Second World War as Marines in the United States Army. Uris describes a training incident I experienced myself. A sergeant addresses a recruit regarding the fact that the recruit had called his rifle a 'gun' (Uris, 1953:57):

"I believe you called your rifle a gun to-day, at inspection."

"Yes sir."

"But it isn't a gun, is it, Jones?"

"No sir, it's a United States Rifle, M-1903, thirty calibre, breech-loading, bolt-operated shoulder weapon, sir."

"I forgot, sir."

"Do you think you can remember?"

"Oh yes sir, infinitely and eternally."

"I believe we can help you remember it."

"Private Jones, unbutton your fly."

"Yes sir."

"That's your gun."

"Yes sir."

The sergeant then drills the recruit outside while he holds his penis (his 'gun') in his right hand, his rifle in his left, reciting:

This is my rifle,

This is my gun,

This is for fighting,

This is for fun (Uris, 1953:57).



Figure 5: swany, *Untitled (This is my rifle, this is my gun)* performance. Natal Command (06/12/2019).

In the incident I was involved in, the entire company had to perform the drill as a result of my having called my rifle, a 'gun'. This is a common tactic during training to install collective thinking and understanding. The concept that the institution wants the conscripts/recruits to grasp is that they are only as strong as the weakest link (member). The training tactic also has darker, more subversive tendencies. Our training non-commissioned officers would often use this method to encourage conscripts to resort to self-policing or self-correcting, and to brutal, hazing techniques to "motivate" the weakest link in a company or platoon. This is achieved by punishing the entire platoon or company for the perceived weaknesses of the one member. Kubrik (1987) illustrates this ritual by showing us the brutalisation of a recruit by his fellow recruits in a 'blanket party' one night after lights-out. These incidents are reported by my participants. These scenes in the film, depicting something I had been forced to repeat on countless occasions myself, things I had experienced, are what sparked an epiphany within me. I realised that this violent socialisation I had experienced, was not only specific to my peers and my generation but had been experienced by others across military organisations and national

institutions, stretching back through generations of intakes of men into the military. These rituals are apt examples of what my research has found in military culture and gendered institutions. They are applied to, performed by, or are attached to, the male body, and using specific symbols and language, enforce specific behaviour or performances.

Joan Acker (1990:146-147) identifies five general categories of institutional/organisational processes that result in their gendering: i) the construction of gender divisions – a focus on the divisions of labour, of allowed behaviours, and of power, including “the institutionalised means of maintaining the divisions in the structures of labour markets, the family, the state”; ii) the construction of symbols and images – “that explain, express, reinforce, or sometimes oppose those divisions”; iii) the interactions between women and men, women and women, and men and men - including “all those patterns that enact dominance and submission”; iv) the gendered components of individual identity - which may include “consciousness of the existence of the other three aspects of gender” processes, such as, the choice of appropriate work, language use, clothing, and presentation of self as a gendered member of an organisation; and finally, v) gender is implicated in the fundamental, ongoing processes of creating and conceptualising social structures. Kelly Dye and Albert Mills (2005:91-92) allocate the following headings to Acker’s gendering processes: i) Gendering Practices / Structures, ii) Gendering Cultures, iii) Gendering Interactions, iv) Internal Gender Constructions, and finally, v) Creating and Conceptualising Social Structures.

Jeff Hearn and Wendy Parkin (2003:128) provide a positive critique of Acker’s theory and stress that these gendered processes intertwine with organisational culture(s) and organisational sexuality. I concur, and for the purposes of my thematic analysis of the data received, I use Acker’s gendering processes as sub-themes informing my three main themes based on their thinking.

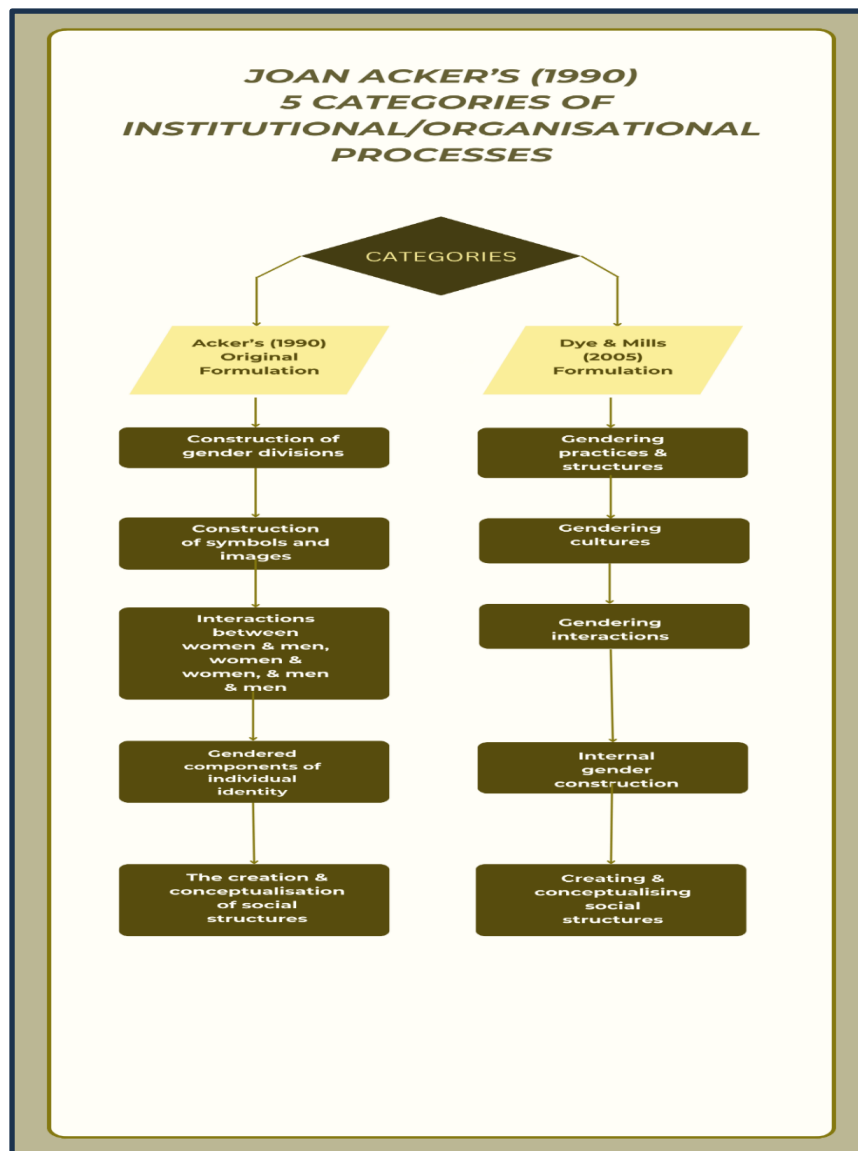


Figure 6: Joan Acker's (1990) five Categories of Institutional/Organisational Processes and Dye and Mills' (2005) Formulation. Design by Swanepoel (2025).

Acker's theory is a complex and multi-layered approach to critical analysis of institutions, with a particular focus on the extent of its gendering. In 1992, Acker performed a valuable synthesising analysis of her theory, reducing five to four major gendered processes in organisations: i) the production of gender divisions; ii) the creation of gendered symbols, images and forms of consciousness; iii) interactions between individuals (women and men, men and men, women and women); and iv) the internal mental work of individuals (Hearn & Parkin, 2003:128). When considering the SADF, it can be seen that women and men, through processes of inclusion and exclusion, specialised in particular types of labour (Hearn & Parkin, 2003:129). Men occupied command positions and fulfilled the roles of soldiers, while women fulfilled support roles in administrative and logistical positions. This division of labour was controlled by a formal structure which ensured this division, one important element being

the conscription system. Although it was proposed as something that should be thought of as natural and biological, it was in fact, social, cultural, historical and political (Hearn & Parkin, 2003:133).

The SADF was an institution dominated by men, both in member numbers and in those holding powerful positions of command, and gender was a definite determining factor within the operation of the institution. As a result, the main aims and objectives of the SADF and its methods of operation were defined by men and in men's interests. In addition, these interests were determined by a very specific type of man and masculinity, that is, white, heterosexual, Afrikaans and Christian, all characteristics that aligned with a hegemonic ideal. However, although this 'military masculinity' was profound, dominant and pervasive, it was neither monolithic nor unresisted (Hearn & Parkin, 2003:130). This analysis ties in with the observation made by Hearn and Parkin (2003:129) that "organisations are both social places of organising and social structurings of social relations, whose interrelations are historically dynamic". As my literature review confirmed, institutions and organisations do not exist and operate within a vacuum, they and the actions within them, are always embedded within social contexts. Equally, gender is not one 'thing'; it is contested, complex and differentiated (Hearn & Parkin, 2003:135). The sex-gender distinction is closely linked to other dichotomies, such as nature-culture and body/mind, with the sex/gender distinction implying that "sex and biology are pre-social or free of the social" (Hearn & Parkin, 2003:135). However, it has been argued that our understanding of "biology is itself constituted in the social" (Hearn & Parkin, 2003:135). Therefore, Hearn and Parkin (2003:135) argue that "there is not just one possible relation of the biological sex/gender and the social sex/gender", but rather many possible relations and interrelations.

While the complexity of gendered institutions is an established position in existing scholarship, including some that acknowledge the complexity of the SADF itself, the point I attempt to make is that our understandings of gendered institutions and organisations follow from the increasing complexity of understandings and meanings of gender, as well as the situatedness (intertwined within environmental, social, and cultural factors) of institutions and organisations and their members (Hearn & Parkin, 2003:135). My study, although this was not its focus, confirms and illuminates these complexities through research and interviews with former conscripts

Conclusion

The first sections of this literature review chapter have critically discussed scholarship about gender as an analytical tool, as well as a lens to study men and masculinities, and militarised masculinities. Further, it reviewed research conducted regarding gendered institutions, in particular, military

institutions. The sections attempt to establish the links between gender, masculinity, the military, and institutions. The next chapter discusses the origins of the SADF and its military culture. In addition, it provides the historical and political context of this era, which gives insights into the rise to prominence of the South African military establishment. Although this study focuses on the experiences of White males, former conscripts lived experiences of the SADF, to avoid being considered purely an exercise in navel-gazing, I have included counterpoint and alternative insights and views.

Establishing the origins and context of an institution is crucial because it provides a framework for interpreting the purpose, behaviour, and impact of that institution. For the purposes of this study, this was accomplished by considering factors such as the SADF's political, legal, and economic environment, as well as the social and historical forces at play. Further, for the purposes of the central problem that this study is concerned with, it is important to understand how the SADF's gendered rituals, directives and markers came about and why. Equally, understanding the institution's historical context assists in establishing the former conscripts' mind-sets, perspectives and experiences.

CHAPTER THREE: THE SOUTH AFRICAN DEFENCE FORCE

Van der Waag and Grundlingh (2019:4), editors of *In different times: The War for Southern Africa 1966-1989*, describe the cycle of military historiography: first, journalism and war reportage; second, followed by official history; third, then personal and regimental and unit accounts; and then finally, fourth, critical academic studies. They opine, as evidenced by their collection of articles, that we have reached the fourth stage of military historiography; critical academic studies. This study straddles the final two as it incorporates personal accounts, but then critically analyses them. Investigating the establishment and evolution of the SADF within the apartheid context provides insights into the men who served by revealing how the institution was designed to reflect and enforce the prevailing political ideology, thereby shaping the experiences, worldviews, and behaviours of its personnel. Further, an investigation of the SADF's origins assists in understanding the present-day narratives and identities of its veterans. The original institutional culture created a shared framework of behaviour, and a specific set of values. Many veterans still grapple with how their values and identities were shaped at a critical point in their social development within a state and institution now deemed illegitimate and criminal.

As this study explores the lived experiences of SADF veterans, an exposition of the SADF is therefore vital, providing insights into the nature of sociological, cultural and psychological forces brought to bear on young white South African men. This chapter investigates how the SADF and its institutional 'machinery' were established; created over time, with intent, informed by, and interwoven with, the apartheid-era political, economic and societal context.

Philip Frankel (1984:xv), in his analysis of the South African military, *Pretoria's praetorians: Civil-military relations in South Africa*, asserts it would be "patently ridiculous to label a modern, complex and differentiated institution such as the South African military as a monolithic agent of state power". The Apartheid South African military institution was not the homogenous, "purposive and hierarchically controlled institution" it is often portrayed as (Frankel, 1984:xv). It was, instead, a complex institutional body which reflected the diversity present within its serving members. These serving members consisted of two types: professional soldiers forming a small permanent force, and part-time soldiers. Less than one-third (28%) of South Africa's military manpower as of 1982 consisted of permanent, full-time, career soldiers, that is, Permanent Force members (PF's) (Frankel, 1984:12). The SADF was essentially a citizen military force with a professional core (Frankel, 1984:1). The part-time manpower consisted of National Service (NS) conscripts, Citizen Force (CF) members, Active Citizen Force members, Commando members, and National Reserve members (see Figure 7).

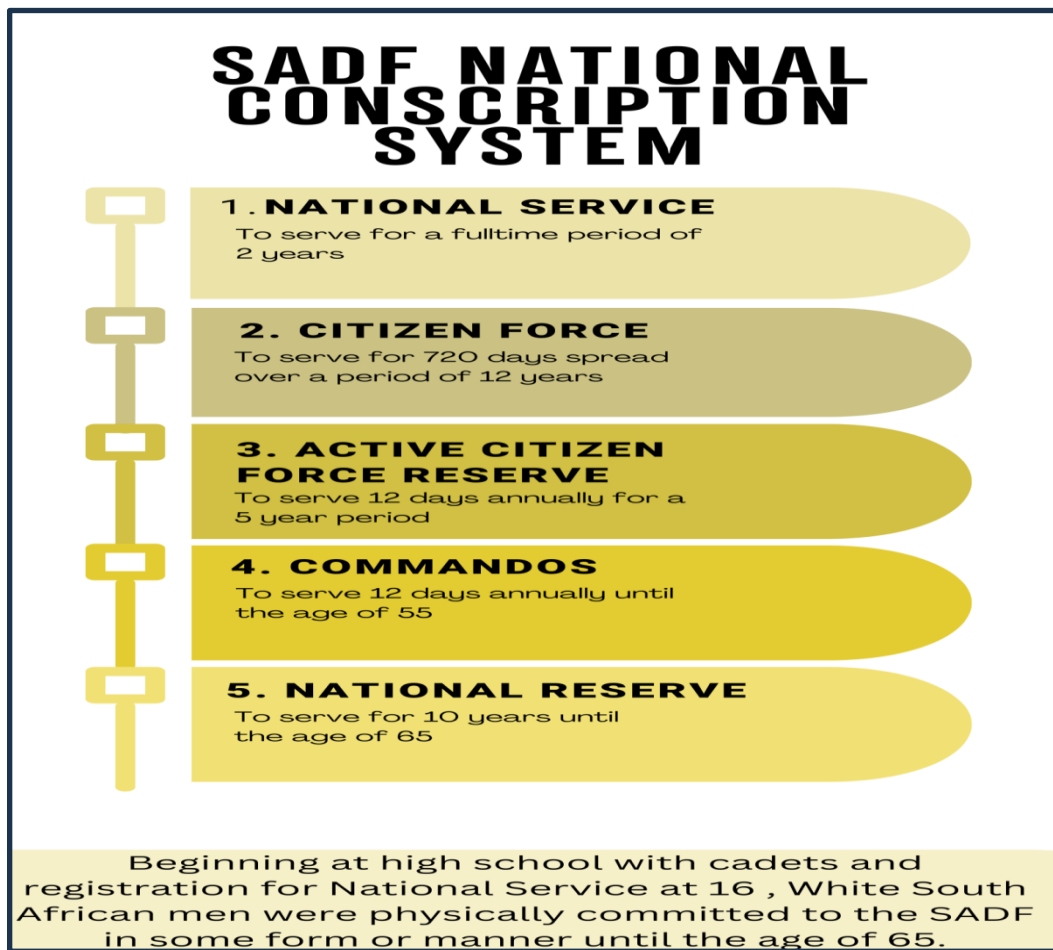


Figure 7: The various White South African male conscript's physical commitments to the SADF. Design by Swanepoel (2025).

Describing the militarisation of South Africa, Frankel (1984:107-123) provides insights into the recruitment of white women, as well as opening the Defence Force ranks to other race groups. Such recruitment occurred in a strictly controlled manner and limited extent. As Lennart Bolliger, in his 2021 study of the Apartheid-era's black soldiers, attests:

[I]n all the wars of decolonisation across Africa, tens of thousands of African soldiers fought in the security forces of the settler and colonial regimes. They often made up the bulk of those forces and, in some contexts, even far outnumbered those who fought in the armed wings of the liberation movements (Bolliger, 2021:1-2).

This was certainly my experience on the Border where all of the South West African Territorial Force (SWATF) units consisted of a white leadership group and a majority black fighting force. Although this

was partially due to the fact that the source of white manpower, that is, conscription, had already been overextended, the step-by-step progressive phasing in and expansion of black forces occurred largely as part of the military establishment's Total Strategy (Grundy, 1987:25). This strategy will be discussed in more detail under the Hearts and Minds section (3.5.8) but suffice to say that this added further complexity and heterogeneity to the apartheid-era military institution.

Frankel's (1984) study focuses on the interaction between soldier and civilian, the majority of white South African men being both during the apartheid-era. It achieves this by focusing on, not only the political behaviour of South African soldiers, but the way in which this behaviour reflects social tendencies ingrained in the greater society (Frankel, 1984:xxi). Frankel (1984:xix) describes his research aim as follows:

A case study of the SADF could conceivably contribute to the ongoing debate over civil-military relations – to defining the role of the military in society, to show how soldiers respond to socio-political pressures, the consequences of militarisation and its impact on the politics of ruling elites – all set within the peculiar racial and political configuration of South African society.

It should be noted that my research and data collection methods, in contrast to Frankel's (1984), did not attempt to ascertain the political affiliations of the former conscripts. However, my research approach does align with the Frankel's (1984) belief that the South African military was composed of complex, divergent human beings with "values, feelings and perceptions of social and political affairs which cut across and complicate their common commitment to both maintain the corporate interests of the military and to perpetuate the existence of the white state apparatus" (Frankel, 1984:xv). As a vital institution and integral to South African society, it certainly was not non-political, and Frankel (1984:xvii) argues it was equally difficult to accept the notion of the 'non-political' soldier obedient to civil authority in the specific South African context already described. My own position as a non-politically aligned conscript contradicts this statement, as does the data provided by some of my participants. These contradictions are likely to arise from the fact that for many conscripts our obedience and presence were forced. He does, however, assert that the SADF reflected the diversity of its members which would include the non-politically aligned (Frankel, 1984:xv).

Frankel (1984:11) argues that it is absolutely crucial to look behind the formal structure of the SADF in order to identify a number of shaping institutional factors. I attempted to accomplish this task by referencing not only Philip Frankel's (1984) study, but also Ian van der Wag's (2015) overview of South African military history from 1899 to 2000, *A Military History of Modern South Africa*. Frankel's (1984) study is one of the first detailed studies of the SADF itself, as well as its relations with greater society, and is regularly referenced by scholars in the field. Van der Waag's (2015) book is similarly, a

first of its kind, providing a largely historical overview of South African armed forces as an institution, and of the complex roles that these forces played in various conflicts. Although much of this section is informed by these two sources due to the prominence of their voices in the field, important additional sources are Gavin Cawthra's (1986) comprehensive analysis of the Apartheid security forces, *Brutal Force: The Apartheid War Machine*, and Hilton Hamann's (2001) interrogation of South Africa's apartheid-era military generals, *Days of the generals*. Two collections of essays are also referenced, the afore-mentioned *Beyond the Border War* (2008) edited by Gary Baines and Peter Vale; and *War and society: The Militarisation of South Africa* (1989) edited by Jacklyn Cock and Laurie Nathan. The data extracted from these texts was supported by an examination of the Apartheid-State's White Papers on Defence and of the SADF's official magazine, the journal *Paratus*, which was published between 1970 and 1994. A number of counterpoint points-of-view are also included, such as Thula Simpson's *Umkhonto we Sizwe: The ANC's Armed Struggle* (2016), and Lennart Bolliger's *Apartheid's Black Soldiers* (2021).

This section of research regarding the origins of the SADF discusses the rise of the garrison state and the development of the Total Strategy in apartheid-era South Africa. It does, however, begin with a focus on the SADF and its institutional and historical framework to provide context and understanding.

3.5.1 A Hard Institution

The military was a key institution for the ruling National Party, and was utilised to support and protect, by force, if necessary, the values and interests of South Africa's white minority (Frankel, 1984:xix). State coercion being a predominant component of the arsenal of political control, the military institution became a critical tool for socialisation purposes within an ideologically mobilised society under the Apartheid regime (Liebenberg, 2019:268). Hearn and Parkin (2003:129) opine that "organisations are both social places of organising and social structurings of social relations, whose interrelations are historically dynamic". This observation is closely linked to the militarisation of South African society, the growth of the garrison state with its accompanying siege culture, and the emergence of the apartheid-state's 'total strategy' against what was believed to be a 'total onslaught' on the Republic. The perception here was that the population was, in fact, the battlefield, as is evidenced by this excerpt of Chief of the South African Defence Force, General Viljoen's address at the University of Pretoria in 1983.

Everyone must also understand that this type of war is primarily concerned with the winning of the hearts, souls and minds of the people. It is a psychological, moral and religious struggle. If the struggle is lost at this level, everything is lost. Everyone in South Africa must understand

that this is the kind of struggle we are dealing with. We can only offer resistance if we are spiritually prepared to resist, and if all the people grasp the reality of what we are all about to lose if a small, ruthless minority were allowed to gain control and to establish a Marxist one-party state to serve their bedfellow's (SACP's) main aim — Russian Imperialism. (Paratus, August 1983:36).

Conscripts, as targets of this type of socialisation, and in particular the South African military tradition conscripts such as myself experienced during the late 1970s and 1980s while serving in the SADF, had its origins in specific historical circumstances. The military in the 1980s fitted into the apartheid-era pattern of dominant institutions in its racially exclusive composition and the distribution of authority within it (Frankel, 1984:11). It was “an essentially white institution in ethos, manpower and command structure” (Frankel, 1984:11). Further, it was dominated by the Afrikaner²¹ segment of the white population, reflecting the South African bureaucratic state institutions of the time, where Afrikaners enjoyed greater access, mobility and power (Frankel, 1984:11). The foundations of this may be found in the actions and thinking of the Afrikaner intelligentsia in the immediate aftermath of the Boer conflict with Britain.

An exposition of the Union Defence Force follows next, and scholarship about this entity identifies specific formative events and building blocks which are integral to the military institution known as the SADF. Firstly, there are the geographic location and environment, the demands and requirements of the local conditions and situations, and how these required the transformation and adaptation of the military institution. Secondly, there are the two contrasting influences of the British Imperial forces and the Dutch settler *kommando* system. One was organised around the model of a professional standing army and rigid hierarchy, while the other was based on a system of civilian militias (Cawthra, 1986:6). Finally, there are the cultural and ideological differences between the white colonisers themselves, the Afrikaners and the English.

3.5.2 The Union Defence Force (1912 – 1957)

In the late nineteenth century Afrikaner politicians, clergy and writers sought to create ethnic solidarity among the unsophisticated rural people who were scattered over a vast area from the

²¹ This thesis uses ‘Afrikaner’ as a historical and cultural descriptor, particularly in relation to apartheid-era ideology, militarism, nationalism, and specifically, institutional power within the SADF. However, given the study’s broader emphasis on situatedness and non-homogeneity, it acknowledges the diversity of Afrikaans-speakers, and contested nature of the notion of an Afrikaner identity. This study aims to avoid the impression of a monolithic understanding of the term, as it does with the use of the ‘SADF’ as term and concept.

Cape to the Zambezi and whose cultural and material interests were being threatened by British imperialism. To that end, they fashioned a political mythology out of the historical materials at hand (Thompson, 1985:239).

According to Leonard Thompson (1985:239) what Afrikaner intelligentsia devised in the late nineteenth century was primarily a “liberatory mythology” aimed at unifying and solidifying the Afrikaner ethnicity despite their conquest by Britain. The goal was to achieve *volkseenheid* (unity of the volk or nation) in order to realise the aim of restoring an Afrikaner republic (Du Pisani, 2004:157-158). Frankel (1984) posits, however, that despite this Afrikaner nation-building project, the British colonial ideology was not completely eradicated, and in fact, often appropriated. A clear example is the Afrikaner appropriation of the British sport of rugby. Regarding the military institution, Frankel (1984:13) endeavours to understand civil-military relations in South Africa by indicating, firstly, the role of British imperialism in shaping South African perception of military and social relations. British imperialism in southern Africa resulted in the complete transplantation of the British “liberal-type civil-military” norms, military traditions and military culture, into the local environment (Frankel, 1984:13). With this British model, there was a dominance of civil²² authority over the military, with professional “military institutions acting as executive agents of the state in the implementation of public policy” (Frankel, 1984:13). Secondly, Frankel (1984:13) shows how this British imposition and heritage, transplanted in Southern Africa, was transformed through the shaping forces of indigenous cultural and political influences. Essentially Frankel (1984) is proposing that the co-existence of British and Boer ideologies within, and often contestation over, Southern Africa territory, finally resulted in the military institution known as the South African Defence Force.

South Africa, like the rest of the continent, has a long history of colonialism, stretching back as far as 1652 with the establishment of an outpost by the Dutch East India Company in Table Bay. The colonisation of South Africa by European countries began with Dutch occupation which was followed by the British. By the late 1800s South Africa consisted of the British territories of the Cape Colony and Natal, as well as the remnants of the earlier Dutch occupation which were the Boer republics of the Orange Free State and the South African Republic (also known as the Transvaal). The Boer Republics’ wish for self-determination and the British attempts at unification of the territory resulted in conflict between what were essentially opposing ideologies, represented by different ethnicities. What is of significance for this study, is that following the conquest of the Boer Republics, Britain forged the Union of South Africa on 31 May 1910. The establishment of the first armed forces for South Africa as

²² Civil authority refers to the legitimate use of power by rulers over the people they govern. It is the practical implementation of a state on behalf of its citizens, other than through the military.

a political entity followed soon after on 1st July 1912 (Van Der Waag, 2015:1). The goal was a unified white society which was to be built on “a consensus that the sectarian interests of the English and Afrikaans had to be finely balanced” (Van Der Waag, 2015:71). This was a new country, consisting of the four territories who only eight years before had been at war with each other, tenuously bound together in a compromise in order to further white interests on the sub-continent. As a result, the main (white) political contest was between an inclusive South Africanism, and an exclusive Afrikaner nationalism (Du Pisani, 2004:158).

The Union laid the foundations for the modern apartheid state that was to follow, as well as the basic structures of the SADF (Cawthra, 1986:6). Van der Waag (2015:73) argues that the Union Defence Force (UDF), in many ways a reflection of greater white society, was a “compromise between the determination of English-speakers to maintain the British military connection and the desire of Afrikaner nationalists for a restoration of Boer political and military traditions”. The UDF compromised between these two forms of military organisation by incorporating both a standing army and a modified Boer *kommando* system (Cawthra, 1986:6). It was not a united country and certainly not a united UDF. In fact, Van Der Waag (2015:88) argues that the military institution was a contested space of competing interests and personal rivalries where military cultures clashed and mingled. There was an inevitable contest between British and Boer military value systems within the institution. As a result, there was a need to “balance language and sectarian interests at the cost of military effectiveness” (Van Der Waag, 2015:76). Indicative of this was the fact that the UDF existed under a divided command. These internal factions often resulted in appointments within the UDF being based upon political criteria rather than merit (Van Der Waag, 2015:76). The advent of the Great War, World War One (1914 – 1918), brought these matters to a head.

At the outbreak of war, the Union of South Africa offered to take responsibility for its own defence. This freed the Imperial British troops, garrisoned at the Castle in Cape Town and at the Royal Naval Base in Simon’s Town, for service in Europe (Van Der Waag, 2015:76). For many in the Union, the departure of these remaining imperial troops would have signified an end to the British occupation of South Africa, and the beginning of true independence. As mentioned, there were two camps in the Union, one pro-British and the other, a largely Afrikaner nationalist camp who, due to their enmity with the British, called for the Union to remain neutral in the war (Van Der Waag, 2015:92). In fact, in the nationalist camp there were even elements which were pro-German because of their enmity with the British as a result of the recent Boer Wars (1880-1881 & 1899-1902)²³. The Afrikaans-English language

²³ These have been renamed the South African Wars as a way of acknowledging that black and other indigenous South Africans were also participants in the conflicts, and were also affected by them.

and culture divide remained a basic partition in the white rank of the UDFs, and reflected the enmity in the greater South African society (Van Der Waag, 2015:175). This partition within the UDF would also be characteristic of the, as yet, unformed South African Defence Force. This raises the important question as to why the two groups would be willing to serve in the same defence force at all, particularly when considering the UDF and the fact that the members had only recently been at war with each other.

Robert Morrell (2001:5) cites Dane Kennedy, who wrote of “small islands of white in a huge black ocean”, referring to the settler identity, and the persistent awareness of being demographically outnumbered (Kennedy, 1987:181). It was this awareness that Du Pisani (2004:165) notes, the National Party played upon, utilising the *swart gevaar*²⁴ slogan, with its undeniably racist connotations, as part of its political campaign. The suggestion was that Christian white civilisation was under threat (Du Pisani, 2004:166). Gavin Cawthra (1986:7), using an excerpt from a journal written in approximately 1909 by a white member of the colony, provides further insight into the culture of fear and anxiety which dominated the political agenda:

The question of defence can never become an insignificant one in South Africa, for the enormously preponderating native population forbids neglect of military forces, and there is a very considerable proportion of [white] South Africans who ... are absolutely convinced that a great native rising is only a matter of time.

Steve Biko (1946-1977), activist and leader of the black consciousness movement in South Africa, addressed this concept. In a South African Students' Organisation (SASO) newsletter, he opined that:

The overall success of the White power structure has been managing to bind the Whites together in defence of the status quo. By skilfully playing on that imaginary bogey — ‘*swart gevaar*’ — they have managed to convince even the die-hard liberals that there is something to fear in the event of the Black man assuming his rightful place at the helm of the South African ship (Biko, 1971:4).

Biko (1971:4) goes on to argue that white South Africans, in general, continued to reinforce this notion amongst themselves even though there might be “some moderate disagreements on the subjugation schemes”.

As in the rest of the world, the Second World War greatly changed the Union of South Africa. War-related industrialisation including the mining sector transformed the South African economy and sped

²⁴ The concept of ‘the black danger’ is something that the NP government would rebrand once in power as the *rooi gevaar* or the ‘red danger’, as the Cold War developed, portraying itself as the bastion of Western democracy and Christianity in Africa, standing against the forces of communism.

up modernisation and urbanisation of its society. War-induced social, economic and, importantly, political changes, saw the rise to power of Afrikaner nationalism and the National Party (NP), as well as the transformation of the Union Defence Force into the South African Defence Force.

3.5.3 The South African Defence Force (1957 – 1994)

Van Der Waag (2015:219) notes that the Second World War marked the beginning of a new era, not only for South Africa, but in fact, globally. The rivalry of the United States of America (USA) and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) “developed into an intense global struggle defined by national interest and ideology” (Van Der Waag, 2015:215). The advent of these two superpowers after the Second World War, and their Cold War, was accompanied by the gradual collapse of the old colonial powers due to the anti-colonial struggles and wars of colonised people, resulting in the liberation of their colonies. The replacement was a form of neo-colonialism driven by economics and financial gain, rooted in ideology. The Soviet Union and the United States, as well as China, attempted to fill the power vacuums in, what was, essentially a second scramble for Africa. This ‘scramble’ resulted in a number of what were effectively proxy wars between the new super powers. These events would have a significant effect on Southern Africa, on South Africa itself, its defence policy, military institution and on military conscripts, such as myself and my peers.

Although South Africa had gained its right to self-government in 1910, with the United Kingdom (UK) maintaining interests in, and connections with, the Union (Baynham, 1989:131). Baynham (1989:131) states that at that time, the UK's interests included: firstly, those Britons who remained in South Africa; secondly, Britain's trade and investment in the territory – notably the mining of not only mineral resources such gold and diamonds (begun in the nineteenth century), but as post-World War Two technologies advanced, strategic minerals; and thirdly, the value of the Union as an ally in the First and Second World Wars. Further, South Africa was viewed by Britain as an important link in its chain of defence of the sea routes around the Cape of Good Hope (Baynham, 1989:132). As a result, Britain maintained a vested interest in South Africa, which the governments of the time (both Union and Republic) used to their advantage, whilst still attempting to free itself from its hegemony and influence.

South African institutions, particularly the military, were targeted by the ruling National Party after their political victory in 1948 and were systematically converted into Afrikaner state apparatus (Grundy, 1986:8). Nowhere are these conversions more visible than in the transformation of the South African military institution. The architects of the Apartheid regime understood that individuals and

organisations are affected by societal institutions. The institutions targeted, such as the military, were infused with complex and coherent mixtures of cultural, organisational and ideological material (Meyer, 2008:792). The understanding was that members or actors would be “penetrated” in multiple and complex ways by the institutions they inhabited or interacted with (Meyer, 2008:792). This is partially because institutional structures affect actors through coercive processes, including state legal actions (Meyer, 2008:792). However, institutional environments also create and set up standards that through institutional culture and interpellation of its members/actors, become taken-for-granted and natural (Meyer, 2008:792). Members are not simply influenced by these institutional environments but are constructed in and by them. Consider the above brief description regarding institutional environments in context of a total institution²⁵ such as the military, and in particular the SADF, and the coercive processes that were likely to have been applied to the former conscripts. This research attempts to explore these aspects/processes its effects on conscripts and their reactions/responses to it.

One of the foremost goals of the new NP government of 1948 was the capture of the state institutions of the South African Union, in order to shape them to accord with Afrikaner ideology, and bend them into compliant instruments (Frankel, 1984:18). An additional goal was using them for the economic and social benefit of white, and more importantly, white Afrikaans-speaking South Africans. The problem of white poverty in South Africa was predominantly a rural Afrikaner problem where most had been generational subsistence farmers (Giliomee, 2002:609). Therefore, there was a need to manage these differences and cultivate similarities in order to establish a unifying standpoint to achieve a national Afrikaner identity (Du Pisani, 2004:160). Du Pisani (2004:159) posits that the emergence of the Afrikaner nationalist ideology, the mobilisation of Afrikaner power, and the construction of a hegemonic form of Afrikaner masculinity were closely related processes. According to Connell and Messerschmidt (2005:832), hegemonic masculinity refers to “the socially dominant construction of masculinity in a hierarchical gender order, an ascendancy achieved through culture, institutions and persuasion”. According to Du Pisani (2004:159), during the 1930s and 1940s, the Afrikaner nationalist ideal of masculinity was established, contested and finally consolidated within a position of hegemony. This ideal was a construct of Afrikaner intellectualism described as Christian Nationalism, and championed by Afrikaner leaders²⁶ in academia, media, politics and religion (Du Pisani, 2004:159; Giliomee, 2002:269-272).

²⁵ Erving Goffman (1961:xi) describes a total institution as a place where people are cut off from the outside world and live an enclosed, formally administered life, often not voluntarily.

²⁶ The *Afrikaner-Broederbond* played a crucial role in the establishment of this hegemonic ideal. It was a secret male organisation established in 1918 to promote Afrikaner interests (Grundy, 1986:4-5; Thompson, 1985:46).

The Apartheid nation building project exemplifies this, and demonstrates that masculinities are historical and mobile, specific and temporal, and importantly, constructed. Afrikaner hegemonic masculinity was to be used as part of the nationalist ideology to merge the divergent Afrikaner interests and goals (Du Pisani, 2004:160; Labuschagne, 2015:130). A central focus of this project was, of course, the most masculine of institutions, the military.

As a result, the design (or redesign) of the post-war UDF began almost immediately. The Defence Minister, Frans Erasmus' (1948 – 1959) first concern was to promote, increase, bolster and reinforce the cause of Afrikaner nationalism (Van der Waag, 2015:220). Erasmus began by eradicating all vestiges of the UDF's British colonial origins by disbanding all the citizen force units and purging the officer ranks (Van der Waag, 2015:214-219). Emphasis was now placed on allegiance to the National Party, Afrikaner identity, and the military culture and traditions of the old Boer Republics (Van der Waag, 2015:221). This organisational and workforce transformation resulted in Afrikaner culture dominating the military institution's language of communication, its symbols and nomenclature (Van der Waag, 2015:221). Erasmus' policy was based on three premises: firstly, the recognition of South Africa's isolated geographical position and its unique defence needs, and the establishment its sovereign independence; secondly, the Union's determination that it could not be bound to participate in any war, and neutrality must be the first line of defence; and thirdly, that the Union would be responsible for its own defence, with its own interests being placed first (Van der Waag, 2015:223).

Van der Waag (2015:224) uses a quote from Erasmus to summarise, "Each consideration of our defence must be taken from a purely South African viewpoint". By South African, Erasmus meant, white Afrikaner, with the Afrikaner nationalist mythology being propagated through religious, cultural, and now that the NP was in power, state machinery or institutions (Thompson, 1985:46). An example of Afrikaner nationalist mythology of predestination was the Day of the Vow, or of the Covenant, which was a religious holiday during Apartheid commemorating the *Voortrekker* victory over the Zulus at the Battle of Blood River in 1838. This was an alignment with the notion of a Chosen People and the Promised Land, modelled on the Biblical story of Israelites freed from bondage. It incorporated elements of a racial and political myth such as white purity and hegemony, as well as religious and military hegemony (Thompson, 1985). The implementation of the *kommando* was consciously linked to this defining event in Afrikaner nationalism and the Voortrekker leader, Andries Pretorius' victorious *Wen Kommando* (winning commando) and its victory over the Zulu army.

Erasmus was determined to revive the old spirit and system of the *kommando* as he felt it best represented the traditions and history of Afrikanerdom (Van der Waag, 2015:226). The Dutch settler

kommando exemplifies Afrikaner civil-military tradition and precedes British colonisation of southern Africa. Afrikaner civil-military concepts such as the *kommando* were developed within the local context of white settler defence and the notion of the citizen-soldier (Frankel, 1984:17). Frankel (1984:19) describes the Afrikaner citizen-soldier as originating in the early Dutch Cape colony (1659), and who were white citizens who bore arms to assist regular soldiers in defence of territory taken from indigenous populations, and in fact, bore the brunt of warfare against indigenous people on the border areas. He argues that its military value was its crucial role as a mechanisation for community defence against external threats (Frankel, 1984:17). Historically, these threats were initially the indigenous nations of Southern Africa, and then later, the British.

Frankel (1984:22) stresses however, that the *kommando* was more than a military system to be mobilised in times of need, but stood at the centre of “a mesh of social relations extending from the military to the deepest realms of Afrikaner politics and culture”. He goes on to posit that the *kommando* in fact emerged as one of the major cornerstones of Afrikaner society, having both intellectual and organisational implications which extended into “the realms of politics and culture” (Frankel, 1984:20-21). It was a powerful socio-cultural institution in its own right with a formative impact upon multiple aspects of Afrikaner culture and identity (Frankel, 1984:20-21). The *kommando* operated as one of the main integrating forces in the Afrikaner community, and despite its racial and gender exclusivity, engendered the notion of the nation-in-arms and disseminated democratic²⁷ and individualistic ideals (Frankel, 1984:20-21). While the British military institution emphasised the deployment of disciplined military formations with heavy firepower, the *kommando*, in contrast, emphasised “the use of small, lightly armed and highly mobile units, geared to irregular and individual action appropriate to the local conditions” and the immediate situation being confronted with (Frankel, 1984:25).

An indication of the growing white nationalism within the country was the official renaming of the Union Defence Force to the South African Defence Force in 1957. The renaming was accompanied by new uniforms, unit badges, rank insignias and medals being instituted. Notably, the Castle rank insignia replaced the British crown insignia (Van Der Waag, 2015:238). The Castle insignia referred to the Castle of Good Hope and its adoption may be considered a symbolic shedding of the last vestiges of British domination and influence in South Africa. Erasmus can be said to have remodelled the defence force, with its structures, processes, and symbolism, into a new political Afrikaner military institution

²⁷ Deney's Reitz (1999) describes his time as a member of a Boer *kommando* in his memoir written shortly after the end of the South African/Boer War (1899-1902). The *kommando* was made up of volunteers, with officers being appointed by the members of the *kommando*, and not by the government. He states that the “military organisation was a rough one”, with discipline being a problem due to the individualistic nature of the *kommando* members (Reitz, 1999:16).

(Van Der Waag, 2015:239). This was followed by South Africa's official withdrawal from the Commonwealth in 1961. Afrikanerdom had realised its ideal of creating a South African Republic.

Frans Erasmus, who had no military experience, was little more than a NP party official, and was replaced as the Minister of Defence on the eve of South Africa's departure from the Commonwealth by Jacobus Johannes "Jim" Fouché (1959 – 1966) (Van Der Waag, 2015:239-240). Erasmus was not only seen as incompetent but also divisive, and Fouché set about smoothing the English/Afrikaans conflicts and repairing the SADF's image (Warwick, 2019:138-139). The SADF had from the outset been identified as an important environment for facilitation of a common 'white nationhood', albeit one which retained explicit Afrikaner control (Warwick, 2019:138). The SADF continued to strongly endorse Afrikaner traditionalism. One of the most obvious indications of this was the establishment of the *Afrikaanse Kultuurvereniging Volk en Verdediging* (AKVV, Afrikaans Cultural Association, Nation and Defence) in 1958 (Warwick, 2019:140-141). The AKVV was established to "promote Afrikaans as a military language", to strengthen the relationship between Afrikaners, Afrikaans culture, and the military, and to ensure that Afrikaner nationalist commemorations were endorsed with a military presence (Warwick, 2019:141). The AKVV believed that Afrikaner culture was, and always had been, the salvation of the "white nationalist element in South Africa" (Warwick, 2019:142).

Defence policy going forward would be determined by a changing threat-perception and the attempts by, what Van der Waag (2015:240) describes as "an embattled South Africa" to find security in a rapidly changing and increasingly hostile world. These perceptions resulted in the NP government now moving its focus to urgently enhancing the SADF's military capabilities, that is, manpower, armaments and equipment, as it remained a small force with outdated World War II equipment. Importantly, in order to increase the manpower, Fouché set about achieving the implementation of national conscription. However, the State's goal of full white male conscription required the support of the greater white South African public. As a result, a critical task for Fouché was the mobilisation of white consent, that is, not only of Afrikaners, but also of English-speaking whites, as a racial compromise for the purposes of national defence (Warwick, 2019:143-145). Frankel (1984:29) notes that the militarisation of South Africa occurred concurrently with, and in reaction to, the country's descent into international isolation and pariah state as a result of its Apartheid policies. Militarisation was exacerbated by the rise of African nationalism on the African continent, and in particular, in the Southern African region as well as within South Africa. On the third of February 1960, the British Prime Minister, Harold Macmillan (1894–1986), gave a speech at a meeting of the South African Parliament which forewarned of the liberation of the African continent:

The wind of change is blowing through this continent and whether we like it or not, this growth of national consciousness is a political fact. And we must all accept it as a fact, and our national policies must take account of it (Macmillan 1960: 31).

The 'wind of change' Macmillan speaks of was evidenced by the liberation of no less than seventeen countries on the African continent that same year. These included all the British colonies in the southern African sub-continent, Botswana, Lesotho and Swaziland, and leaving the former colonies, South Africa and Rhodesia, ironically, as the final strongholds of British imperialism. The Portuguese colonies of Angola and Mozambique resisted the political disturbances wrought by African nationalism until 1975 when a coup took place in Portugal. The result of the collapse of the Portuguese rule of these southern African colonies was profound for the region. The departure of the Portuguese was followed by Zimbabwe (Rhodesia) gaining independence on 18 April 1980. With the destruction of what effectively had been a white defence triumvirate in southern Africa, South Africa found itself without, what it had regarded as 'buffer states' against liberated African states. Pretoria had until then, relied on these white-ruled 'buffer states' to ensure that African nationalism and liberation struggles remained confined to regions distant to its own borders (Davies, 1989:107). The defence line against direct foreign intervention now became South Africa's borders (Hamann, 2001:51). However, its protectorate, South West Africa (Namibia), remained, and as the final remaining buffer state assumed a central ideological and strategic role for the Apartheid government and the SADF.

These events led to the development of the perception amongst white South Africans of a South Africa under siege and being a garrison state, notions actively promulgated by largely Afrikaner politicians. International condemnation and isolation, as well as embargos and sanctions, added further support to the notion that South Africa was being targeted from outside. In addition, the country was experiencing internal unrest as a result of the rise of local African nationalism, further fuelling the perception of being under siege. Resistance to Apartheid had been steadily intensifying in the 1950s in South Africa. This strengthening campaign of initially peaceful resistance finally resulted in the Sharpeville Massacre on 21 March 1960. What began as an anti-pass law campaign initiated by the African National Congress (ANC) and the Pan African Congress (PAC), resulted in sixty-nine protesters being killed by the South African Police.

This was to become a watershed moment in the history of Apartheid resistance. It resulted in the government declaring a State of Emergency nine days later. In addition, the Unlawful Organisations Act was issued on 8 April 1960, resulting in the banning of the ANC and PAC. Importantly, the international community, unable to ignore the infringements on the rights of South Africa's black

population, was galvanised by the internationally publicised event and began to apply pressure on the NP government to begin reforms to its largely racist policies. Within the ranks of the South African liberation movements there was, given the Apartheid State's clear willingness to resort to extreme violence to defend the system, a growing call to create an armed force in preparation of the next phase which was to counter and resist the declaration of the Republic of South Africa, on the 31st May 1961 (Simpson, 2016:26). By August 1961, Nelson Mandela was arguing that the ANC itself should be guiding the rising violent resistance to the Apartheid State (Simpson, 2016:33). The guiding principle was to direct violent attacks at the symbols of oppression rather than people itself (Simpson, 2016:33). In opposition to Albert Luthuli's (1898-1967) wishes, Joe Slovo (1926-1995), at a South African Communist Party (SACP) meeting on the 14th December 1961, announced that a new organisation, *Umkhonto we Sizwe* (MK) would function as the fighting arm of the ANC (Simpson, 2016:37-40).

Luthuli, the ANC president-general, notes at the time that South Africa found a constant drive for more policemen, more soldiers, and more armaments (Simpson, 2016:37). It is no coincidence that, with increasing international isolation and a growing threat within and outside its borders, a massive programme aimed at the modernisation of the Defence Force had been initiated by the South African government in 1960 (Frankel, 1984:31). As a result, when P.W. Botha (1966-1980) became Minister of Defence on 5 April 1966, he inherited an institution in transition. By this time Botha had gained a reputation for tough, efficient administration as he rose through the ranks of the NP. Hamann (2001:50) notes that there was a noticeable shift in military and defence thinking upon his ascension. Botha had a much wider, global view of South Africa's situation. He was notably influenced by anti-communist Cold War ideology, as were his closest military strategists. The South African military increasingly projected itself as the defender of the West and its liberties such as free enterprise (Philip, 1989:203). Botha argued that the West was threatened by Soviet expansionism, and South Africa, being part of the West, and as the strategic jewel of Africa, was therefore the target of communist forces (Hamann, 2001, 50). Certainly, Southern Africa had become one of the Cold War's ideological battlefields, with the USA and the Soviets utilising proxy forces in the region. This was to culminate in 1988 in south-eastern Angola near *Cuito Cuanavale*, when the SADF, in support of the National Union for Total Independence of Angola (UNITA), faced off with the People's Armed Forces for the Liberation of Angola (FAPLA) aided by Cuba and the Soviet Union. The battle was the biggest conventional battle in Africa since World War II and it climaxed with an Angolan/Cuban defensive victory. This would end South Africa's Border War and saw South Africa withdraw from South West Africa as its final buffer state was liberated.

3.5.4 The Garrison State

Frankel (1984:29-70) equates apartheid-era South Africa to a 'garrison state'. The metaphor is that of a group of soldiers stationed at a military post in hostile territory. Giliomee (2002:605), however, notes that John X. Merriman (1908-1910), Prime Minister of the Cape Colony, had already articulated this concern in 1894, speaking of the white minority population as a 'garrison' that held "the country in the interests of civilization and in the interests of good government and general enlightenment of South Africa". Made during a debate of the House of Assembly, it was argued that whites deserved to dominate, and that a healthy white group would ultimately be in the interest of all South Africans (Giliomee, 2002:605). In 1941, Harold Lasswell theorised the garrison state as a hypothetical construct of future world politics. At the time he argued that there would be "a move away from the dominance of the specialist on bargaining, that is the businessman, toward the supremacy of the specialist on violence, the soldier" (Lasswell, 1941:455). During the late 1970s and 1980s South Africa certainly displayed the characteristics of Laswell's conceptualisation.

Frankel (1984:31) posits that white South Africans, largely as a result of state propaganda, viewed themselves and their country as being under siege. A culture of fear and anxiety existed, and this was used by the Apartheid government to maintain control, and led to a culture of conformity where dissent was also seen as a threat. As a result, along with an expectation of violence, the use of physical force as a means of problem-solving was normalised and promoted, with institutions such as the military and police experiencing societal elevation (Frankel, 1984:31). The managers of violence in 'hard'²⁸ institutions such as the military, and to a lesser extent, the police, experienced an elevation in status in relation to the 'soft' institutions such as parliamentary bodies and the judiciary (Frankel, 1984:31). As Frankel (1984:31) puts it, "the visibility and prestige of the military increased with each turn of the domestic and international screw".

Frankel (1984:35) notes that the isolation of South Africa from the rest of the world as well as a belief in an imminent and massive 'total onslaught' from external and internal forces resulted in the growth of "siege psychologies" in South Africa. The rise of the military, beginning in 1948, can then be seen to be the result of, and in reaction to, these real and perceived accumulated forces. Simultaneously, there occurred an institutionalisation of authoritarian ideologies and social forms, most notably, the militarisation of South African society (Frankel, 1984:35). This perception of a threatening, unfriendly

²⁸ This imagery of 'hard' refers to rigidity and toughness of the military institution as well as the formal rules and laws that characterised the political and social system, which the military itself was used to enforce (Pennington, 2009:14-15).

world gave rise to a garrison state psychology which supported the need for the visibility, status and political claims of the South African military establishment, including conscription (Frankel, 1984:31).

Militaries, no less the South African military, thrive on wars or on war-like situations. 'Hard' organizations of this type tend, in addition, to develop institutional stakes in perpetuating the climate of fear feeding their popular status. Thus the credibility with which the South African military exerts claims to political influence and social resources is directly dependent on the psychology of 'total onslaught' being maintained as a general credo of the white elite (Frankel, 1984:31-32).

An attack against South Africa was conceptualised as one that was occurring at every level – military, diplomatic, political, economic, social and cultural. Informed by French General André Beaufre's (1974) concept, the threat was articulated as a 'total onslaught'. The 'total strategy' response, as understood by the SA military, was a transplantation of French theories on counter-insurgency drawn from the French colonial military experiences in Indo-China and Algeria, found most notably in the work of Beaufre (Van der Waag, 2015:252). He argued that in the case of warfare between regular military forces and guerrillas, the war is an indecisive and protracted affair (Beaufre, 1974:39). In this type of warfare, military actions are part of a total strategy of a persuasive character, the aim of which is to essentially cause the weariness of the adversary and their will (Beaufre, 1974:39). This entails psychological, economic, as well as diplomatic factors playing a role (Beaufre, 1974:39). The result is what Beaufre (1974:39) describes as an "exterior manoeuvre", which is a more or less honourable compromise after a long phase of negotiations.

Beaufre's concepts were introduced to the South African military during a series of lectures in 1968, attended by, notably, General Magnus Malan (1930–2011), who was to serve as chief of the SADF (1976–1980) and Minister of Defence (1980-1991). Beaufre, who was the highly respected chief French representative at the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), was invited by the South African military attaché in Paris to visit South Africa (Scholtz, 2013:35). His theories were seen to offer a comprehensive strategic answer to the problems faced by South Africa, and in fact, according to Frankel (1984:46), virtually every course at the South African Joint Defence College was based on one or other of Beaufre's strategic concepts and theories. As a result, they formed the basis of the regime's doctrine during Botha's years at the helm of the SADF, and then as the leader of the NP and the country (Van der Waag, 2015:252).

It should be noted that, although Beaufre's concepts informed the thinking of Malan and Botha at the security-strategic level, and were imposed in a trickle-down approach onto the SADF structures and

men, the officers in the field were focused more on counter-insurgency tactics. General Georg Meiring indicates that they therefore focused on more practical, hands-on sources such as John McCuen's *The Art of Counter-Revolutionary Warfare* (1966) and other similar studies of revolutionary insurgency wars (Scholtz, 2013:38). Regardless, McCuen (1966) also makes the point that counterinsurgency is multidisciplinary, and as such, it is not just a struggle between insurgents and soldiers or the police. The starting point should be to prevent insurgency taking place at all, by addressing the concerns of disaffected groups, or as General Meiring put it, to "take the fires away from the pot" Hamann, 2001:62). This meant addressing some of the concerns of black South Africans, such as housing, services, employment and education.

At the strategic-level, the total onslaught, as conceptualised by the NP government and SADF, demanded total counter-strategies that focused, not only on military concerns, however, but co-ordinated aligned military, political, foreign, financial, economic, production and social policies (Frankel, 1984:47-48). Frankel (1984:54) notes that total involvement was championed by official Department of Defence documents, namely, the 1973 and 1974 White Papers. The documents stress that defence was not only a matter for the Defence Force but of each department/institution, and of every citizen privileged to call South Africa their home (Frankel, 1984:54). Essentially, the Department of Defence issued a call to arms, for a nation-in-arms. In this way the concept of the 'total onslaught' was utilised by the government to justify the militarisation of South Africa. Importantly, it was a conscious effort to create a social environment where military service appeared attractive, military responses to political threats sensible, military growth vital, and greater military spending necessary (Grundy, 1986:58).

3.5.5 The Militarisation of South Africa

An integral part of the militarisation of South Africa was, of course, conscription. It was no coincidence that universal military service for white male South Africans coincided with growing international sanctions and condemnation of the country's policies, increasing Eastern bloc (Soviet) involvement in the Southern African region, and the militarisation and polarisation of South African society (Van der Waag, 2015:255). As noted earlier, in the position of Minister of Defence, Botha inherited a transforming institution in 1966. However, the SADF's expansion efforts were being hampered by the ongoing shortages of manpower as it was still reliant on volunteers and the limited ballot system²⁹ (Van

²⁹ From 1952, all men of conscription age were balloted, with a small number each year being selected to attend military training. However, as the perceived threats to South Africa grew, so the numbers of men called up, and the period for which they were required to serve, increased (Callister, 2007:51). In 1965 a commission to investigate the SADF's manpower needs, found that the ballot was an unfair and inefficient system of

der Waag, 2015:255). As a result, on 1st January 1968, compulsory National Service was introduced by Botha. This conscripted all medically fit white male citizens into military service for a period of nine months continuous training and service on the year they turned 18. By 1972 it had been extended to twelve months, and by 1977, twenty-four months. Call-up periods for the part-time units of the Citizen Force known as camps, were also extended from four to ten years. In addition, other sources of personnel were also tapped for voluntary enlistments, such as units for white women and ‘non-whites’ (Van der Waag, 2015:256).

Although there was resistance to conscription, it was always fairly limited. The resistance was mainly driven by the Conscientious Objectors Support Group and the End Conscription Campaign, both active in the 1980s. Conscription, however, became one of the main tangible examples, and as such, initiators of the shift in civil-military boundaries. Conscription not only provided the military institution with members but also became a very effective mechanism for militarising society. The experiences, sacrifice and plight of the National Serviceman (NS) was one that every white citizen shared in their homes, neighbourhoods, communities and workplaces, as the conscripts were the sons, brothers, spouses and fathers of those citizens. Direct evidence of the military moving out of the barracks and into society, the SADF used the familiar face of the National Serviceman as a powerful propaganda tool (Frankel, 1984:58). Botha himself described South Africa as a “dynamic military society” which was being educated for war (Cawthra, 1986:55). As argued, this militarism was most strongly inculcated through National Service, but it was also achieved through the school cadet system (Cawthra, 1986:55).

Regular articles on the cadet system appeared in the *Paratus*, the official SADF magazine. The term ‘paratus’ comes from the Latin phrase, *semper paratus*, ‘always prepared’ (Merriam-Webster, n.d.). In the 1978, September issue, an announcement was made that on the instruction of the Ministers of Defence and of Education respectively, “a more purposeful and interesting programme for cadet training at South African schools has been re-introduced” (*Paratus*, September 1978:30). The article spells out the broad aims behind cadet training, which include the preparation of male pupils for military service as well as to promote an awareness of the particular needs and facets of civil defence (*Paratus*, September 1978:30).

By March 1985, almost all the high schools for white boys throughout the country were involved in the cadet system, falling under various SADF area commands (Cawthra, 1986:56). The pupils wore military uniforms and were trained by uniformed teachers who had undergone military service

recruitment, and advised that it should be replaced by national service and universal conscription (Callister, 2007:51-52).

(Cawthra, 1986:56). Paramilitary camps were also established as an extension of the cadet system, where the boys were prepared for their National Service basic training (*Paratus*, March 1981:80-81). The school cadets fell directly under the control of the SADF, and this liaison between the military and educational institutions is a prime example of the total strategy in action against the 'total onslaught'. Cawthra (1986:64) observes that virtually the entire white male population was being mobilised for the Apartheid war effort, as either cadets preparing for conscription, as conscripts undergoing National Service, or as Citizen Force members on camps, or in the Commandos in their local communities. Cadet training was not only an additional part of this mobilisation initiative, but also of the militarisation of white South African society during the apartheid-era. Finally, the practice of compulsory registration for 16-year-old white boys for National Service at their schools, made the education system an extension of the military, and effectively turned schools into recruitment bases (Cock, 1989:11)

Cawthra (1986:132), whilst analysing the "structure of the apartheid war machine", indicates that, in-line with the total strategy concept, the South African Police (SAP) and the military were integrally linked components of the common security forces. Further, he notes that the SAP underwent Counter Insurgency (COIN) training that was indistinguishable from that of the SADF (Cawthra, 1986:132). The two forces even used the same or similar equipment. In fact, as a result of the States of Emergency in the 1980s, where the SADF acted together with the SAP in the townships, the two were linked together under the umbrella of 'state security forces' (Cock, 1989:7). It is also significant that although the expansion of the SADF between 1960 and 1979 was at the expense of the SAP, from 1980 the increase in police force spending far outstripped that allocated to the military (Cawthra, 1986:132-133).

Cawthra (1986:133) believes that this reflected the regime's intent on building up the SAP as a frontline force along with the citizen force as a modern iteration of the Boer *kommando* units, manned by part-timers. Further evidence of this intent are the figures he presents: between 1981 and 1983 the SAP members increased by more than 8 000, followed by a further 3 000 in 1984 with plans to increase police strength to 68 000 by the mid-1990s (Cawthra, 1986:133). In addition, there were the Police Reserves (ex-full-time members) and the Reserve Police (white volunteers) totalling 20 000 members (Cawthra, 1986:133). Finally, there were also the Railways Police, municipal Traffic Police and the private forces of the Mine Police at major mining companies. It should be noted that approximately half of the members of the SAP were black. Militarisation of Apartheid-era South Africa was not isolated to white society alone. The Bantustans, or so-called 'homelands', that the National Party government allocated to the black inhabitants of South Africa and South West Africa, also had their own police forces which were closely integrated with the SAP. Cawthra (1986:134) concludes that the number of

police and para-police in South Africa made it one of the most intensively policed countries in the world at the time.

The militarisation of South Africans was not restricted to only the white population. It incorporated black South Africans, who were, of course, also the focus of the liberation movements and their own respective militarisation. Mark Phillips (1989, 20-21), informed by former SADF Chief, General Constand Viloei's observations regarding 'area defence', states that the South African liberation movements were engaged in an area war rather than a border war, but a war, nevertheless.

3.5.6 The Total Strategy

Frankel (1984:34-35) believes that although the rise to prominence of the Defence Force had much to do with the discussed factors resulting in the South African siege mentality, it is also indicative of the relationship forged between Botha and the Defence Force leadership echelons. He argues that Botha was extremely skilled with regards organisation and administration, a skill he evidenced not only in various positions within the National Party, but in particular, in the Defence Ministry and then finally in the office of the Prime Minister (Frankel, 1984:34). This strongly supports Lasswell's (1941:457-458) claim that the ruling elite of the garrison state would acquire most of the skills of modern civilian management. As noted earlier, Lasswell's (1941) concept of a Garrison State referred to societies dominated by their defence establishments, where "military priorities override other socio-political concerns, positioning the military as the primary domestic influence". He posits that in a modernised vision of the role of 'specialists of violence' in our societies, military institutions will include a large degree of expert-competency in many skills we have "traditionally accepted as part of modern civilian management" (Lasswell, 1941:457-458). These include the exercise of skill in supervising technical operations, in administrative organisation, in personnel management, and in public relations (Lasswell, 1941:458). Lasswell (1941:458) anticipates the merging of these skills of the manager of large-scaled civilian enterprises with those of the professional soldier. Botha exemplified this concept of the 'manager of violence' and would, in fact, be the architect of a comprehensive state apparatus.

The "symbiotic patron-client" relationship forged during Botha's fourteen-year tenure from 1966 to 1980 as Defence Minister, established a political alliance between the executive office and those in powerful military positions (Cawthra, 1984:34-35). This resulted in a shift in civil-military boundaries. A prime example of this close association between the executive office and military elites was the relationship between Botha and General Magnus Malan, and their paralleled rise to power. Frankel (1984:35) points out that this was not merely based on similar perceptions or leadership styles but the

intimate ties developed as a direct result of a “symbiotic, patron-client system”. Botha maintained his interest and concern with the institution’s interests when he became Prime Minister in 1978. In fact, he retained the Defence portfolio until 1980, when he finally appointed General Malan to the position (Hamann, 2001:53). Hamann (2001:53) reports that for the military, Botha’s election was a welcome change in leadership style, quoting Magnus Malan as saying, “[F]or the first time we had the advantage of a prime minister who had come through the military and not the police”.

In 1975, while Botha was still Defence Minister, a government White Paper on Defence was published which defined the NP’s ‘total response’. It asserted that defence strategy embraced much more than military strategy, and that such “a total strategy was not confined to a particular sphere, but applicable at all levels and to all functions of the state structure” (Cawthra, 1986:27). Botha and his advisors believed that the National Party government and white South Africa faced threats on all conceivable fronts (Hamann, 2001:53). As a result, the era of ‘total onslaught’ and ‘total strategy’ began in earnest with Botha’s election. Hamann (2001:47-62) devotes an entire chapter to this period in South African history, identifying it as “the rise of the securocrats”, that is, military officers who had the power to influence government policy. The Defence Force leadership, as has been indicated, certainly had the ear of the Prime Minister.

Extensive organisational transformation resulted the replacement of the old UDF General Staff with the Supreme Command. The Supreme Command organisational structuring and leadership-style was based on the principles of corporate leadership (Van der Waag, 2015:254). The result was “a highly centralised bureaucratic-military structure with the power to co-ordinate the implementation of both security and political strategies and policies” (Swilling & Phillips, 1989:143). This structure makes sense because military institutions tend to favour centralised government and strong planning by the public sector as opposed to pluralism and mobilisation politics (Frankel, 1984:57). This style of control was characteristic of Botha’s management style. Frankel (1984:34-35) notes that Botha imposed his aggressive management style onto the military. He would reduce complex social problems to their most basic essentials, and then infer strategic responses derived by reasoning from the evidence of these essentials, finally following through with action dictated by technocratic criteria³⁰ (Frankel, 1984:34-35).

³⁰ Technocrats were decision-makers chosen by Botha for office, based on their technical expertise and background. These technocrats were then utilised to solve problems in a domain specific to their technical skills. The terms ‘technocrat’ and ‘securocrat’ became associated with the ruling elite in Botha’s military institution, and had who had huge influence on government policy and decision-making.

Botha was supported not only by the Supreme Command, but also the State Security Council (SSC) which had come into being in 1972. Its function was to aid and advise the government in a number of key areas: on the formulation and implementation of national policy, on strategy in respect of national security, on policy regarding the combatting of any specific threat facing the country, and on any intelligence priorities (Hamann, 2001:57). Its members were the Prime Minister, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, the Minister of Defence, the Minister of Justice, the Minister of Law and Order, the Chief of the SADF, the Commissioner of Police, and the directors-general of National Intelligence, Foreign Affairs and Justice. The State Security Council was thought to be a government within a government, and where the real power lay (Hamann, 2001:58). It became the driving force behind the government's 'total strategy', with Botha serving on it, firstly, in his position as Minister of Defence, and then in the positions of Prime Minister and President respectively (Frankel, 1984:252).

In 1978, with Botha now in a position of Prime Minister and with the power to operationalise the total strategy, the National Security Management System (NSMS), also known as the Joint Management System (JMS) was launched. The NSMS can be described as a militarised bureaucracy, and it worked in tandem with the regular civil service to co-ordinate the implementation of the state security action strategy (Selfe, 1989:150). It was a network of more than five hundred national, regional, district and local centres, co-ordinated through twelve Joint Management Centres (JMCs) which effectively gave the government intelligence on every region, city and township in the country (Van Der Waag, 2015:252). The JMCs were usually chaired by a senior officer in either the SADF or SAP. Established by Botha, the comprehensive state apparatus operated under his personal direction, and it was evidence of Botha's brutal but efficient management style. It is also indicative of the militarised nature of the South African government of the time.

The management systems allowed the Defence Force and Botha, informed by Beaufre's concepts, to harness and co-ordinate the full range of government departments and agencies. A Total National Strategy had been devised, with a Total Management System and 'total managers' in place to implement that strategy where and when it deemed necessary. Further, this enabled the SADF to rationalise and legitimise its prominence and expanded role in the new pattern of social and political development within South Africa (Frankel, 1984:57).

Along with the social and political, the total strategy also incorporated the economic sphere. The private sector itself, like the public, had, in fact, been militarised by the regime. Sanctions and the international arms embargo on South Africa resulted in "a symbiotic relationship between the military and the business sector". As a result of growing international isolation and military demands, there was an

increased effort by the Apartheid state to achieve a degree of self-sufficiency within the local economy (Frankel, 1984:79). Attaining self-sufficiency in order to protect itself from sanctions was of vital importance for the national war machine. The rise of the military to prominence, its expansion under Botha's leadership, as well as the international arms embargo, stimulated simultaneous growth in the industrial sectors which were linked to the national war machine as producers and suppliers. Frankel (1984:79) utilises C. Wright-Mills'³¹ term 'military-industrial complex' to describe the militarisation of the business sector in South Africa at the time. The South African regime established "an extensive network of strategic industries and arms manufacturing concerns" by taking political, economic and legislative steps which ensured that private companies were integrated into the war effort (Cawthra, 1986:81).

As Minister of Defence, Botha established the Defence Advisory Council (DAC) in 1973, of which he was the chairman (Cawthra, 1986:84). The Council consisted of Botha's Head of the Defence Force, General Malan, the president of the Armaments Board, as well as a number of businessmen and military officers (Cawthra, 1986:84). One of Botha's first priorities upon becoming Prime Minister, was to win support for the total strategy ideology from the private sector and big business in particular (Philip, 1989:203). In 1979 Botha gathered business leaders together for a conference at The Carlton Hotel, a prestigious five-star hotel in Johannesburg, where he announced his vision of re-establishing the regional dominance of South Africa and its partners in big business, and a state commitment towards a free enterprise economy (Philip, 1989:203; Tomaselli & Louw, 2016:36). One of the key issues raised was the need to ensure capitalist investment and growth by ridding the region of the Soviet-driven Marxist threat (Philip, 1989:203). In addition, Botha co-opted thirteen prominent and powerful businessmen to the Defence Advisory Council.

All of the above are clear indications of the planned militarisation of business and the economy, and an excellent example of Wright-Mills' military industrial complex. Botha's government clearly sought to mediate between the military and business by creating consultative bodies (Frankel, 1984:141). Further, it should be remembered that businesses were also co-opted into supporting the apartheid-state's conscription policy which had, not only a direct financial implication in salaries paid to absent national servicemen and citizen force members, but also as a result of the withdrawal of skilled white labour from the mainstream of economic activity (Frankel, 1984:144). Simpson (1989:218) believes that

³¹ Wright Mills (1956) believes that three groups comprised what he named the 'power elite': military officers, corporate business leaders, and powerful politicians. His thinking is influenced by the effects of the Cold War, where the military and combinations of organisations and institutions cooperated in a military industrial complex. Military, state and corporation constitute the means of power, where the military holds a position of undue influence due to its position of enhanced power in a world perceived to be at war.

business' acquiescence is based on its need for political and social stability in order to survive. Despite anti-apartheid rhetoric from some sectors of the business community, it was dependent on the military capacity of the regime to avoid the economic repercussions of social and political upheaval (Simpson, 1989:218-219). This is supported by the TRC's (1998:58) findings presented in volume four, chapter two, which focused on business and labour:

Business was central to the economy that sustained the South African state during the apartheid years. Certain businesses, especially the mining industry, were involved in helping to design and implement apartheid policies. Other businesses benefited from co-operating with the security structures of the former state. Most businesses benefited from operating in a racially structured context.

Secondly, as virtually all business enterprises are driven by their aim of achieving and maintaining profit margins, military contracts were highly sought-after. The fact that SADF expenditure was increased substantially, sustained by a five hundred per cent increase of the military budget during the period from 1975 to 1985, gives an idea of the scale of the spending power of the military (Cawthra, 1986:81). The TRC report, volume 4, chapter 2 (1998:49), states that many businesses, including subsidiaries of leading corporations, became willing collaborators in the creation of, what the report calls, the "governments' war machine". It argues that this was "no reluctant decision imposed on them by coercive apartheid legislation", but one made to willingly collaborate actively with the SADF "war machine". As Frankel (1984:83) posits, the military, and the governmental and economic elite were locked into a tight tripartite network in support of Apartheid policy.

If one considers that the military institution practices the management of organised violence, that is, violence which is managed, gendered, reshaped and/or justified though a broad empirical context, then it becomes clear that Botha and the military elite used the Total Strategy as a blueprint for the purposes of this management and for its justification (Nuciari, 2018).

3.5.7 The Managers of Violence

At the beginning of this section, I highlighted Frankel's (1984) assertion that the South African military was not the monolithic agent of state power it is often portrayed as, but was in fact, a complex institutional body. The SADF, as part of Apartheid's security forces, is also often portrayed as the iron fist of the NP government, that is, an agent of ruthless and oppressive authority. Gavin Cawthra (1986) for example, names his book on the SADF, *Brutal Force: The Apartheid War Machine*, which is echoed in the TRC report in 1998. Of course, as numerous historical accounts show, it very often was this brutal

war machine, one of the most notorious examples of this brutality being the raid on Cassinga³² on 4 May 1978. With P.W. Botha being elected as leader of the NP and Prime Minister, a more aggressive defence policy would be implemented (Jacobs, 2006:30). As Leopold Scholtz (2013:67) notes, by 1978 military intelligence and the analyses thereof provided a clear picture of what was required from the SADF to safeguard white South African interests, a strategy of ‘forward defence’.

With the reality of Rhodesia’s pending liberation following close on the heels of the liberation of the Portuguese colonies, apartheid South Africa’s strategy of utilising buffer states to protect itself from incursion was nearing an end. As a result, the military tightened its grip on South West Africa, and began conducting operations deep into Angola, aimed at destroying SWAPO bases, troops and logistics which were located there. However, it is important to take into consideration that Botha and his military advisors, as proponents of the Total Strategy, also believed that the threat faced by the country and government was on all conceivable fronts, not only the military one (Hamann, 2001:53). They warned that actual military action only represented 20% of the battle for South Africa, and that the remainder of the battle, that is, 80%, was chiefly on the political, psychological and economic fronts (Hamann, 2001:55; Cooper, 1989:180). The military elite, supported by Botha, called for “a shift from purely military to an integrated national action”, that is, interdepartmental and co-ordinated actions in all fields: military, psychological, economic, political, sociological, technological, diplomatic, ideological and cultural (Frankel, 1984:45-46; Hamann, 2001:57; Simpson, 2016:221). This Total Strategy was officially presented to the House Assembly in a Defence Force White Paper on the 31st March 1977.

Hamann (2001:62) argues that the Joint Management System which involved the SADF in every facet of South African life was evidence of the Total Strategy approach. He quotes General Georg Meiring who was involved in the co-ordination of what was considered the ‘non-shooting’ part of the war:

Our strategy was not to keep the lid on but rather to take the fires away from the pot. The major emphasis was on trying to win the hearts and minds of the people. We got involved in everything. For example, we had vets and doctors all over the show. We had teachers, we repaired windmills and waterholes. We looked after sick cattle and we built roads; you name it and we did it (Hamann, 2001: 62).

According to Beaufreian thinking, war can be waged on two levels, the direct strategy, where the enemy is confronted head on by force, and the indirect strategy, where confrontation is basically random and insidious, and the force is calculated and moderated (Frankel, 1984:48; Beaufre, 1974). The indirect

³² Code-named Operation Reindeer, it was a cross-border, pre-emptive semi-conventional strike on SWAPO bases inside Angola (Hamann, 2001:72).

strategy outcomes are realised through manoeuvres and methods that are not necessarily determined by the aims and immediate demands of a military victory (Frankel, 1984:48). Beaufre believed that more and more in modern warfare, the shift would be away from the direct strategy where outcomes are determined through military confrontation (Frankel, 1984:49). At the time of writing, ‘modern’ would have referred to nuclear capabilities, and therefore, this makes sense if one considers that this concept was formulated during the Cold War era and the ever-present threat of a nuclear holocaust. Beaufre (1974:3) argues that escalation, or intensification of the military effort, has been curtailed in more recent conflict to a level determined by, as he puts it, moral and nuclear deterrence. Instead, he suggests that the indirect strategy, where the aim is to suggest to the enemy a compromise which aligns with your political objectives, will be the future of modern warfare (Frankel, 1984:48-49; Beaufre, 1974:72-74). The aim of the indirect strategy is not the capitulation of the enemy, but is rather, a “tough form of negotiation”³³ (Frankel, 1984:49). This is what the Apartheid government, using the SADF, attempted to engineer.

3.5.8 WHAM! The Battle for Hearts and Minds

In 1976, in the wake of the Soweto Uprisings, members in the top echelons of the military sent a memorandum to Botha in his capacity as the Minister of Defence (Cawthra, 1986:26). Believing that “the government’s response to the uprising was an unmitigated disaster”, they suggested that some form of military takeover was necessary in order to implement the immediate social and political changes necessary to quell the challenge of African nationalism in the country (Cawthra, 1986:26). The military argued that, based on the belief of a total onslaught, these uprisings should be viewed as Soviet-initiated. In order to quell such unrest within the country, the government was urged by the military elite to implement meaningful reforms designed to alienate the South African population from the insurgents (Van der Waag, 2001:252-253). According to the counter-insurgency strategy promoted by the military, the conflict is understood as largely occurring on a broader social level rather than just on an actual battlefield itself. The point Botha’s generals were making was that the anticipated total onslaught on South Africa required “a total strategy capable of combining effective security measures with reformist policies, aimed at removing the grievances” that Soviet insurgents and revolutionaries could exploit

³³ It is argued that the SADF carried out this form of negotiation with its Border campaign. Certainly, it lost the ascendancy once the conflict became more conventional in nature. On December 22, 1988, South Africa, along with Angola and Cuba, agreed to implement the United Nations’ Resolution 435 as part of the Tripartite Accord at the United Nations in New York (Van der Waag, 2015:280-282). Although the Accord included an agreement for the independence for Namibia, it also required the withdrawal of Cuban troops from Angola, and Southern Africa (Hamann, 2001:100-101). In addition, the ANC camps and training bases in Angola were to be closed. This resulted in effectively creating a buffer zone between South Africa and the ANC’s MK which the SADF had been creating with its military actions in Angola, utilising SWA as a launching pad (Van der Waag, 2015:282).

(Swilling & Phillips, 1989:136). This approach placed special emphasis on a campaign to ‘win hearts and minds’ (WHAM).

Ironically, by recognising the importance of winning popular allegiance, the military emerged as an important force for political and social reform in South Africa and South West Africa. This is in contradiction to the majority of the literature I found on the perception of the SADF. Further, a form of ‘deracialisation’ took place within in the SADF’s, as well as the SWATF’s, ranks, albeit partial, and as a matter of circumstance and necessity. This ‘deracialisation’ of the Defence Force had major symbolic and psychological value as it allowed the military to shift the image of its role from the racial to the ideological defence of the Republic (Frankel, 1984:158). This not to say that because some of the SADF and SWATF units were racially integrated, they did not ultimately remain divided along primarily racial lines, and which also corresponded to hierarchical lines of authority and access to power (Bolliger, 2021:121). However, the racial integration of the units was in stark contrast to the greater societal situation in Apartheid South Africa and in South West Africa (Bolliger, 2021:121).

This revisionist view of the SADF is supported by General Constand Viljoen, as stated in an interview with Hamann (2001:61):

Having been students of the revolutionary war, we in the military realised the importance of efficient government, of good administration, good relationships between blacks and the Defence Force and also blacks and whites in the country. We went a long way in trying to coerce the other departments into realising they had a very important part to play in the revolutionary war.

Viljoen goes on to acknowledge Botha’s role in implementing and driving this total strategy, stating that Botha realised that if you caused dissatisfaction on any matter in the black community, you created a greater potential for revolutionary reaction (Hamann, 2001:61). Viljoen’s admission that the military were students of revolutionary warfare is an important one. In my opinion, this is an indication that the military leaders would also have been students of Marxist ideology, and likely to have encountered Louis Althusser’s (1970) work on state apparatuses and ideology.

Althusser (1918-1990) distinguished between two types of state apparatuses: the Repressive State Apparatus (RSA) and the Ideological State Apparatus (ISA). This mirrors Beaufre’s (1974) concept of attacks on two main fronts; the conflict largely occurring on a broader social level rather than merely on only an actual battlefield itself. In Marxist theory, according to Althusser (1970:11), the Repressive

SA consists of the government, the administration, the army, the police, the courts and the prisons, and 'functions by violence', which includes administrative repression. It belongs entirely to the public domain, whereas much of the Ideological SA belongs to the private domain. The ideological component, according to Althusser (1970:11), consists of the religious, family, educational, legal, political, cultural, communications (press, radio, television), and trade unions ISAs. They function primarily by ideology, but also secondarily by repression, even if this is only symbolic (Althusser, 1970:12-13). Using schools, churches, and military state institutions as examples of apparatuses, Althusser (1970:5) describes them as teaching 'know-how', but in forms which ensure "subjection to the ruling ideology or the mastery of its 'practice'". The State, in Marxist thinking, is viewed as a 'machine' of repression, enabling the ruling class (in South Africa, whites) to ensure their domination over the working class, (in South Africa, the black population) (Althusser, 1970:7).

Viloen and his cohorts understood this to be the black liberation movements' perspective, as they were trained, supported and inspired by Soviet, Cuban and Chinese governments. Beaufre's (1974) concepts of 'total onslaught' and 'total strategy' were constructed to counter the attack on the State Apparatuses (SA). This transformed the military elite into managers of violence rather than merely specialists of violence. Rather than being merely blunt, direct weapons, employing short-term tactics with little finesse, they became strategists with a long-term vision. An example of this type of thinking is the SADF's Civic Action³⁴ programme. In 1976, as a result of total strategy thinking, and in reaction to rising instability, both in South Africa and South West Africa, the SADF implemented an extensive propaganda programme called Communications Operations (Comm Ops), firstly in SWA, and then four years later in South Africa (Van der Waag, 2001:261).

It must be kept in mind that the formulation of the SADF's 'total strategy' and the WHAM campaign did not occur in a vacuum. As I have indicated, it was in reaction to specific situations and conditions, and was in turn reacted to by liberation forces and local populations. Hamann (2001:123) provides insight into this by reporting former president Thabo Mbeki's statement to the *New York Times* in 1980:

We can't fight a bush war in South Africa. Look at the map. It is all developed. There are roads, radios and landing strips everywhere. This is not Angola or Mozambique. We do not have forests. The (military) machine would smash us if we tried to send in an army from outlying areas. Also, 87% of the Whites are in towns and cities. Our masses have to serve as our bush. The Black community is our bush.

³⁴ It was also known as *burgersake*, *Komops*, Communications Operations, Comm Ops, and the more sinister, Psy Ops or Psychological Operations.

The ANC leaders of the time, Mbeki amongst them, visited Vietnam and studied that country's anti-colonial struggle and victory against both France and the USA. Accordingly, a 'total strategy' of their own was devised and presented, named *The Four Pillars of Revolution – a Strategy for the People's War* (Hamann, 2001, 123; Scholtz, 2011:203-204). The first pillar was the building of more underground structures/cells, and invigorating the existing ones; the second, the mass mobilisation of the South African people; the third, a drive to further isolate the Apartheid regime internationally; and finally, the fourth, the continuation and acceleration of the armed struggle (Hamann, 2001, 123; Scholtz, 2011:203-204). This was to be a people's war, with the war being taken to the places they were, mostly the townships. The aim was to make the country ungovernable, beginning in the townships, by taking control over the communities through establishing and using self-defence and combat units (SDU). As Hamann (2001:126) posits, civic action organisations would mobilise the people of the area, generally the townships and hostels, using liberation propaganda, and ensure maximum compliance through fear, intimidation and violence if necessary. The threat of necklacing³⁵ was one such way that compliance was ensured.

Ironically, as much as white South Africans of this period imagined themselves as being under siege and living in a garrison state, similarly black South Africans themselves, I would imagine, must have felt themselves to be under siege and living in individual township garrisons. The militarisation of South Africa, I believe, would have reached almost saturation at this point. By mid-1986, the SDUs' goal of making the townships ungovernable had brought about the collapse of local black urban authorities (Nathan, 19089, 73). This resulted in a second declared State of Emergency, close on the heels of the 1985 one. The issue became that the army had been caught in "a cycle of increasing repression" (Cawthra, 1986:241). Black communities, including those in South West Africa, would be unlikely to be won over by the SADF or SWATF, since they had also experienced the military in its repressive role (Cooper, 1989:180). This would result in an "irresolvable contradiction" (Evans, 1983:19).

The Comm Ops programme, also known as Civic Action or WHAM, was developed to foster harmony between the military and local populations in an effort to win hearts and minds (Van der Waag, 2001:261). As part of the Comm Ops programme, the military trained and appointed soldiers as 'communicators', projecting the image of the soldier as a man of action who was a friend of black people and was prepared to defend them (Bolliger, 2021:61; Cawthra, 1986:238). The emphasis was on presenting the SADF in a positive light, in order to deny the insurgents, the psychological advantage of the support of the local population (Grundy, 1987:61). Based on Beaufre's theories on warfare, it was

³⁵ Necklacing was the practice of forcing a rubber tire around a victim's chest and arms, filling it with petrol, and then setting it on fire. The practice and term originated in the 1980s in black townships of Apartheid South Africa.

especially applied to the operational area of South West Africa, the thinking being that it would be far easier to manifest a presence in an environment where the local population was at least somewhat friendly (Van der Waag, 2001:261). Introduced in South West Africa in 1974, it was, however, also implemented in South Africa four years later (Herbstein & Evenson, 1989:111). The Civic Action projects had four main forms: one, specific tasks, for example, drought relief and building roads or bridges; two, specially trained individual national service men deployed in Bantustan and government departments, mainly as teachers and medical personnel; three, special SADF task forces established for specific projects such as army-run-sports clinics; and finally, four, the development of black military, paramilitary and Civil Defence organisations (Cawthra, 1986:237).

The training for the Comm Ops programme was carried out at the South African Intelligence School base (or 11 Commando) in Kimberley. A need for a specific corps to conduct tactical and operational intelligence activities was identified in the late 1970s, which was, in my opinion, partially guided by the ‘total strategy’ approach. As a result, the South African Intelligence School (SAINTS) was established, and was where I was posted upon my induction into the SADF as a national serviceman, and as part of Intelligence School’s first National Service intake. The school was responsible for the training of permanent force, citizen force and national servicemen in a number of fields: Intelligence, Counter Intelligence, and Communication Operations. After completing my basic training and bush-phase training - a period of six months in total - I underwent a battery of tests, including psychological evaluations. As Evans (1983:21) confirms, there was a strict and careful selection process for the civic action programme (CAP), which only allows those whose views conform to the SADF’s requirements being selected to participate - as he puts it, “[T]hose with views too far to the left or right are not included”.

One of the questions I was asked in an interview was whether I would be willing to share a bungalow and mess hall with black soldiers. I remember that I found some of the questions a little obvious, considering the purposes we were being evaluated for. One of the more obscure exercises though was the Rorschach inkblot test. However, in hindsight I realise now that my cohort and I were being carefully sifted and streamed. Some were selected to be interrogators, some to be intelligence analysers, and some, such as myself, to be Civic Action specialists. These tests were designed to determine not only our worldviews and personalities, but also our emotional states. After a week of rigorous testing, and based on the evaluators’ findings, I was placed into the Comm Ops programme, for a further four months training. Here as a Civic Action specialist trainee, I was exposed to Beaufre’s theories, as well as *The Art of War*, attributed to the ancient Chinese military strategist, Sun Tzu. My specialisation was the development of black military, para-military and Civil Defence organisations within the SADF.



Figure 8: The SAINTS unit shield, “*Lux ad Gladium*: The Light for the Sword”. Photograph by Swanepoel (2025).

Following the completion of my training, I was deployed to the Border where I was seconded to the South West African Territorial Forces, and joined 201 Battalion in the Western Caprivi. I spent the remaining fourteen months of my National Service as a Comm Ops specialist non-commissioned officer (corporal), at the Omega base, home of the 201 San-Bushmen unit. Due to the *coup d’etat* in Portugal, and the resultant collapse of the Portuguese colonies, and the outbreak of warfare in the Angolan region, two San-Bushmen groups, or tribes, the *Baraquentos* and the *Vasequelas*, fled the area. These refugees, including men, women and children, were offered refuge and housed at a SADF training base in the Caprivi. This was at a price, of course, as most of the men were convinced to join South Africa’s war against SWAPO. After a number of iterations, the base and its inhabitants finally became known as Omega, the home of the 201 Battalion Bushmen unit in 1977 (Uys, 2015:75-76).

As a Comm Ops specialist at the base, I worked with the Bushmen soldiers and their families, assisting the commanding officer, Commandant Adams, and his wife, Jacqui, in establishing the Adult Education Centre, or the VOS (*Volwasse Onderrig Sentrum*), as it was more commonly known. It was later named The Jacqui Adams Adult Education Centre, after the Commandant’s wife. I arrived at Omega in 1983, shortly after the Adams family, and not too long after that the VOS was built. I was the first teacher to work in the newly established centre, where I provided basic education to the wives of the soldiers, and

then also to the soldiers when they were confined to the base (recovering from wounds or injuries). Two photos (Figures 9 and 10) appear in Ian Uys' (2015) history, *Bushman Soldiers*, which I am convinced (based on the dates indicated in the book, the venues and likeness) were taken of me teaching in the centre.

Ian Uys (2015:197) notes that Commandant Adams insisted that education was of premium value at the Omega base, as he believed that the Bushmen could not develop as soldiers without it. This education was supplied by the Adult Education Centre and the Bushmen school, and was manned by National Servicemen who were generally Civic Action specialists (Uys, 2015:197). The headmasters of the school, on the other hand, tended to be older national servicemen who had completed a teaching degree before beginning their National Service. The education centres at Omega were examples of a successful Comm Ops programme. In addition, and in support of the Comm Ops education programme, the Omega clinic was upgraded to a base military hospital including a laboratory (Uys, 2015:183). The clinic services continued, run by two nursing sisters and saw upwards of 2500 patients monthly, with the hospital treating approximately 800 patients monthly (Uys, 2015:183).



Figure 9: The Jacqui Adams Adult Education Centre (Uys, 2015:198)



Figure 10: The Jacqui Adams Adult Education Centre (Uys, 2015:198)

Cawthra (1986:205) identifies the 201 Battalion at Omega Base, as the showpiece of the SADF's Civic Action programme. The unit's emblem was a black crow with a white breast symbolising its demographic make-up, black troops with a white leadership group. As the unit developed and grew, so its numbers did until it finally stood at approximately 850 troops, 200 to 300 of whom were white. The 201 Battalion is an example of the political and military objectives of all the Civic Action projects (Cawthra, 1986:206). This is because the deployment of Civic Action troops was not only a way of familiarising the population with the army by providing essential services to citizens of occupied territories, or territories where the military is operational, as part of a propaganda exercise, but also for intelligence-gathering purposes (Cawthra, 1986:206; Evan, 1983:21).

The unit was eventually incorporated into the South West African Territorial Forces (SWATF) as part of the so-called 'Namibianisation' effort of the South African government on 1st August 1980 (Bolliger, 2021:35-37; Minter, 1994:123).

The creation of SWATF marked a crucial shift in the military identity of black soldiers: they were officially no longer fighting on behalf of their homeland of a foreign army but served in Namibia's future national military to protect the country and its people (Bolliger, 2021:35-36).

The 'Namibianisation' strategy was aimed at preventing SWAPO and PLAN from dominating SWA after it gained its independence by creating alternative political and military institutions to oppose them

(Bollinger, 2021:36). In addition, these black soldiers knew the language, customs, and environment in which the units operated (Bollinger, 2021:35). Finally, and arguably far more importantly, by utilising mostly local black troops in their units in SWA, as well as proxy forces such as the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA), the SADF kept white casualties to a minimum. As Bollinger (2021:35) observes, South Africa's growing external, as well internal, conflicts exposed what he calls the "SADF's greatest political vulnerability: White military casualties". White manpower was an issue, firstly, because, despite National Service there were not enough white soldiers to cover all the fronts the SADF was engaged on, particularly when troops began to be used in the black South African townships (Minter, 1994:123). Secondly, white South African society was very sensitive to white casualties, and therefore, military strategy accordingly aimed at reducing the risks to white soldiers, in particular (Minter, 1994:123). The SADF thereby maintained support and minimised dissent amongst the general white public in South Africa, by where possible, placing chiefly black soldiers in danger in South West Africa.

Part of this strategy to maintain the support of the white public in South Africa, included the 'hearts and minds' programme targeting white South Africans, and specifically, the national servicemen themselves. Propaganda was specifically manufactured for this purpose. In fact, in 1980 it was revealed that the SADF was producing at least twenty print publications that year (Cawthra, 1986:44; Craig, 2008:60; Frankel, 1984:97). This propaganda initiative was not limited to print, as with all military training involving elements of ideological indoctrination. There was a wide variation in the type of ideological motivational techniques and tools employed. An example is the concepts of indirect warfare and the 'winning hearts and minds' approach, where these concepts were instilled mainly in the echelons of the higher ranks, and in the military intelligence sections (Cawthra, 1986:45). The use of ideological sophistication tended to decline in the lower ranks where the focus was chiefly on 'othering' and a narrative of 'us against them', which was often overtly racist in tone: Christianity versus socialism and atheistic communism, as well as their minions, the black 'terrorist' movements of SWAPO, PAC, SACP and ANC. This was certainly my experience of the SADF's propaganda campaign as a conscript. One of the first things we were shown as new conscripts during our initial basic training was a film depicting, in great detail, necklacings in black townships. We were told that if black people would do this to their own, to consider what they would do to our white families and loved ones. Those of us selected to remain at Intelligence School for further specialist training, were then exposed to the 'winning hearts and minds' ideology in order that we might assimilate and disseminate it ourselves.

3.5.9 WHAM! White Hearts and Minds

A government White Paper on Defence and Armaments Production (1973) clearly states that it was Defence Force policy to “make fullest use of the opportunities afforded by the National Service System to promote the physical and spiritual preparedness of our youth”. One thing that is clear is that national servicemen were “deeply educated in the norms, codes and values of the Defence Force” in order for them to be forged into a unified professional fighting force capable of ensuring the security of the state (Frankel, 1984:96). To this end, a psychological section was established in the Medical Service in 1967 resulting in the Military Psychological Institute (Frankel, 1984:96). At the Institute various programmes for institutional socialisation were devised (Frankel, 1984:96). In the course of psychologically conditioning its conscripts as defenders of the state, the SADF communicated information of a definite political nature (Frankel, 1984:96; Grundy, 1986:65). The institutional values instilled during National Service were continually re-enforced through a system of follow-up commitments in the form of Citizen Force duties (Frankel, 1984:96).

Amongst other things, state propaganda was also aimed at winning the hearts and minds of the general white South African civilian public. This was not merely pro-security forces propaganda but pro-government views, disseminating the total strategy ideology via the South African mass media outlets. Frankel (1984:98) states that there is no doubt that there was an official liaison between the military and the state-controlled South African Broadcasting Company (SABC). Their television viewers were inundated with highly selective documentaries designed to emphasise the total onslaught and portray the role of the SADF combatting it (Frankel, 1984:98). SABC listeners were, in addition to the regular news bulletins and current events programmes, exposed to numerous request programmes for men serving in the military. Programmes such as *Forces Favourites* and *Fun with the Forces* not only fulfilled an important propaganda role by providing support for those involved in the Border War, but also portrayed the men as protectors of those at home in South Africa (Drewett, 2008:98).

Keyan Tomaselli and Eric Louw (1989) conducted a research analysis of the NP government’s propaganda strategy in popular broadcast media in the period from 1976 to 1986. In the study, they align this with the militarisation of South Africa which occurred over the same period, and the Win Hearts and Minds campaign. They argue that the growing influence of the military also resulted in not only the co-opting of the media but the ‘militarisation’ of the media itself (Tomaselli & Louw, 1989:28). As a result of this militarisation, they note that during the research study period, the media messages were generally sympathetic to the military with its aims being promulgated (Tomaselli & Louw, 1989:28). Further, this is likely to have aided in the conditioning of white South Africans for war

(Tomaselli & Louw, 1989:28). Tomaselli and Louw (1989:33-34) indicate ways in which they believe control of the media manifested. Firstly, the right-wing opposition (those who were opposed to any sort of political concessions to black aspirations) were disparaged and belittled in an effort to invalidate them, internal conflicts and disagreements within the government and the NP were played down, and support for the liberation movement was minimised and downplayed (Tomaselli & Louw, 1989:33-34). Secondly, certain buzz words and phrases were used repetitively and presented in a positive light, such as, total strategy, reform, free enterprise, moderate blacks, the West, and 'our boys on the Border' (Tomaselli & Louw, 1989:33). "Boo words" (the researchers' term), such as total onslaught, radicals, the Eastern Bloc, socialism and communism were given a negative treatment (Tomaselli & Louw, 1989:33-34). Thirdly, overt racism was avoided (Tomaselli & Louw, 1989:34). Finally, the rhetoric of South Africa being a garrison state under siege was re-enforced and popularised (Tomaselli & Louw, 1989:34). There was a growing prevalence of Botha and his military strategists' definition of reality, and the 'us versus them' narrative, in the media, particularly, via the SABC, which was considered to be essentially a mouthpiece for the ruling party (Tomaselli & Louw, 1989:34).

Frankel (1984:97) notes that in order to support the SADF's own internal media with the purpose of promoting its image, the Defence Force used both state-controlled media as well as "a network of favourably inclined civil organisations to propagate total strategy and the military ethic outside of its immediate institutional sphere". This highlights the importance of the role the private sector played in the total strategy, and as a result, the economy. South Africa's military strategists increasingly projected themselves as the defenders of free enterprise and asserting that military strength was inseparable from economic strength (Philip, 1989:203). Military involvement and control at all levels of society included the economy and the business sector. As indicated earlier, the implementation of the total strategy by the Botha government and his military aides introduced a reformist thrust to ensure social stability (Philip, 1989:202). At the forefront of this were upliftment schemes for black communities, such as, the provision of, and privatisation of, township housing, which business leaders welcomed (Philip, 1989:203-207). As noted in the TRC (1998) report, volume one, chapter 13, an example of this initiative was the 1984 Black Communities Development Act No 4, which introduced freehold ownership and provided for purposeful development of black communities outside the national states (homelands).

From the point of view of the business sector, political and social stability required maximum economic growth which was conditional on a relaxation of ideologically sanctioned state control over the employment and training of black labour (Frankel, 1984:141). This referred to the laws which determined racially based job reservation and employment practices, as well as those racially discriminatory laws which related to education. The price the private sector had to pay for the reduction

of government control was financing programmes aimed at improving the standards of living of black communities, specifically in urban areas (Frankel, 1984:141). However, it should be noted that the private sector, although often critical of NP policy, was equally not a force of liberation, being driven by profit considerations, and was certainly complicit with Apartheid in its use of cheap black labour which resulted from its legislation (Frankel, 1984:141). However, the regime's reform strategy and project to reconstitute the black urban structures that were destroyed in the mid-1980s, as well as use of the WHAM programme, would ultimately fail because of its denial of full political rights for blacks (Nathan, 1989:77). As in South West Africa, regardless of what the apartheid South African government offered, it did not offer complete liberation.

Conclusion

This chapter has provided a framework for interpreting the purpose, behaviour, and impact of the South African military institution by discussing critically its origins as the Union Defence Force and its subsequent transformation into the SADF. Evidence was provided that the SADF was a unique cultural institution that is likely to have significantly influenced its members, "contributing to the development and transformation of their identities" (Heward, Li, Chun Tie & Waterworth, 2024:2382). Chapter five will discuss the conceptualisation of the SADF military identity by analysing the data received from the participant former SADF conscripts. A further dimension is included in chapter six by providing a visual representation of the interpretation of its findings.

CHAPTER 4: METHODOLOGY

This methodology chapter presents the various processes, procedures, and tools used to collect and analyse the data for the purposes of addressing the questions posed by the study. This encompasses a research design which outlines the plan for collecting, measuring, and analysing the data. The chosen research methodology focuses on which types of methods were deemed suitable to collect and analyse the evidence required to address the research problem. The methodology then was a logical and systematic plan to resolve the identified research problem. The importance of this chapter will become evident as I define and explain the tools and methods used in the research study, but briefly, the information provided will allow the reader to confirm the accuracy, rigour and dependability of my approach is accurate and dependable. This detailed exposition may aid future researchers to adapt aspects of this approach for similar studies.

The research problem being investigated became my guide for designing my research methodology. The study proposes that by investigating the lived experiences of men in a men's only military institution it is possible to examine the gendered nature of that institution, and an argument may be put forward that some men actively resist the gender directives enforced upon them. Further, the study highlights the trauma boys and men experience as a result of the often brutal coercive and violent socialisation processes they undergo within gendered institutions such as the military. Finally, the study posits that men are not necessarily stuck in the past, trapped by the manner in which their gender identities are formed within authoritarian institutions. Therefore, the study aims to describe the characteristics of a phenomenon experienced by a group of people and the culture they share(d). Both the social group and the culture were formed and emerged from the institution that was studied. The research establishes a causal relationship between institutions, its culture, and men, in this case, the SADF military institution, its culture, and its former conscripts. Identifying a gap in the research area, I have earlier argued that my specific focus is an under-researched topic. This lacunae and my approach have resulted in a research methodology which was tailor-made for the purposes of the study, and will be discussed in this section.

A primary consideration is then the type of data required to achieve the aim and objectives of the study. Lesley Le Grange (2018:1) notes that empirical research tends to be dominated by traditional quantitative and qualitative studies³⁶. Le Grange (2018:1) explains that essentially, data in the form of numbers are quantitative, while data in the form of words, that is, narratives, and/or, visual images, are qualitative. Methods may also be mixed, which produces both quantitative and qualitative data,

³⁶ Qualitative research and quantitative research are umbrella terms for a range of research methodologies. The distinction between the methodologies relates to the types of data and results each produces via their associated research methods.

and is known as mixed methods methodology (Le Grange, 2018:1). However, for the purposes of performative practice-driven research that incorporates qualitative data collection, the consideration of which methodologies to use and how is far more complex than basic definitions might imply, as this chapter will provide evidence of.

John Creswell (2009) proposes that when considering the methodologies and “the gradation of differences” between them, the first consideration should be to determine the basic philosophical assumptions the researcher(s) bring to the study. The second should be the types of research strategies used in the research, such as, for example, qualitative case studies (Creswell, 2009). Lastly, the specific methods employed in conducting these strategies should be considered, for example, collecting data qualitatively via instruments such as semi-structured interviews (Creswell, 2009). This chapter will take into consideration Creswell’s (2009) insights by presenting the study’s paradigm, methodology and methods.

It is in this consideration of research design and methodology, and practice-driven methods that the concept of post-methodologies arises. I am a visual artist, with a focus on performance art and embodied research, and I rely on artistic processes and creative output as methods of investigation. An important consideration then, regarding the selection of the appropriate methodology for this study was its practice-related component, and post-methodologies. Sometimes referred to as ‘(post)qualitative’ (Le Grange, 2018), or ‘post qualitative research’ (St. Pierre, 2011, 2013), refer to an event ‘after’ qualitative research, that is, a shift and break away from traditional qualitative research. Post-methodologies align with practice-driven research by emphasising the dynamic, often messy, context-specific nature of real-world practice. The focus is on the emergent, relational, and reflexive process of knowledge creation, moving beyond rigid, pre-defined methods. This chapter will unpack the notions of post-methodologies and post-qualitative research in more depth.

4.1 Research Paradigms

A research paradigm is an inclusive concept (including the presence of the researcher and their awareness of their presence in relation to their research) that captures the embodiment of theory and underlines the necessity of reflexivity in researchers (Collins & Stockton, 2018:2). It is the conceptual lens through which the researcher examines their research project to determine the types of research methods that will be used and how the data will be analysed (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017:26). While the paradigm provides the framework, the researcher chooses and applies a specific paradigm to their work, and as such, is an acknowledgement of the presence of the researcher. Paradigms are assumed to inform the design as well as the conduct of any research project (Creswell, 2014).

Creswell (2014) stresses that in planning a study, researchers must reflect on the philosophical worldview and assumptions that they bring to their study, as well as how the choice of research design is influenced by that worldview. Further, they should consider the specific methods and procedures of research that translate their approach into practice. This is a self-reflexive approach that is aware of the worldview and how it may influence their decisions and analysis. The research approach, he argues, will involve the intersection of philosophy, research design, and specific selected methods (Creswell, 2014). With this understanding, I begin my methodology chapter by considering the positioning of the researcher within the research process, and the effect of the researcher on the process of inquiry and on the considerations of knowledge generation. My researcher positionality describes both my worldview, as well as the position I have adopted regarding my research task (Holmes, 2020:1). It can be deduced then that self-reflection, which includes a reflexive approach to the position of myself in relation to my research, is a prerequisite and an ongoing process (Holmes, 2020:1).

This concept of reflexivity is one of the golden threads which run through this research study. Reflexivity enables “the researcher to identify, construct, critique, and articulate their positionality” (Holmes, 2020:1). This is of importance because it will assist the researcher in understanding and acknowledging how their lived experience and identity can influence their work, and although complete objectivity is impossible, they may create mitigating strategies to ensure the quality and trustworthiness of their findings. Sue Wilkinson (1988:494-495) defines reflexivity as “disciplined self-reflection”, which takes three forms: personal, functional and disciplinary reflexivity. Applying Wilkinson’s (1988:494-495) formulation, I firstly considered my own identity, interests and life experiences; secondly, I reflected on the nature of my research project to identify choices made; and finally, I considered the discipline’s origins and views.

A term that is linked to the notion of researcher reflexivity is the ‘research paradigm’, which defines a researcher’s worldview (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017:26). Although they are closely related, a research paradigm and a researcher’s worldview are not the same. A research paradigm is the framework a researcher uses for a specific study, but which is shaped by, but distinct from, the researcher's own, broader worldview. The researcher's unique worldview is the foundation of their beliefs, values, and philosophy, while the research paradigm is the specific application of that worldview to the research process itself.

4.1.1 Essential components of research paradigms

According to Denzin and Lincoln (2018:195), a research paradigm (as opposed to a worldview paradigm) encompasses four essential components: ethics (axiology), epistemology, ontology, and

methodology. By selecting a specific research paradigm, the researcher should be aware that it will be assumed that the study will be informed, and guided by “the assumptions, beliefs, norms and values” of the selected paradigm (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017:27). Ethics, in brief, asks, “How will I be as a moral person in the world?” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018:195). This question may be answered by “defining, evaluating and understanding concepts of right and wrong behaviour relating to the research” (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017:28). Consideration of ethics played an important role in this study as it involved human participants who had potentially suffered traumatic experiences. Epistemology asks, “How do I know the world?”, and “What is the relationship between the inquirer and the known?”, implying an ethical-moral stance toward the world and the self of the researcher (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018:195). In other words, to understand the epistemological element, the researcher needs to ask how we know what we know (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017:27). Ontology asks questions about the nature of existence, and the nature of the human being in the world (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018:195). Awareness and critical reflection on philosophical assumptions and considerations about the nature of reality are crucial to understanding how meaning is made of the data that was gathered by the research study (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017:27). Ontological inquiry in the research involves seeking out the foundational concepts which constitute the themes to be analysed. Integral to this are the analytic frames or techniques that are chosen for interpreting or reading the data. This is of particular importance as this study used thematic analysis as a tool to make sense of the meaning embedded in the collected research data (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017:27).

Finally, methodology focuses on “the best means for gaining knowledge” about that world (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018:195). The question asked regarding methodology is, how does the researcher go about obtaining the desired data which will result in the knowledge and understanding to enable them to answer their research question, and thereby make a contribution to their discipline’s knowledge and methodologies (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017:27)? Consideration of the analytic frames or techniques to be selected for interpreting or reading the data should be included in answering this question. It is necessary for a researcher to establish criteria for constructing the methodological approach best-suited to address the posed research problem. The research paradigm plays an important part in this as it establishes or informs the foundation for the study’s research and its methodologies. Once the research paradigm has been determined, an appropriate research plan can be created. The paradigm will assist in understanding how the theories and practices of the research project work.

Creswell (2014) highlights the four paradigms which are most widely discussed in current literature about research design. They are constructivism, postpositivism, transformativism and pragmatism. A brief consideration of each paradigm follows below, in an effort to motivate the criteria I chose to align my study with, and those I rejected. This consideration is included as I selected aspects from,

and built on, these paradigms. link with your study, motivating why this approach is relevant (and thus why you are discussing it).

4.1.2 Positivism and Postpositivism

I include a brief discussion of these paradigms as counterpoints to my selected paradigms. Positivism defines a worldview of research which is grounded in research methods that are considered scientific. Its assumptions are more suitable for quantitative than qualitative research (Creswell, 2014). It is the preferred paradigm for research which attempts to interpret observations in terms of facts or measurable entities, the aim of which is to provide explanations and to make predictions based on measurable outcomes (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017:30).

The outcomes of positivist research are underpinned by four assumptions: determinism, empiricism, parsimony, and generalisability (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017:30). What can be deduced about positivism and its concern with the impartial search for facts, by considering these assumptions, is that it is objectivist (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017:31). In addition, the theories being generated are considered universal, where law-like generalisations are made across contexts, and where context is considered unimportant (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017:31). The quantitative research methodology is advocated as the foundation for positivist research, with the positivistic worldview being a theoretical perspective closely linked to objectivism (Gray, 2004:17).

Objectivist epistemology holds that there is an objective reality that exists independently of consciousness (Gray, 2004:17). Research, therefore, involves discovering an objective truth (Gray, 2004:17). The relevance of this to my study is my critique of positivistic social sciences and colonial discourse, where the sciences were historically used to legitimise arguments for the exclusion and oppression of groups. The historic oppression of women, sexual minorities, and indigenous black nations, and people of colour (who were the subjects of positivistic science) is associated with this questionable 'objective truth'. The study addresses this prioritising and universalising of dominant male experiences, and the positioning of women, sexual minorities, and indigenous black nations, and people of colour, whilst critiquing the reliance on pre-existing categories (positivistic) which can perpetuate gender stereotypes. In addition, it interrogates the neglecting of subjective experience and the impact of power dynamics in research.

Postpositivism, on the other hand, speaks of the thinking after, or in reaction to, Positivism, and "it challenges the traditional notion of absolute truth of knowledge" (Cresswell, 2014). Although positivist elements remain in the paradigm, postpositivism acknowledges that absolute truth can never be found: a hypothesis is never proven, but instead, a failure to reject the hypothesis is established

(Cresswell, 2014). It also acknowledges that, while data, evidence and rational considerations shape knowledge, evidence established in research is always imperfect and fallible (Cresswell, 2014). However, what remains essential is objectivity, and therefore researchers must examine their methods and conclusions for bias (Cresswell, 2014). Although I concur with the need to address possibilities of bias, I do not subscribe to the notion of objectivity.

Constructivism is in reaction to positivism and postpositivism's claims of objectivism, and may be considered anti-positivism. According to Gray (2004:17), it rejects positivism's views on knowledge, and instead argues that meaning is constructed not discovered. Whereas positivism is associated with objectivity, so constructivism is associated with subjectivity. My research study acknowledges my subjectivity, the importance of context, and seeks the rich, unique, thick descriptions of individual lived experiences. It argues that researchers cannot make the claims of positivism when studying the behaviour and actions of humans because its assumptions of linearity, universality and predictability in human behaviour is too simplistic and does not acknowledge the role of human subjectivity and agency. Whilst acknowledging my own subjectivity as auto-ethnographic researcher and participant observer, I did, however, take note of the need to mitigate researcher bias, and the application of academic rigour to my research processes. This will be elaborated on later.

4.1.3 Constructivism

Constructivism is typically viewed as an approach of qualitative research, with the essential premise being that reality is socially constructed (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017:33). In constructivism³⁷ the researchers focus on the social, where even the bodies of knowledge developed over human history are conceived of as "social constructs that do not reflect an objective external world" (Costantino, 2008:118).

A primary undertaking of the paradigm is to understand the subjective world of human experience (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017:33). This type of research is aligned with the thinking that individuals develop subjective meanings of their experiences, and these in turn determine their understanding of the world (Creswell, 2014). These meanings are varied and multiple, and as a result, researchers using this paradigm tend to search for the complexity rather than narrowing the subjective meanings into a

³⁷ Yan-Yan Chen, Daniel Shek and Fei-Fei Bu (2011:130) differentiate between the terms, constructivism and constructionism, by arguing that social constructionists see reality as a product of social process while social constructivists, focusing on the individual, view reality as subjectively defined. Variations of constructivism are: psychological constructivism (knowledge is not acquired but rather is constructed); social constructivism (the world is the product of human definition and interpretation shaped by cultural and historical contexts) and radical constructivism (the external world is constructed solely by our individual minds and is perceived uniquely) (Costantino, 2008:118-119).

few categories of ideas (Creswell, 2014). These subjective meanings are negotiated and contextualised socially, historically and geographically. As such, it is argued that they are not simply imprinted on individuals but that “they are formed through interaction with others and through historical and cultural norms that operate in individuals’ lives” (Creswell, 2014). The paradigm assumes a subjectivist epistemology (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017:31). The relevance to this study is that researchers thus consider the processes of human interaction, whilst focusing on “the specific contexts in which people live, in order to understand the historical and cultural settings” (Creswell, 2014). In addition, the researchers recognise and acknowledge their own presence and impact on the research, that their own backgrounds and lived experiences shape their interpretations and understanding of the research data, while informed by their interactions with participants (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017:31).

In terms of methods, constructivist qualitative research studies typically use participant observation and interviewing for the purposes of data generation (Costantino, 2008:119). The researcher aims to understand a phenomenon from the perspective of those experiencing it, with their understanding being co-constructed with the participants through their mutual interaction within the research setting (Costantino, 2008:119). This description of constructivist methods strongly aligns with this research study’s aims. The processes of the human interaction of the former conscripts were considered, whilst focusing on the specific contexts in which they lived, this was done in order to understand the historical and cultural settings, namely Apartheid South Africa and the SADF. As a result, constructivism was a research paradigm I included in my research design.

4.1.4 Transformativism

In the transformativist paradigm, “the central focus of the research effort is on uncovering agency” which may be hidden by social practices, with the possibility of leading to not only an arising-of-awareness, but liberation and emancipation (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017:35). Uncovering agency and an arising-of-awareness are central tenets and/or objectives of my research approach. In addition, transformativist research places central importance on the study of the lives and experiences of groups that have been traditionally marginalised and/or oppressed (Creswell, 2014). Some of the areas of focus are gender, race, ethnicity, disability, sexual orientation and socioeconomic class, where inequalities result in skewed power relationships.

This study, whilst investigating societal constructs and power relationships, also interrogates research approaches, methodologies and methods because research methods are and have historically been complicit in discourses of power and knowledge. Therefore, of further interest to my research

approach is transformativism's assumption that the researcher will proceed collaboratively³⁸ in order not to further marginalise the participants as a result of the research inquiry (Creswell, 2014). The transformativist worldview holds that research inquiry needs to be informed by political contexts and intertwined with a political social change agenda in order to confront social oppression (Creswell, 2014). This intimates that the research contains an action agenda for the reform of social issues such as inequality, oppression, domination, suppression, and alienation. This is reform that aims at changing the lives of the participants, the institutions in which the individuals work or live, as well as the researcher's life (Creswell, 2014). Creswell's (2014) observations regarding transformativism hold true for this research study and its aims and objectives.

While I do not claim marginalisation or victimhood for myself and my white, male research participants, my study does focus on the raising-awareness of gendered institutions in the hope that some sort of social transformation, or shifts in perspectives that recognise the adverse effects some practices within such institutions might cause, and this is in line with the paradigm's 'action agenda'. I acknowledge that we, the former conscripts, are white and male, with all the privileges that are associated with that race and gender in the former apartheid state, a formerly segregated, patriarchal society. However, there was a disparity in power relationships within the gendered military institution we were conscripted into, as my research about such institutions have shown. This is discussed in detail in the analysis section but briefly, there existed a strictly hierarchical structure discipline and order were defined by its chain of command. This established a clear line of authority from top to bottom, supported not only by military law but state law. In addition, some of the institution's traditions and informal practices perpetuated inequality and discrimination. Further, as the data collected by this study shows, compulsory conscription had a negative impact on some conscripts, carried into old age.

Although I have distinguished the transformative paradigm from postpositivism and constructivism, Mertens (2007:424) notes that boundaries between paradigms may be permeable. This thinking hints at a more flexible, pragmatic approach to research, such as pragmatism advocates.

³⁸ In fact, the participants may assist the study by collecting and analysing data in an engaged participatory role. As such, the paradigm assumes a transactional epistemology, that is, what constitutes acceptable knowledge practices for the purposes of the study, as the researcher interacts with the participants (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017:35).

4.1.5 Pragmatism

Pragmatism believes that “it is not possible to access the ‘truth’ about the real world solely by virtue of a single scientific method” (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017:35). What it argues is that there is a necessity for a worldview which provides methods of research that are the most appropriate for studying the phenomenon at hand (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017:35). In the pragmatic paradigm researchers emphasise the research problem, using all available approaches to understand the problem, rather than focusing first and foremost on the research methods (Creswell, 2014). It is a paradigm which allows for a more practical and pluralistic approach using a combination of methods (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017:35). Researchers use what will work best depending on the situation and context. As such, it is not committed to any one paradigm or method. Pragmatic researchers believe that research always occurs in social, historical and political contexts (Creswell, 2014). Using a combination of methods, it is argued, will “shed light on the actual behaviour of participants, the beliefs that stand behind those behaviours, and the consequences that are likely to follow from different behaviours” (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017:35). This was an objective of my own research.

The epistemology of this paradigm is relational, as it advocates that the relationships in research are best determined by what the researcher deems appropriate to a particular study (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017:35). Pragmatism allows for the consideration of multiple methods, as well as different world views, and assumptions. As such is often seen as “the philosophical underpinning for mixed methods studies and pluralistic approaches to derive knowledge about a problem” (Creswell, 2014). It views mixed methods, that is, incorporating both quantitative and qualitative methods, as the most pragmatic way to understand human behaviour (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017:35). My research, it should be noted, did not attempt to generate quantitative data and as such does not use quantitative methods.

Nevertheless, my approach has been informed by the notion of pragmatism, and selecting from various paradigms, and methodologies, for those tools which are best suited for my interdisciplinary research study. This approach also allowed for the introduction of post-methodologies³⁹ which will be defined and discussed shortly.

As a result of this consideration of post-methodologies, I also included the interpretivistic paradigm. Alan Bryman (2012:712) defines interpretivism as “an epistemological position that requires the social researcher to grasp the subjective meaning of social action”. It argues against “the positivistic notion of a passive, mechanistic and reactive human being” (Chen, Shek & Bu, 2011:129). This is

³⁹ Post-methodologies question traditional research assumptions, such as the idea of a single, universal method or a single truth. Instead, they embrace fluidity, complexity, and a more experimental, emergent approach to inquiry. These approaches are less about following a fixed method and more about creating a process that is unique to the research question itself.

something which my research study advocates. Interpretivism seeks to understand human action and behaviour rather than to explain it. Defenders of positivism attempt to explain, holding that the purpose of any science is to offer “causal explanations of social, behavioural, and physical phenomena”, whereas interpretative inquirers, on the other hand, do not see social and educational research as ‘scientific’ in the conventional sense of that term (Schwandt, 2000:191). Social science researchers emphasise that “the qualitative understanding of any phenomenon is based in making meaning of specific experiences and, therefore, is inherently an interpretive practice” (Bhattacharya, 2008:464). The rationalisation behind this is that all social research is interpretive⁴⁰ (Bhattacharya, 2008:464).

For the purposes of my study, I concur because my study focuses on the lived experiences and social context of the former conscripts, and how these shaped their reality. Further, because ontologically, the former conscripts’ realities are multiple and relative, and the knowledge acquired in this discipline is socially constructed (meaning making) rather than objectively determined, it was essential that I, the (social) researcher, in particular, clarified my epistemological and methodological attributes due to the complexities this type of research involves. In order to understand human actions and behaviour, an intentional stance is required.

It is through this systematic consideration of paradigm approaches that I have attempted to shed some light on my decision-making processes, and underpinning my own intentional stance. My approach began with pragmatism and its flexible, pragmatic approach. This empowered me, as the researcher, to include transformativism, whilst acknowledging the tenets of constructivism-constructionism, as well as interpretivism. Finally, in selecting my paradigm and methodology I also considered the epistemology of my study, thereby focusing on the validity of the knowledge my research produced, and the ways it went about gaining it. Equally it focused on the knowledge/experiences of my participants, how they acquired it, and its effect on them.

⁴⁰ Interpretivism and constructivism are often used interchangeably or linked together. Equally, these approaches also all critique positivism and propose a change to the approach of the quantitative-qualitative divide by considering the use of mixed methods. Interpretivism, I would argue, makes a similar assertion to constructivism, with the use of the term ‘to interpret’ rather than ‘to construct’ being the chief difference.

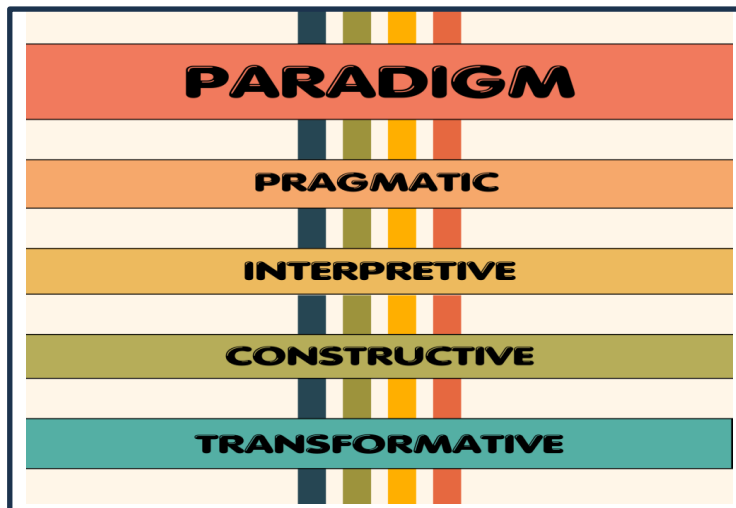


Figure 11: This research study's paradigm. Design by Swanepoel (2025).

By establishing this study's research paradigm, a foundational framework that guided every decision, from formulating questions and designing the study, to collecting and interpreting data, was provided. Further, it assisted by defining the researcher's philosophical stance regarding ontology and epistemology, as well as the appropriate methodology, thereby ensuring a logical and consistent structure for the entire research process.

4.2 Research Methodologies

As has been discussed, quantitative research is typically associated with a positivist and objectivist stance, while qualitative research is associated with a constructionist and subjectivist one (Bryman, 2008:13). However, qualitative researchers now adopt diverse approaches which may range from positivist to constructionist. Quantitative researchers now include qualitative methods within their approaches. Despite this, it should be kept in mind that the qualitative methodology arose to provide a more suitable approach, as compared to a quantitative approach, to the complexities of the study of humans, their social worlds, and their multiple realities. My study focuses on humans (former SADF conscripts), their social worlds (the SADF and apartheid South Africa), and their multiple realities (individual lived experiences in institutional spaces). Therefore, as I have argued, the qualitative methodology is appropriate for this study. However, as indicated under the paradigms' heading, my approach is a pragmatic one, and therefore, my methodology includes post-methodologies, which while falling under the qualitative umbrella, add further complexity to my selected methodology.

4.2.1 Qualitative research

Saldaña (2011:3) defines qualitative research as “an umbrella term for a wide variety of approaches to, and methods for, the study of social life” A qualitative approach, guided by interpretivism, views ‘reality’ as multiple and dynamic, and is something this study subscribes to (Dawadi, Shrestha & Giri, 2021:33). Creswell (2009) describes this methodology as a process of research which involves emerging questions and procedures. Data is typically collected in the participant’s setting, while data analysis inductively builds from particulars to general themes, with the researcher making interpretations of the meaning of the data (Creswell; 2009). Qualitative data is descriptive information that captures observable qualities and characteristics not quantifiable by numbers. The qualitative research methodology as a result emphasises an inductive approach⁴¹ to the relationship between theory and research, in which the emphasis is placed on the generation of general conclusions or new theories (Bryman, 2012:36). Inference is an assertion made on the basis of something else observed; an inductive approach then is the establishment of facts, derived from a body of observations, on which theories, concepts or principles are later built, moving from specifics to generalisations (Gray, 2004:400).

Saldaña (2011:3) describes the goals of qualitative research as multiple, depending on the purpose of the particular project. As such it may incorporate multiple realities, and multiple aspects and contexts. The qualitative methodology can be applied in interdisciplinary studies with a wide range of epistemological viewpoints, research methods, and interpretive techniques of understanding human experiences, and therefore the methodology uses a wide and multifaceted range of data collection methods, and approaches (Saldaña, 2011:4; Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). As Sharon Lockyer (2008:706) concludes, despite their differing theoretical assumptions and methodological preferences, these disciplines and sub-disciplines are united in their reasons for employing qualitative research. The reasons are that they wish to identify, analyse, and understand patterned behaviours and social processes (Lockyer, 2008:706). What is notable regarding this type of research is that the close relationship that exists between the qualitative researcher and the participants in this approach makes it possible for the participant to contribute to shaping the research (Daniel, 2016:93).

While the qualitative research focus is on persons’ lives, lived experiences, behaviours, emotions and feelings, as well as subjective meaning (Rahman, 2017:103), it also importantly views human thought and behaviour within a social context (Daniel, 2016:93). The research approach produces the “thick

⁴¹ In the inductive approach, data is collected, analysed, and then a conclusion or theory is developed. In contrast, in the deductive approach, usually an existing theoretical framework or model is tested. The inductive approach is typically used in Qualitative research, while the deductive approach is typically used in Quantitative research.

description” of participants’ feelings, opinions, and experiences; and interprets the meanings of their actions (Denzin, 1989). The term or concept, “thick description”, has become synonymous with qualitative research and is arguably one of its greatest strengths. It originates with Gilbert Ryle (1971), a British metaphysical philosopher, for whom it involves understanding and absorbing the context of a situation or behaviour (Ponterotto, 2006:539). It also involves ascribing present and future intentionality to that behaviour (Ponterotto, 2006:539). However, it is Clifford Geertz’s (1973:6) use of the term in his academic writings and research regarding ethnography, which promoted its acceptance by qualitative researchers worldwide (Ponterotto, 2006:539-540). Geertz (1973:2) describes it as a “kind of intellectual effort”. This “intellectual effort” involves the ethnographer inscribing social discourse; which, in so doing, “turns it from a passing event, which exists only in its own moment of occurrence, into an account, which exists in its inscriptions and can be reconsulted” (Geertz, 1973:10). Geertz (1973:12) goes on to add that meaning can be given to these “passing events”, making it “possible to think not only realistically and concretely about them, but, what is more important, creatively and imaginatively with them”.

Norman Denzin’s (1989) elaboration of “thick description” introduced Geertz’s (1973) anthropological term and Ryle’s (1971) philosophical concept to the disciplines of sociology, communications, and humanities. In his classic book on *Interpretive Interactionism*, Denzin devotes a full chapter to elaborating on the concept of “thick description.” describing it as follows:

It presents detail, context, emotion, and the webs of social relationships that join persons to one another. Thick description evokes emotionality and self-feelings. It inserts history into experience. It establishes the significance of an experience, or the sequence of events, for the person or persons in question. In thick description, the voices, feelings, actions, and meanings of interacting individuals are heard (Denzin, 1989:83).

Such a qualitative research approach has the potential to provide abundant data about real life people, their situations, and perspectives (Daniel, 2016:93). Meaning is then most often constructed on the basis of people’s perception of their worlds, experiences, and interaction with events and circumstances in their lives; this is meaning made by the people, and/or the meaning made from the collected data (Xiong, 2022:958).

However, what are considered the major benefits of qualitative research by certain researchers, are also considered major disadvantages by others. Notably, the lack of the use of quantitative processes such as the statistical, mathematical, or numerical analysis of data collected, makes it difficult and often impossible to simplify findings and observations. By applying quantitative processes, it is argued by some that it presents objective accounts of the world and develops descriptions and

explanations in the form of universal laws (Xiong, 2022:956). This is because quantitative research, as described by Martyn Denscombe (1998:173-176), is a “researcher detachment” research approach. Quantitative researchers argue the advantages to this *researcher remove* (my term) ensures that the objectivity of the researcher is not compromised and that it ensures respondent anonymity. It embodies a view of social reality as an external, objective reality (Bryman, 2012:36). However, this ‘remove’ quantitative researchers attempt to achieve by operating as detached observers is, I would argue, firstly, impossible to achieve completely, and secondly, likely to inhibit the establishing of rapport, trust and intimate relationships with research participants (Xiong, 2022:957). This causes tremendous difficulties when probing into phenomena within its context as the researcher is distant and uninvolved with the subjects or participants. There is a likelihood of possible oversimplification with a failure to develop a more profound understanding of underlying meanings and explanations involved in participants’ viewpoints (Xiong, 2022:957). The findings may reflect the point of view of the researcher rather than that of the participants, which, one might argue, introduces the possibility of bias, and is contrary to quantitative research’s aim of objectivity. I have attempted to counter this possibility by applying a number of measures to minimise bias and ensure academic rigour. One of the major measures is linking my themes for the purposes of analysis of data to accepted theories of gender and institutions.

Another critique of qualitative research is that there are also limitations regarding researchers’ interpretations of collected data such as thick descriptions (Xiong, 2022:958). These interpretations can be affected by researchers’ own personal experience and knowledge (Xiong, 2022:958). The argument is that researchers impose, even unconsciously, their meaning and understanding of a situation to a given time and place to other people, the participants (Daniel, 2016:93). This bias may be further exacerbated by the researchers’ failure to consider their contextual influence on the assessment (Rahman, 2016:105). Some of these contextual influences might be culture, gender, race, or ethnicity. As a result, policy-makers, academic institutions and peers may give low credibility to results produced from the qualitative approach. Other issues or disadvantages are the smaller sample sizes of most qualitative studies, resulting in the limited ability to, firstly, generalise the results to the larger population; and secondly, to replicate the study. These two issues are important objectives of quantitative research, and this often results in qualitative research being regarded as ‘unscientific’. The qualitative researcher must keep these critiques in mind and therefore reflexivity extremely crucial.

Nevertheless, what is significant for my methods and research design choices, other than the objectives and contexts of the study, are those aspects that foster rapport with research participants, that is, subjectivity and engagement/involvement rather than objectivity and researcher detachment. It is precisely my insider knowledge that provides an advantage, whilst still acknowledging the

drawbacks I have noted. Although, due to ethical considerations, I maintained some distance and had no face-to-face contact with the participants, when analysing the data they supplied, the fact that I was a fellow former-conscript was advantageous.

Having made the decision that the pragmatic paradigm was the best suited approach for my research study, then a combination of qualitative and post-qualitative methodologies was deemed the most appropriate for its purposes.

4.2.2 Post-methodologies

Post-qualitative research emerges from key tenets of postmodernism which critiques grand narratives, objectivity, and has an emphasis on self-reflexivity and a rejection of humanist assumptions. Maureen McHugh (2014:143) posits that life is multifaceted and fragmented, and a postmodern position challenges researchers to recognize that there are multiple meanings for an event, as well as multiple perspectives on a person's life. According to McHugh (2014:143), "from the postmodern position all knowledge, including that derived from social science research, is socially produced and therefore can never be value free". McHugh (2014:143) describes this postmodern or post-qualitative approach, as the third epistemological position. This is a further approach, or way of thinking, that this research study includes, that of the post-qualitative researcher, and an alternative approach to knowledge-building and the presentation thereof.

From the post-qualitative perspective, the ways of knowing and representing are called into question in order to open up spaces for study, challenging the very concepts through which we perceive reality and that constitute us as researchers... A post-qualitative research position is always multifaceted and woven from theoretical diversity, and as such it does not have a single perspective nor does it articulate a single proposal, nor can it be described in an orderly manner in a handbook on research (Aberasturi-Apraiz, Gorospe & Martínez-Arbelaiz, 2020).

I believe that this quote encapsulates the essence of my own study, which integrates research with practical activity. My approach, as such, is postmodern because it challenges traditional, objective research by emphasising the researcher's role in shaping knowledge. My post-qualitative research acknowledges and pays attention to lived sensations, embodiment, and the ways bodies participate in and shape research practices. Simultaneously, it uses the artist's creative practice as a starting point to generate new knowledge and understanding about the practice itself, including a creative artefact representative of the research study.

The post-methodologies I introduced and applied to this research are what make the research transformative. This includes my auto-ethnographic approach and my focus on practice-driven research. However, there is also the performative element, with the performative in the research (a type of speech act) calling something into being. Although I am a performance artist, and have created a performance art piece informed by this study, performative (auto-ethnographic) research has additional and other meanings which do not necessarily connote performance (art). These could be a raising-of-awareness, cathartic acts of contrition or testimony, or creating new ways of looking, interpreting and representing knowledge, all of which are elements of my study. Most notably, in the case of this study it is used as a method of visual archiving.

Jane Bacon (2013:113) when describing Della Pollock's (1998) conceptualisation of performative writing, speaks of how the primacy of rational thinking processes "press the body into the shadows". Her premise is simply this: by speaking and writing the 'doing', Pollock may be writing 'performance' but, more importantly, she is giving primacy to the experience and, by default, to things of and from the (her) body (Bacon, 2013:113). As a result of the presence of the situated body, my own and the participants', in my study, as well as the various layers of performance and performativity, primacy of the experience, and therefore the body, is something I have intentionally attempted to do. The active historical and present body is at the centre of the research I have conducted and presented. Given the inextricable interrelationship between the body and gender, and (performance) artmaking and the body, as well as the situatedness of the researcher, this study should also be described as embodied research.

Le Grange (2018:2) notes that in order to grasp subjective experience and thereby understand human actions, an intentional stance is required by researchers. It is his belief that this 'stance' results in a further break within qualitative research itself, namely, (post)qualitative research (Le Grange, 2018:3). The argument is that scientific research, associated with the concepts of rationality, objectivity, and universal truth, places constraints on qualitative research (Le Grange, 2018:3). He champions alternatives to methodological orthodoxy and conventional ways of knowing, and (post)qualitative research, with the emphasis on critical engagement with qualitative methods and the awareness of their role in discourses of power and knowledge. (Le Grange, 2018:11). This resonates with me as an academic and artist, and as an approach to this study. This thinking is presented in some detail by John Law (2004) in *After Method: Mess in Social Science Research*. Law (2004:2) discusses what happens when social science attempts to describe things that are complex, diffuse and 'messy'. His premise is that if researchers want to think about the "messes of reality" then they will need to teach themselves to think, to practice, to relate, and to know, in new ways (Law, 2004:2). Researchers will need to teach themselves to gain knowledge of some of the realities of the world by using methods that are unusual to, or unknown in, social science (Law, 2004:2).

Law (2004:4), whilst calling for “a way of thinking about method that is broader, looser, more generous”, acknowledges that the ‘social science method’ is already “variegated and heterogeneous in its claims”, and even more so in its practices. The point he makes though, is that the problem is not so much a lack of variety in the practice of method, as it is the hegemonic and hierarchical pretensions of certain versions or accounts of methods over others (Law, 2004:4). For Law (2004:4) these standard methods, while often being extremely good at what they do, are “badly adapted to the study of the ephemeral, the indefinite and the irregular”. According to Lather (2013:635), (post)qualitative research might be viewed as a “methodology-to-come”, using postmodern theories to open up concepts associated with qualitative inquiry. As she asserts, “there is no methodological instrumentality to be unproblematically learned” (Lather 2013, 635). The methods of (post)qualitative research instead “unfold through intra-action with the world” (Le Grange, 2018:8).

Elizabeth St. Pierre (2014:3) believes that by putting aside conventional humanist qualitative methodology, researchers might actually use the productive analyses provided by, what she refers to as, the “posts”, resulting in work that some are calling the “new empiricism”, for example, Clough’s (2009) *The New Empiricism: Affect and Sociological Method*. St. Pierre points out that at one stage the Qualitative research methodology itself was considered radical, describing it as follows:

Instead of reading statistical data collected in surveys and experiments in which people and what they thought and felt and did were disappeared in numbers in charts and graphs, we retrieved the lived body—we wanted people live, in person, present. We wanted to talk with them face-to-face; to see, first-hand, what their faces and bodies looked like when they described their everyday lived experiences. We wanted to see their pain. We wanted to witness their oppression first hand. We wanted to laugh and weep with them when they told us their stories. We wanted to hear their voices which came from the depths, the core of their inner beings. We wanted to watch them in their natural settings as they really were. We wanted to get to the ground of truth, to the reality of their everyday lives. We longed for our own experiences of “being there” with them in the field, being present, being witnesses in the moment with them. Then, if we’d carefully and systematically captured and recorded that authentic reality, we could reproduce it, represent it in words, in thick description, so that others could read our texts and be there too (St. Pierre, 2014:7).

These words capture St. Pierre’s optimism and enthusiasm at the possibilities that she envisioned the qualitative research approach opening. However, it is her belief that the qualitative methodology has now lost much of its early radical possibility, and she signals her concerns and her desire for something different by using the phrases, “post qualitative research” and “post inquiry” (St. Pierre, 2011; St. Pierre, 2014).

Brad Haseman (2006:1) echoes this sentiment, whilst focusing in particular on the scenario of practice-led researchers. He argues that they struggle to formulate methodologies within the binaries of quantitative and qualitative methodologies which are sympathetic to the nature of their research (Haseman, 2006:1). It is his belief that as a result there is a third methodological distinction emerging, performative research; “post inquiry” (Haseman, 2006:5). For the purposes of this research study I used the term, post-qualitative research. Performative research, considered to be part of post-qualitative research because it focuses on embodied, relational, and performative aspects of knowledge creation, as opposed to more traditional representational methods, forms part of the selected methodology and methods for this research study.

4.2.3 Performative research

The concept of performativity was introduced in this research study when discussing Butler’s (1988) theory regarding gender. Butler implicitly draws from the linguistic theories of John Austin and Jacques Derrida in her formulations of gender identity (Salih, 2007:56). The central aspect of Austin’s (1979) claim is that “certain speech utterances do not just describe or report the world, but actually have a force whereby they perform the action to which they refer” (Bolt, 2008:3). In Butler’s theorising, Austin’s frame of reference is expanded to demonstrate how performativity includes bodily acts (Bolt, 2008:4). Their concept is that gender proves to be performative as it constitutes the identity it is purported to be (Salih, 2007:56; Butler, 1990: 24–5). Gender in this conceptualisation, is an act that brings into being what it names (Salih, 2007:56). In the context of gender, a ‘masculine’ man or a ‘feminine’ woman are constructed by their naming, and by reiterative performance (Salih, 2007:56).

Gender identities, it is argued, are “constructed and constituted by language, which means that there is no gender identity that precedes language” (Salih, 2007:56). Haseman (2007) posits that when research findings are presented as performative utterances, “there is a double articulation with practice that brings into being what it names”. Performatives are not reportage; rather than merely describing, they enact real effects in the world (Bolt, 2008:4). Performative implies that research can do more than simply document, report, test or prove, but can, through performative utterances, have a transformative effect, even if it is only a raising-of-awareness within the readers, researcher and participants. In this there exists the potential for activism, of research which not only generates knowledge, but is engaged with, and addresses, problems faced by the research subjects. This reflects one of the aims of performative research, to initiate or engineer positive change. In this sense there are points of connection between the transformative paradigm and performative research.

Conquergood (1998:33) emphasises performance as a counterbalance to the weight and prestige given to texts in the academy. By text, he is referring to both text as a metaphor for conceptualising social reality, and actual texts such as books and articles as representations of knowledge (Conquergood, 1998:33). Conquergood (1998:33) provides this emphasis because he believes that the hegemony of the inscribed word is insufficiently challenged, even in performance-based ethnographies. He notes that even “the most radical deconstructions” finally take place on the page, thus consolidating and entrenching the text-bound structure of the academy (Conquergood, 1998:33). Nevertheless, the move from “scholarship about performance to scholarship as performance” strikes at the heart of such issues of scholarly authority (Conquergood, 1998:33). I believe that my research, as performance art practice, encompasses both scholarship about performance and scholarship as performance.

Law (2004), Haseman (2006), St. Pierre (2011, 2014), Lather (2013), McHugh (2014), and Le Grange (2018), amongst a growing number of academic researchers, articulate resistance to the textual fundamentalism of the academy. We might consider that knowledge in the West is in fact, scriptocentric⁴² (Conquergood, 1998:26). Western scriptocentric knowledge, or textualism, privileges distance and detachment, which are attributes at the core of the quantitative methodology and the so-called ‘hard sciences’ (Denzin, 2003:11). If we consider participants’ experiences, then it is with textual inscription that researchers attempt to rescue meaning from such ephemeral events (Conquergood, 1998:31). Further, even the performance element in academia is mostly recorded or reported as text. The aim is to make it an “inspectable”, and as a result, a respectable, form of knowledge, distilled or separated from situational contingencies (Conquergood, 1998:31). However, Denzin (2003a:11) points out that we need a social science model that is performative, with an acknowledgement of the body and embodiment being key here.

Conquergood’s (1998:26) call for performance studies scholars to continue to critically engage the textualist bias of Western intellectual systems is being taken up by performative researchers amongst others. He does, however, qualify this call, stating that by deploying performance as a method, the aim should be to not necessarily discard the textualism that pervades the dominant regimes of knowledge, but instead to decentre it (Conquergood, 1998:26). Instead of endeavouring to rescue the ‘said’ from the ‘saying’, a performance paradigm struggles to recuperate the ‘saying’ from the ‘said’, to put mobility, action, and agency back into play within scholarship, and more specifically, research

⁴² I experienced a contrast to this scriptocentricism whilst working with the two Bushmen communities, or tribes as they were known, who were at the centre of the Omega base where I served during my military service. They utilise pictographs and petroglyphs as a way of visually recording their lived events and their history. Records of these may be found in the caves and rock walls of, in particular, the Drakensberg and Lesotho mountains, and the Northern Cape. However, the majority of their recording is conducted via oral and performative storytelling. Knowledge and history is recorded, shared and transferred in this manner.

methodology (Conquergood, 1998:31). In this conceptualisation, the 'saying' is the 'doing' or performing, whilst the 'said' is the 'done' or the performance (Denzin, 2003a:11).

For Haseman (2006:5) performative research is that third methodological distinction mentioned earlier. Haseman (2006:4) observes that, "constrained by the capacity of words to capture the nuances and subtleties of human behaviour, some researchers have used other symbolic forms to represent their claims to knowledge". In performative research, research findings are made in presentational forms, that is, symbolic data in the material forms of practice (Haseman, 2006:5). This could be in the forms of sound, including music; of images, both still and moving; of live performance; or of digital code⁴³ for example, to blur the lines between the physical and the digital (Haseman, 2006:5). Alongside quantitative (symbolic numbers) and qualitative (symbolic words), in this third category of research, the symbolic data works performatively, in other words, the saying becomes the doing (Haseman, 2006:6). As such, it is argued, "it not only expresses the research, but in that expression becomes the research itself" (Haseman, 2006:6).

Haseman (2006:3) describes this as being the result of "a radical push to not only place practice within the research process, but to lead research through practice". Examples of this are, notably, practice-based and practice-led research, what I refer to as practice-driven research, which will be discussed in detail later. It is his belief that the host of practice-led research strategies, methods of data collection, and forms of reporting which have been incorporated under the qualitative banner, has over-stretched the limits of the 'qualitative research' category (Haseman, 2006:5). That third methodological distinction mentioned earlier, (post)qualitative research, or an example of Lather's (2013:635) "methodology-to-come", is performative research.

As performance artist and performative researcher, I have not only theorised bodies by exploring the cultural and gendered position of the bodies of the former conscripts, or conducted archival analysis of these bodies and their corporeal experience, but I have also undertaken intercorporeal⁴⁴ exchanges by sharing my research through my body. This is embodied research as I use the body as a primary tool for research, and include both researcher and participants foregrounding our lived, embodied experiences to explore our experiences of cultural practices within a gendered institution.

⁴³ The pervasiveness of Artificial Intelligence and the accompanying rapid advancement of technology are likely to result in exponential growth in this area.

⁴⁴ Briefly, intercorporeality focuses on the relation between one's own body and that of other(s) to illuminate intersubjectivity and social understanding in an alternative way (Tanaka, 2015:455).

4.2.4 Performative (auto)ethnographic research and embodied research

Tami Spry (2001:710) defines auto-ethnography as “a self-narrative that critiques the situatedness of self with others in social contexts”, and describes auto-ethnographic performance as an embodied methodological praxis. This ‘situatedness of self with others in social contexts’ suggests the complexity of post-qualitative research, as for the purposes of this study the ‘self’ is both researcher and participant. The title of my research title includes the phrase, *embodied storytelling*, referring to not only the participants’ description of their lived experiences within the SADF but also my own. As Laura Ellingson (2017:1) notes in her book, *Embodiment in Qualitative Research*:

In ethnographic sites, bodies encounter each other as warm, material manifestations of ourselves; bodies do not wait quietly outside while a core ethnographic self interacts with the equally disembodied minds of participants. Nor do free-floating brains analyse data independently of the fingers (or voices or eyes using adaptive technologies) that turn pages, press keys, and wield pens. Likewise, representation is an embodied act; researchers write or type (or draw or paint or photograph or dance) and discover new meanings even as we move across the page, stage, canvas, or screen.

In attempting to identify any fields of research in which the body itself, that is, embodiment, the experience and material fact of having a body, is the central object of focus, Ben Spatz (2017:2-5) lists the methodologies of ‘action research’, ‘artistic research’, ‘practice research’ and ‘performance research’. He goes on to propose that ‘embodied research’ is a methodology which relates to all of these, and that the primary objects of such investigation are the possibilities and potentials of bodies, individually or collectively (Spatz, 2017:3-5). Spry’s (2001:709) article reflects her continuing process of integrating the ‘doing’ of auto-ethnography with the critical reflection upon auto-ethnography as a methodological praxis. This ‘to-and-fro’ process is also integral to this study.

Performative auto-ethnography includes the researcher’s body in the research of others and their bodies. It is informed by research on personal narratives, though not necessarily of the researcher. However, in this research study my own lived experiences are relevant, not only because of the insight they brought to the analysis of the data provided by the former conscripts, but because I also have the embodied experience of completing the interview questions as a participant. Our shared experiences are also likely to have informed why I chose this topic and research method. As Langellier (1999:208) notes, a story of the body is told through the body in these interview transcripts, which makes the cultural (and societal and ideological) conflict concrete. Equally, we former conscripts experienced these conflicts in / by our human bodies. In this way the socio-politically inscribed body is situated as a central site of meaning-making, and can also become an instrument of inquiry and research (Spry, 2001:710). This “dynamic and dialectical relation of the text and body” is

a major theme in auto-ethnographic praxes (Spry, 2001:711). As the researcher, I was acutely aware of the tension existing between the textual recording of my research and the performing body, my own and that of the participants which are absent (Gray & Malins, 2004:22). In addition, there is also a performative aspect to how interviewees and I responded to the questions. I base this, not only on my own experience of completing the questionnaire, but also the responses of the former conscripts.

A concept that is integral to this type of research is the role of the researcher as participant-observer. Participant observation occurs in qualitative research when a researcher both collects data and becomes involved in the site of the study (Gray, 2004:403). In some cases, the researcher may actually be part of the focus group being studied. As in the case of this research study, I am both researcher and participant. My focus is the group of former SADF conscripts of which I too am a member. This allows me a unique insider perspective, with valuable insights, and a deep understanding of this particular social context and experience. Acknowledgement of my subjective self and my lived experience, of my situatedness, is an integral part of this research study. This includes the past (recalling my memories and experiences) and the present (as reflecting on the past, and as researcher conducting the research). However, although I participated as conscript then, and which I shared with the former conscripts, I did not participate with the interview participants in any synchronous manner, within the same physical space.

In performative auto-ethnography, the living body and the subjective self of the researcher are recognized as a salient part of the research process, with the socio-historical implications of the researcher being reflected upon (Denzin, 1997:xv). Auto-ethnography allows the researcher to reflect on the subjective self in context with others as part of an academic pursuit of knowledge, as well as on the effect of the subjective self on the data gathered and analysed: here researcher/past conscript's embodied experience continues to play a role. As a result, performative auto-ethnography therefore may be considered a critically reflexive methodology. The methodology includes the 'reflective practitioner', the 'reflective practice', and 'reflection in action' (Gray & Malins, 2004:22). Reflective practice here, it is argued, attempts to unite research and practice, and thought and action, into "a framework for inquiry which involves practice, and which acknowledges the particular and special knowledge of the practitioner" (Gray & Malins, 2004:22). Reflexivity is paramount for the purpose of the practice-driven research approach I have selected.

4.2.5 Practice-driven research

Haseman (2006:3-6) argues that performative researchers may be considered to be researchers who carry out what is known as 'practice-led research', constructing experiential starting points in order to initiate practice. The term 'practice' refers to the production and acquisition of knowledge through the

doing, through action (Liggett, 2020:10). It may also be referred to as studio practice, as the term relates to artists and their creative processes. Haseman (2006:3-6) describes 'practice-led' research as research where the act of creative practice itself is the primary method of investigation. Importantly, rather than solely relying on traditional qualitative or quantitative methods, this allows researchers to generate knowledge through actively engaging in their artistic or design process (Haseman, 2006:3-6). Art practice is equally performative in that "it enacts or produces 'art' as an effect" (Bolt, 2008:5).

Sarah Finely (2005:685) notes that art-based researchers use art forms in their research studies, including visual and performing arts. She describes art-based research as "an act of political emancipation from the dominant paradigm of science for new paradigm researchers to say 'I am doing art' and to mean 'I am doing research' – or vice versa" (Finely 2003: 290). By doing this, art-based researchers are in addition, critiquing the language-based ways of knowing and challenging the status quo responses to the question of what research is and should be (Finely 2005: 685). Thus, they align with the resistance to the textual fundamentalism of the academy discussed earlier. Further, it should be acknowledged that most artistic practice includes some form of research, be it making site visits, taking reference photographs, or making preparatory sketches and colour studies. However, it is not considered research in an academic context unless the resulting work is shared, and its contributions to knowledge challenged within academia by academic peers. The term 'praxis' is often used to describe the making of artwork within a research context (Liggett, 2020:10). By linking theory and practice through "a method of intentionally investigating the process and outcomes informed by practice", researchers have attempted to, not only define research in the arts, but to also establish its credibility as methodology (Liggett, 2020:10).

As I have indicated, my research study includes a practice-driven component. 'Practice-driven' is a broader, less commonly defined term that is often used to mean that research problems come from real-world practice. The term can sometimes overlap with practice-led research. The terms 'practice-led' and 'practice-based' are the two more commonly used terms but are often used interchangeably or seen as related concepts with distinct differences. Instead of using the term 'practice-led' research, Combrink and Marley (2009:179-181) use 'practice-based research'. Writing in 2009, they describe it as "a fairly young concept, defining it as creative work in a number of disciplines (fine arts, design, architecture, performing arts, literature) characterised by a reliance on artistic activity and creative output" (Combrink & Marley, 2009:181). Referring to Haseman's article (2006), the authors argue that the quantitative and qualitative paradigms, having come to frame what is legitimate and acceptable, are not sufficiently sympathetic to the needs of practice-led (Haseman's term) researchers (Combrink & Marley, 2009:183). They further argue that practice-based research, by implication, suggests that this artistic activity and creative output be regarded as a category of research in its own right (Combrink & Marley, 2009:181).

As the number of studies involving practice-related, artistic research increase and the amount of academic literature on the methodologies available grow, so the methods and tools are becoming more clearly defined. Two dominant approaches within the broad paradigm of art practice-related research have been identified (Greenwood, 2012:2-3). The first is when one or more of the arts are used as tools to study or research an issue (Greenwood, 2012:2-3). It could be a social one, such as this research study has undertaken. As an academic artist-researcher I often include installation and performance in my own praxis (see Annexure H). In such cases, the art processes could be used for collecting data, for analysing it and for presenting findings. In the second approach, the research is an investigation into the arts themselves, searching for “a way to understand and describe the complex layers of meaning within an art work or an art form” (Greenwood, 2012:3). Linda Candy (2006:1) explains that if the research leads primarily to new understandings about practice, then it is practice-led.

Practice-led Research is concerned with the nature of practice and leads to new knowledge that has operational significance for that practice. The main focus of the research is to advance knowledge about practice, or to advance knowledge within practice. In a doctoral thesis, the results of practice-led research may be fully described in text form without the inclusion of a creative outcome. The primary focus of the research is to advance knowledge about practice, or to advance knowledge within practice (Candy, 2006:3).

If, on the other hand, a creative artefact is the basis of the contribution to knowledge, then the research is practice-based (Candy, 2006:1).

Practice-based Research is an original investigation undertaken in order to gain new knowledge partly by means of practice and the outcomes of that practice. In a doctoral thesis, claims of originality and contribution to knowledge may be demonstrated through creative outcomes in the form of designs, music, digital media, performances and exhibitions. Whilst the significance and context of the claims are described in words, a full understanding can only be obtained with direct reference to the outcomes (Candy, 2006:3).

Practice-led research allows for the use of the written word to describe, and reflect, creative processes, whilst, on the other hand, practice-based research focuses on a creative resolution or artefact. However, researchers may combine both practice-led and practice-based methods for research purposes as I have done in this research study. ‘Practice’ here could have a range of interpretations: one, practice as individual creative activity, the most obvious interpretation being ‘making’ in its broadest sense; two, practice as facilitation and dissemination, including activities such as curating, commissioning, critical writing; or, three, practice as a collaborative interdisciplinary activity,

involving other practitioners, participants and professionals, and/or external bodies (Gray & Malins, 2004:104). The distinctions between the terms become porous, but what is important is that “the research is led through, and based on practice, as opposed to the qualitative and quantitative paradigms” which instead report on literature study or practice (Combrink & Marley, 2009:183).

Conclusion

Although the aim of my practice in this study is the research, it also serves as evidence of the suitability of post-methodologies to this topic, with my thesis documenting aspects of my process and the resultant artefact. I subscribed to Combrink and Marley’s (2009:184-185) proposal of an alternative where the nature of the written component may be negotiated. For example, the written element could be in the form of reflective journals, peer reviews, catalogue essays, or even visual diaries. Although this negotiated written component is something I champion as a visual and performance artist, for the purposes of this study the artefact I have produced remains textual based as per the academic requirements of my degree. Nevertheless, much of the detailed discussion I have presented in this methodology chapter is to argue why there should be a negotiated change. Further, post-methodologies and practice as research are proposed and central to this study because I found it to be the most suitable way to answer the research questions and objectives about this particular topic. In addition, although I have included a practical component to my study, which provides evidence of what those processes and the resultant creative artefact might look like, the purpose of the practice was to assist in answering the research questions.

Finally, the methodologies discussed were selected when I deemed them appropriate and suitable for the task at hand, in other words, pragmatic selection decisions. In addition, there are also theoretical connections, such as the body and gender, the body as site of trauma and inscription, and of relations of power. Finally, the methodologies were utilised with the intent to initiate transformation, not only in the institutional sphere of gender, but in the realm of academia. I aim to raise awareness of, and add my voice to, the call for the use of alternative methodologies of conducting research which retain academic rigour but utilise methodologies, methods and tools which offer a different approach to knowledge-building.

CHAPTER 5: DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

The present chapter is concerned with the research study's empirical data collection methods, that is, 'verifiable' evidence provided by the collection method. Further it also discusses the coding and thematic analysis of that collected data. My research methodology is qualitative and used self-completion questionnaires to collect data from the participants. As a result, much of my primary data is conversational and narrational in nature, that is, thick descriptions. This research approach was deemed suitable as it provides insight and in-depth information regarding the problem I posed.

However, ethnographic data is complex and context-dependent, and the interpretive process required to derive meaning, was a time-consuming and embodied process. Analysis of the data requires rigorous self-reflection (reflexivity) and clear documentation (audit trails) to ensure credibility. The purposes of this chapter are to provide evidence of both reflexivity and clear documentation.

5.1 Semi-structured/structured interviews and self-completion questionnaires

According to Gray (2004:213), the well-conducted interview is a powerful tool for "eliciting rich data on people's views, attitudes and the meanings" that underpin and inform their lives and behaviours. In line with a widespread phenomenological perspective, interviewers are normally seeking descriptions of how interviewees or participants experience the world, its episodes and events, as well as its (other) inhabitants (Brinkmann, 2014:287). My choice of the use of specifically semi-structured interviews was intended to allow me, in my role of researcher, to 'probe' for more detailed responses than a structured interview may have allowed (Gray, 2004:214). This is where my position as auto-ethnographic researcher, and as a member of the focus group, allowed me unique insights and knowledge based on my own experiences of the SADF, and guided this probing, with my situated perspective and life experiences certainly influenced my choice of topics and questions. Further, influenced by feminist research, the focus was to be, as indicated earlier, a collaborative one rather than objectifying one, in the form of a narrative inquiry. What is pertinent is my awareness of the diversity of experiences that different conscripts had, with varying ideological and political allegiances. As a result, an open-ended questionnaire was important to make space for interviewees to express themselves and touch on issues tangential to my questions, but which I might not have thought of.

When constructing my interview schedule, I was guided, being a former conscript myself, by the notion of self-reflection and self-discovery that may emerge during an interview, intimating that identity too is continuously – also during and through an interview - under narrative construction. This was affirmed when I completed the questionnaire myself as a participant. Arthur Bochner and

Nicholas Riggs (2014:195) believe that narrative inquiry seeks to humanise the human science by placing people, meaning and personal identity at its centre. Narrative inquiry is a qualitative research method that explores how people make sense of their lives through their personal stories (narrative). The approach focuses on the intersection of the participant's experience, temporality, and social and physical environment to provide a deep, contextual understanding of a phenomenon, in this case the SADF. It also invites “the development of reflexive, relational, and interpretive methodologies”, many of which I have discussed in the methodology section of this study (Bochner & Riggs, 2014:195).

Bochner and Riggs (2014:195-196) propose “the notion of a multiple, fluid, and negotiated identity” that is continuously – also during an interview - under narrative construction. Narrative interviewing is a method of qualitative data collection whereby “a story is generated through the interview”, the purpose being to provide an opportunity for the participant to narrate his/her experience for the researcher (Kartch, 2017). This represents a shift in the way roles are conceptualised, that is, from interviewer–interviewee into narrator–listener (Kartch, 2017). This approach to inquiry is an indication of the interpretive nature of my research, where it is accepted that the researcher also contributes to the research data, thereby acknowledging not only the emotionality and subjectivity of the participants but that of the researcher. Further, the reader and audience are conceived as not merely spectators but as co-participants. This is achieved through participatory research methods, which involve actively engaging individuals in the research process beyond passive observation.

A person-to-person interaction, either face-to-face or virtual, was my preferred empirical research instrument. Svend Brinkmann (2014:278), in response to widespread critiques of qualitative research that it is too subjective, argues that qualitative interviewing is, in fact, “the most objective method of inquiry when one is interested in qualitative features of human experience, talk, and interaction”. This is because qualitative interviews are uniquely capable of grasping the rich, nuanced meaning individuals attribute to their lived experiences, and thus of being adequate to their subject matters (Brinkmann, 2014:278). While the post-methodologies would and do dispute claims of objectivity, there nevertheless remains the need for academic rigour. This includes research outputs that represent the qualitative data and research participants in ethical manner that is as accurate as possible. This includes how the data is interpreted, presented and analysed.

Brinkman (2014) argues that qualitative research methods are equally as rigorous as quantitative methods. Being both uniquely capable of grasping human experience, and adequate to the subject matter, Brinkmann (2014:278) posits, is one definition of objectivity. In his argument, an interview is not an interaction between disembodied intellects, but is in fact, “a joint accomplishment of vulnerable, embodied persons with all sorts of hopes, fears, and interests” (Brinkmann, 2018:998). As

this study assigns and argues the value of embodiment in research, this thinking is central to the approach in collecting primary data. The goal was to use interviews as a tool which would connect numerous micro exchanges with my focus group with macro-oriented interpretations of, in this case, the SADF as gendered institution, as well as white apartheid-era society more broadly (Brinkmann, 2018:998).

The ethics advisory board, after a lengthy deliberation, and consultation with the researcher and supervisor, decided that there needed to be distancing between the researcher and the participants, and therefore only online interviews should take place. This was to provide a physical distancing between participant and researcher in order to protect both. The thinking was that due to the shared experiences, some likely to have been extremely traumatic, the face-to-face conversation might evoke strong and unsettling emotions that could compromise the integrity of the research process and/or the ethics of the research process. The consideration was the possibility that some of the participants might be struggling with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) as a result of their experiences in the military, or that a traumatic episode might be triggered, for either the interviewee or interviewer, by the face-to-face interview. There was also concern that some of the participants might look for contact with me beyond the interview process. This did, in fact occur, with two participants attempting to negotiate physical meetings. When I explained the ethical requirements and why this could not happen, one of the two pulled out of the study as a result.

An unforeseen result of the stipulated ethics conditions was that the participants were reluctant to be interviewed online, although I did meet with a number online to answer queries regarding the study itself and its aims and objectives. All participants preferred to physically meet face-to-face, with most wanting this to be in a bar or at a *braai* (barbeque), over drinks. A large number dropped out of the study despite my explanation that this distancing between the interviewer and the interviewee was part of the ethical requirements of the research study. The participants who continued chose to complete a questionnaire form instead, which guided the participant through a chronological recall of his military experience. On reflection, in my opinion this most likely was for the best. The questionnaire process gave the participants time to introspectively work through their recollections as and when they chose. Having to adapt to the requirements of both the ethics committee and my participants proved challenging, as well as admittedly, a little disappointing, but ultimately, guided by my pragmatic paradigm approach, I selected the self-completion questionnaire as my data-collecting instrument done in collaboration with the participants. In addition to the completed questionnaires, some of the participants shared images, videos, and text messages, as well as their journals relating to their experiences. After reading and transcribing their responses I also directed follow-up questions to them, much as I would have, had I been conducting face-to-face semi-structured interviews. The

formal, more impersonal process of the questionnaires therefore became more conversational and personal as rapport was established with the participants.

Although the self-completion, or self-administered, questionnaire method is equated with the structured interview format because of its tendency to avoid open-ended questions, the questionnaire designed for this study retained its semi-structured interview format. The majority of the questions could not be answered with a 'yes' or 'no', and required considerable detail. However, one of the advantages of this method of data collection is its convenience for the participants. This is because they could complete the questionnaire when and where they wanted to, and at the speed that they wanted to go (Bryman, 2012:234). Bryman (2012:233-234) indicates that further advantages are an absence of interviewer effects, and no interviewer variability. For example, the presence of an interviewer may result in the tendency for participants to be more likely to exhibit social desirability bias, that is, the tendency to answer the questions in a manner that will be viewed favourably by the interviewer (Bryman, 2012:233-234). Further, self-completion questionnaires are not affected with the problem of interviewers asking questions in a different order or in different ways, thereby possibly compromising the outcomes of the study (Bryman, 2012:234). In addition, the structure of my original design was easy to follow as it took the participants through a chronological, step-by-step journey of their time in the military. Importantly, this format also encouraged narrative-style responses.

One of the disadvantages was the fact that I was not able to prompt the participants if they were having difficulty answering a question, or if they gave very short or vague answers. They did, however, have access to my cellular number and email address, which a number of participants used when they were unclear about instructions. A further disadvantage was that I was not present to probe participant responses. Probing can be very important when open-ended questions are being asked, therefore, I contacted participants and asked them follow-up questions if I felt it was necessary to acquire additional data (Bryman, 2012:234). On final reflection, in using self-administered questionnaires, I feel that I was not able to take full advantage of the fact that I am an insider and share experiences and a group identity with my participants, and as a result would have been able to establish a rapport during the interview process.

5.2 Sampling and recruitment

The sampling method chosen for this study was purposive sampling. This category allowed me to determine who the best participants were or would be to include in the study. Purposive sampling is a non-probability form of sampling, where the goal is to sample participants in a strategic way in order that those sampled are relevant to the research questions that are being posed (Bryman, 2012:418). It was not convenience sampling, consisting of participants simply being available by chance to the

researcher. There was intentional selection where I sampled with my research goals in mind, which therefore increased the chance that I would gather deep, rich, and meaningful data, and arrive at the ‘thick descriptions’ I have discussed earlier (Phillips, 2014:541). Sites, like organisations, and people within sites, were selected because of their relevance to the research questions (Bryman, 2012:418).

I established clearly what the criteria were that would be relevant to the inclusion or exclusion of units of analysis. Phyllis Eide (2008:743) addresses this process of identifying and inviting participants (recruits) to join the study. She states that the participants should meet clearly defined study criteria while representing “the richest and most complex source of information (data) relevant to the phenomena being studied” (Eide, 2008:743). This method consisted of volunteer sampling with the participants having volunteered to participate in the study. Voluntary participation was predicated on informed consent, which is arguably one of the key requirements of ethical consideration. The target population is white, South African men, who were conscripted into the SADF for a period of two years, between 1977 and 1989. The group who served two years were selected due to the length of their service period, and the likelihood, as a result, of a more detailed and thorough and detailed experience of the SADF. Because the study’s need was to collect detailed, in-depth data, this necessitated a small sample size. This is based on Creswell’s (1998, 2002) recommendations that qualitative researchers should, whilst studying a single cultural-sharing group in ethnography, interview up to ten people. I originally estimated between ten and twenty participants, and eventually received twenty-one who indicated interest, with ten finally participating fully.

The recruitment of participants was reliant on two main avenues. The rationale for using two different avenues was to recruit a wider variety of participants. The aim was to recruit a group of former conscripts with a wide range of experiences, ranging from those who view the experience as a positive one, to those who do not. The first avenue used was a study-specific website where prospective participants were able to find details regarding the research project and potentially sign up for the project on the site whilst maintaining anonymity.

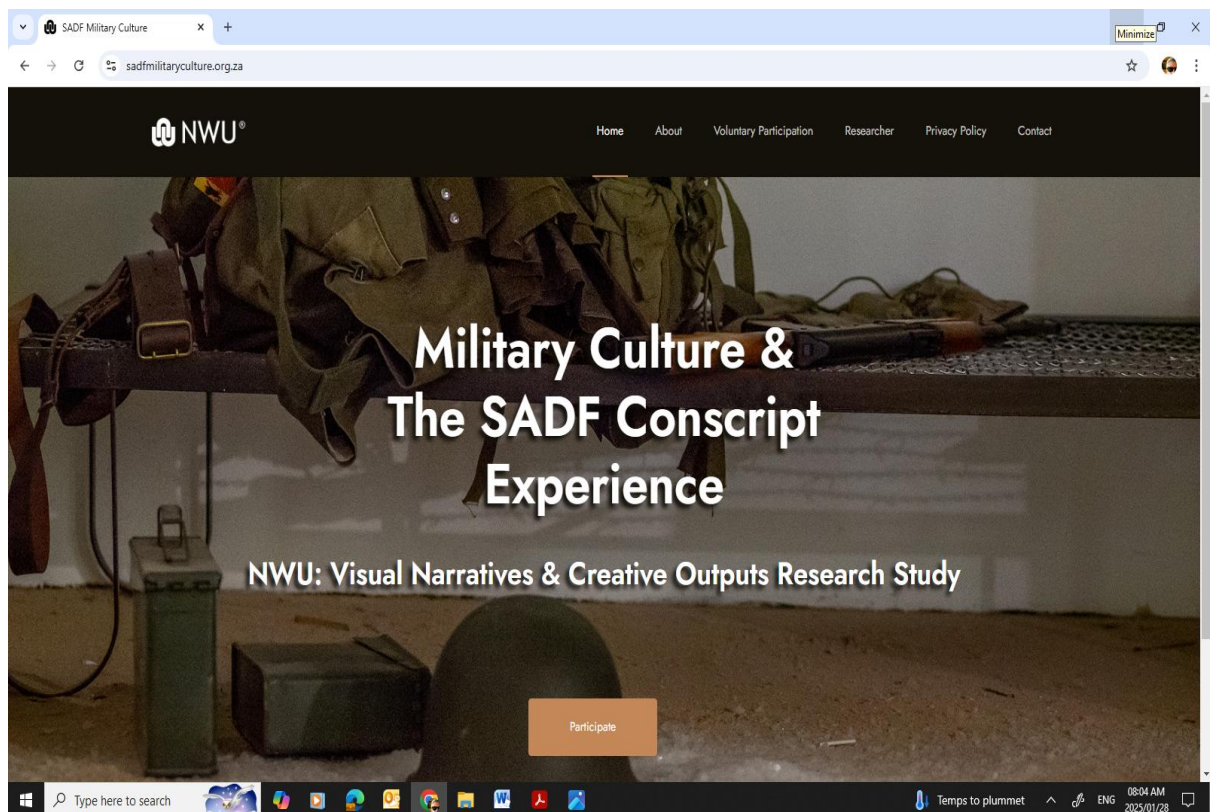


Figure 12: Research study website (www.sadfmilitaryculture.org.za). Design by Swanepoel (2023).

The second avenue to recruit participants took place via SADF veterans' societies. It might be assumed that as a member of the identified community (a SADF national service conscript), it would be easy for me to gain access to participants, having an insider's advantage. However, the importance of maintaining ethical considerations throughout this study's research process is paramount. One way of ensuring this is by gaining access via go-betweens (gatekeepers). This involved approaching gatekeepers, that is, those who control access to these particular institutions or organisations. They passed on the request for willing members to participate in the study and provided the additional service of confirming the validity of participants. The majority of the societies had pages on the Facebook social media site. I provided an advertisement which the gatekeepers placed on their site, pointing prospective participants to my research-specific website. Regarding these veterans' Facebook accounts, an interesting observation was the considerable distrust and paranoia, evident in the reactions to the advertisement, this despite the gatekeepers including the university ethical clearance details. In all cases, due to the push-back from members and the hosts tiring of dealing with queries from members, the advertisements were removed.



Figure 13: This research study's recruitment notice. Design by Swanepoel (2023)

I also worked with the Memorable Order of the Tin Hats (MOTH), who formed in 1927 to provide assistance to military veterans and their families. An additional, and unplanned recruitment avenue emerged when I was invited to discuss my research study in an interview on the Legacy Conversations YouTube channel. Legacy Conversations records the memories of South African Security Forces Members of all ranks, units and races. The channel has 13 500 subscribers and 824 videos as of 28 January 2024. The interview generated considerable interest, with a sharp rise in views of the research website and expression-of-interest emails. The interview can be accessed at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=78oK0ZKIeAc>.

5.3 Measuring Instrument

The units of analysis for this research are the former conscripts' responses to the questionnaire, follow-up questions, and/or other submitted artefacts such as videos, written accounts or journals if

they were willing to participate but not comfortable being interviewed. The research instrument, as indicated earlier, was a questionnaire which guided the participant through chronological recall of his military experience. The questionnaire was not structured to exclude anything, and the participants were informed that whatever they wished to share would be of value. The questionnaire was submitted as part of the ethics application, where it was indicated that participants who did not want to do an online interview could complete the questionnaire in writing.

In my initial formulation of the interview questions, the data to be collected from the participants were to be those experiences that dealt specifically with ritual, initiation and their masculinity within the institution of the SADF. However, I realised that due to my interests and my own experiences, I was emphasising particular areas of the gendered institution, resulting in a definite bias. By excluding all the possible military experiences, I would be leading the interviewees to discuss only the topics I was interested in, and providing the responses I was looking for. The initial questions tended to be informed by some of my possibly preconceived ideas of what the data should look like based on my own experience as a former conscript. This study focuses on gender and gendered institutions, and this tended to be reflected in my initial questions. By only focusing on the experiences of the most obvious of initiations and socialisation trials of the former conscripts I was likely to be greatly limiting my research and its possibilities. To mitigate these risks, I instead structured the questionnaire in a more chronological and sequential manner which covered various aspects of conscription, with very little reference to gender. While still guiding the interviewee, the questions allowed the participant to share his experiences in a non-exclusory and more narrational manner. The questionnaire included all the milestones that a white South African male encountered in his dealings with the SADF, beginning with his registration for National Service at the age of 16 at school.

I was reminded that the word 'ritual' in Latin means the correct way of doing something (Collins, 1981:723). A ritual is an act or series of acts, regularly repeated in a set precise manner, and are done in accordance with social custom or normal protocol (Collins, 1981:723). They provide order and structure. Furthermore, they reinforce an institution's values, strengthen group identity, and provide a framework for managing social order. My conceptualisation as a result began to incorporate the notion that it is in the most mundane that ritual and ideology often lie.

I completed the questionnaire myself and found that the chronological process very effectively initiated memory-recall, and evoked and unearthed much of the rich 'thick' data I was looking for. Upon transcribing a completed questionnaire, I noted areas which I felt required further clarification and detail, or where the participant might need some guidance or clarification regarding a question asked. I would then contact him via his email and pose further questions or seek confirmation. In addition to their written responses to the questionnaire, a number of the participants had online blogs

or vlogs, which they referred me to. However, due to parameters of the study's ethical clearance, I did not visit the blog or vlog sites, relying on the responses provided by my interview process.

Once the data, the life-stories, was collected, I elected to use thematic analysis and open coding to sort and analyse it. This process of analysis and synthesis will be covered in the following section.

5.4 Validity, Reliability and Trustworthiness

This research's methodology may be considered a method of naturalistic inquiry, that is, a 'naturalistic' rather than 'rationalistic' method, where the investigations regarding social phenomena are conducted in natural settings. The natural settings here were, as stated, chiefly the military institution of the SADF. The method of inquiry was naturalistic in that the researcher, as subjective inquirer, has observed, described and interpreted the experiences and behaviour as close to their natural state as possible of a specific human social system (Armstrong, 2010:880). Essentially, it is a naturalistic inquiry about a historic phenomenon, with the research not taking place in the original, natural setting of the SADF which no longer exists. Data collection methods such as qualitative questionnaires were used, with the data being analysed to examine constructions of meaning about that setting, exploring it to generate rich findings, and making possible an emergent theory of organisational behaviour (Armstrong, 2010:880).

However, because of the nature of this type of research, as well as my use of post-methodologies, it is envisioned that there may be concerns raised regarding the integrity of the conclusions that are generated by it. Viewers and/or readers have to be convinced of the credibility and significance of the interpretations offered (Bryman, 2012:386). To build trust in the research findings, I have firstly gathered evidence from multiple sources and perspectives, including my own lived experiences. The aim is to create a 'confluence' of data that strengthens the credibility of their observations, interpretations, and conclusions. Although I have used a pragmatic approach which includes quantitative research, I would argue that the standards used to evaluate the adequacy of traditional quantitative research studies should not be used to assess this naturalistic inquiry (Armstrong, 2010:881-882). This tension between qualitative and quantitative research has been addressed in the methodology section, suffice to say that quantitative and qualitative researchers, and more so, post-researchers, work within distinct and separate traditions, making different philosophical assumptions, employing different methods, and producing different products (Armstrong, 2010:882). The idiom of 'comparing apples and oranges' springs to mind, which is used to say that two things are completely different, and it is not sensible to compare them.

Nevertheless, despite my favouring post-methodologies I would argue that there remains ample evidence of the academic rigour which has been a cornerstone of this research study. It is my belief that the reader will determine, based on my thesis, the exposition of my methods, coding and analysis, including the detailed literature review, that it is a trustworthy study. Lincoln and Guba (1985:290) pose a number of questions which I similarly asked myself whilst considering evidence of the trustworthiness of my study:

How can an inquirer persuade his or her audiences (including self) that the findings of an inquiry are worth paying attention to, worth taking account of? What arguments can be mounted, what criteria invoked, what questions asked that would be persuasive on this issue?

According to Bryman (2012:390) trustworthiness is made up of four criteria; one, credibility; two, transferability; three, dependability; and fourthly, confirmability. Bryman's criteria, I would argue, are also informed by Lincoln and Guba's (1985) text, *Naturalistic Inquiry*. In fact, Creswell⁴⁵ (2013:244-246) indicates that he has found that the Lincoln and Guba criteria are still popular today in qualitative reports, where they use of alternative terms to Quantitative research.

As Creswell (2013:246) observes, in order to operationalise their new terms, Lincoln and Guba (1985) "propose techniques such as prolonged engagement in the field and the triangulation of data sources", in order to establish credibility. As a former conscript myself, I would argue that I have been in the field since I was sixteen years old, and since 2011 I have actively, and within the realm of academia, investigated the SADF and my lived experiences thereof. Both an Honours and Masters degree explored the institution. Further, as is evident in both my literature review and methodology sections, I have used multiple sources to enable the triangulation of my data. Creswell (2013:246) indicates that in order to ensure that "the findings are transferable between the researcher and those being studied, thick description is necessary". For the purposes of my study, I did not merely rely on secondary sources for these thick descriptions, of which, as of recent times and the advent of the internet and social media, there are many. I generated my own primary data, which consisted of not only auto-ethnographic data, but of voluntary participants to my study. This data, its findings and my insights and conclusions add to existing discourse, and due to the transparency of my methods is certainly transferable for the purposes of future research.

Finally, Creswell (2013:246) argues that naturalistic researchers should acknowledge that, rather than reliability and objectivity, they aim at dependability and confirmability. The results will be subject to

⁴⁵ These parallel traditional quantitative approaches to validation, arguably, as a result of the criticism levelled at qualitative research and its supposed failure to adhere to the constraints of reliability and validation applicable in scientific (quantitative) research (Creswell, 2013:245).

change and instability due to the nature and focus of the research, that is, humans and their social systems. Further, confirmability should be the goal, rather than objectivity, in establishing the value of the data Cresswell (2013:246). Dependability and confirmability for the purposes of this study have been established through the transparency and auditing of the research process of which this section is part of. The auditing process included my supervisor's reviewing of my use of primary data, as well as an external editor.

In conclusion, Whittemore, Chase and Mandle (2001:526-527) whilst acknowledging tension between qualitative and quantitative Research, focus on the tension between rigour and creativity. They argue that whilst creativity should be preserved within qualitative research, it should not be at the cost of analytical rigour:

Creativity in and of itself will not contribute to sound science. Elegant and innovative thinking can be balanced with reasonable claims, presentation of evidence, and the critical application of methods (Whittemore, Chase & Mandle, 2001:526-527).

5.5 Ethical considerations

Judith Preissle (2008:277) stresses that qualitative researchers “must address the moral implications of their representations to those they study, to their scholarly colleagues, to policymakers, and to the media and the public”. As researchers the first and most important rule to adhere to is, do no harm. Therefore, ethical considerations have formed an essential component of this study. Having now undergone basic training in ethics which was a prerequisite for this degree, I am aware of the need to respect a person's autonomy, that my study be beneficent (cause minimum harm while being of maximum benefit), and finally, be fair regarding the distribution of the benefits and burdens of the research.

The research involved the voluntary participation of members from the target population, former SADF conscripts. As indicated earlier, these men are likely to have experienced emotional and psychological trauma to varying degrees during their time in the military. There are therefore emotional risks to asking them to revisit the past as this research did. Mitigating strategies were put in place as a result. As indicated, the participation was completely voluntary, with the participants being given full disclosure regarding how their experiences were to be used in the research and the aims of that research (see Annexure B). Confidentiality and anonymity were assured. Their names and personal details, or those mentioned in their testimonies, are not included in either the thesis document or the performance artefact. The participants were assured of their control over their personal information and the authority to decide when information may be made public, which information

they were willing to share confidentially, which information they were willing to share anonymously, and which information was not to be shared at all (Priessle, 2008:274). Because the participants completed a questionnaire remotely each retained a copy of said questionnaire and their responses. As a result, they controlled the written account of their narrative and had a copy of what they provided for inclusion in the study and artistic work.

Should they have opted to participate, the raw data and submitted material would only be viewed by the researcher and supervisor, and would be used solely for the purposes of this study, and consequent publications. An interview schedule is attached (Annexure C) and is an indication that the interviews were to be semi-structured, and would rely on prompts and open-ended questions. The eventual questionnaire (Annexure D) retained the chronological structure and open-ended questions.

The received material was analysed to extrapolate themes, rituals, processes and confessions to be converted into a creative performance piece. The intention of this interpretive work is to provide a further layer of anonymity and remove for the participants. The participants were also given the opportunity to review their contribution to the research, and make the decision of whether to allow their recollections to be included or not. The data itself is stored on a laptop and external drive, both password-protected. I have sole access to these storage devices. Nevertheless, despite these mitigating measures, there remained a concern regarding the emotional safety of the participants. These men I am working with have potentially been through traumatic experiences, and this work may call that up for them. I certainly have empathy and understanding regarding this.

In my discussion of the military institution in chapter two, I noted that the director, Stanley Kubrick, portrayed a number of military practices in his film, *Full Metal Jacket* (1987) which I had myself experienced. It is difficult to begin to describe the psychological/emotional effect that these scenes had on me when I watched the film some five years after my own lived experience. Certainly, there was a moment of epiphany as old traumas emerged, which in all likelihood led to, and resulted in, my Masters *Blou Steen/Blue Stone* (2018) performance some thirty years later. Although it was hoped that the experience of discussing the past might be as cathartic for the participants, there was a possibility it might instead be catastrophic. As a result, access to counselling was necessary. A counsellor was made available to the participants should they have felt the need to talk to someone after participating in the research. One paid-for hour-long session with a councillor, a member of The Health Professions Council of South Africa (HPCSA), was available to each participant, if needed. After this, participants were free to continue speaking with the councillor, but that would be for their own expense.

A letter was drafted to be presented to the gatekeepers in the Veterans' Associations introducing the researcher and the study and its concerns (see Annexure A). It specified what would be required of the

gatekeeper, in particular, distributing information and directing potential participants to the researcher. A consent form for the gatekeeper to complete was not drafted as they were not deemed to be supplying data. A similar document was drafted for the prospective participants which included a consent section (see Annexure B). Finally, ethical clearance was obtained from the university's ethics board before the proposed research study was undertaken: ethics number - NWU-00953-23-A7

5.6 Coding and Thematic Analysis

A grounded theory approach was used for critical analysis purposes. I concur with Bryman's (2012:387) contention that it is not a theory as such, but rather an approach for the generation of theory out of data and I used it as such. My experience of using it in practice-driven research is that grounded theory also generates concepts for artmaking, something which is evident in this study. Bryman (2012:574) proposes that grounded theory, in many instances, does not result in theory but does provide a rigorous approach to the generation of concepts. In fact, that grounded theory does generate concepts for artmaking is vital, because it has a focus on both creative praxis and the resultant artefact as an expression of a rigorous research methodology.

Coding is a key process in grounded theory, whereby data is broken down into component parts, with these parts being given names, labels, or short phrases (Bryman, 2012:568; Saldana, 2016:3). These might be the exact words used by participants, or terms drawn from the social or health sciences (e.g., PTSD), or concept/terms composed by the researcher that seem to describe the information (Creswell, 2013:185). These codes combine multiple facts into a single value, symbolically assigning a salient, essence-capturing attribute for a portion of language-based or visual data (Saldana, 2016:3). For the purposes of this study, I was coding for pattern, which, as Saldana (2016:5) indicates, is "both natural and deliberate". It is natural because there are mostly repetitive patterns of action and consistencies in human social context, and deliberate because one of my primary goals was to find these repetitive patterns of action and consistencies in the human affairs of my focus group and their social worlds as documented in the collected data (Saldana, 2016:5). There was information that I expected to find before the study, but there was also information as well as concepts that I did not expect to find. As a result, the coding in this data analysis process was one of discovery, fluidity and revision, with the data treated as indicators of not only themes, and but also of concepts (Bryman, 2012:568).

The physical process of coding and thematic analysis involved thoroughly reading the generated qualitative data, identifying recurring patterns and concepts, and then assigning descriptive labels or codes to those patterns. An example is my structuring the questionnaire chronologically, dividing it into phases of the National Service conscription experience. Since I was already grouping the

experiences of the former conscripts under broad, preliminary themes, this sped up my coding and analysis process considerably.

Once the coding had been completed, I began looking for categories or themes to group my codes under. In qualitative research this is known as thematic analysis, and these themes or categories are “broad units of information that consist of several codes aggregated to form a common idea”, or concept (Cresswell, 2013:186). Saldana (2016:13) describes a theme as an outcome of coding and categorisation, as well as analytic reflection. This analytic reflection was benefitted by the fact that I was a participant observer in the research study, having been a former conscript myself. As an ‘insider’ researcher I had unique insights into the data, and already had some idea of the likely themes that I would utilise, along with the new ones that arose.

As an artist I approach the process of coding and thematic analysis in a tactile manner, and the process becomes an embodied experience. This process I describe was a manual, physical and tactile one. Rather than using a computer and a software programme, I used, as my supervisor puts it, “Andrew grey matter”. My process involved printing out the completed transcribed questionnaires, and whilst familiarising myself with the responses, highlighting repeated words, ideas or concepts in a designated colour. I then cut these codes out with a pair of scissors, and arranged, re-arranged and grouped them, firstly in the chronological order of the National Service experience, and then assigning each group a theme (see Figures 17-26). Finally, I glued them into a journal in the new arrangements, not only for easy access, but also for safekeeping due to the sensitive nature of the data. The process itself was an organic, physical and interactive one, and ultimately a satisfying one. The switch from the cerebral and desk-bound pursuit of research thesis writing to physically interacting with the data reminded me of the embodiment of the process, and the tangible, visible form of my concepts. Working on the journals during loadshedding⁴⁶, in candlelight, without a cooling fan, the stickiness of the glue on my fingers, and the stickiness of my body as a result of the Durban humidity, placed me physically in the research process as my lived experiences equally placed me in the research design and data itself. Below are photographs of my process (Figures 14-16), as well as photographs of my journal work, featuring the generated/emergent themes, categories and colour coding (Figures 14-26).

⁴⁶ Load shedding in South Africa is a measure by the state-owned power utility, Eskom, to implement controlled, scheduled power cuts (rolling blackouts) across the country to prevent the collapse of the electricity grid. It has been a regular feature of South African life since approximately 2007.

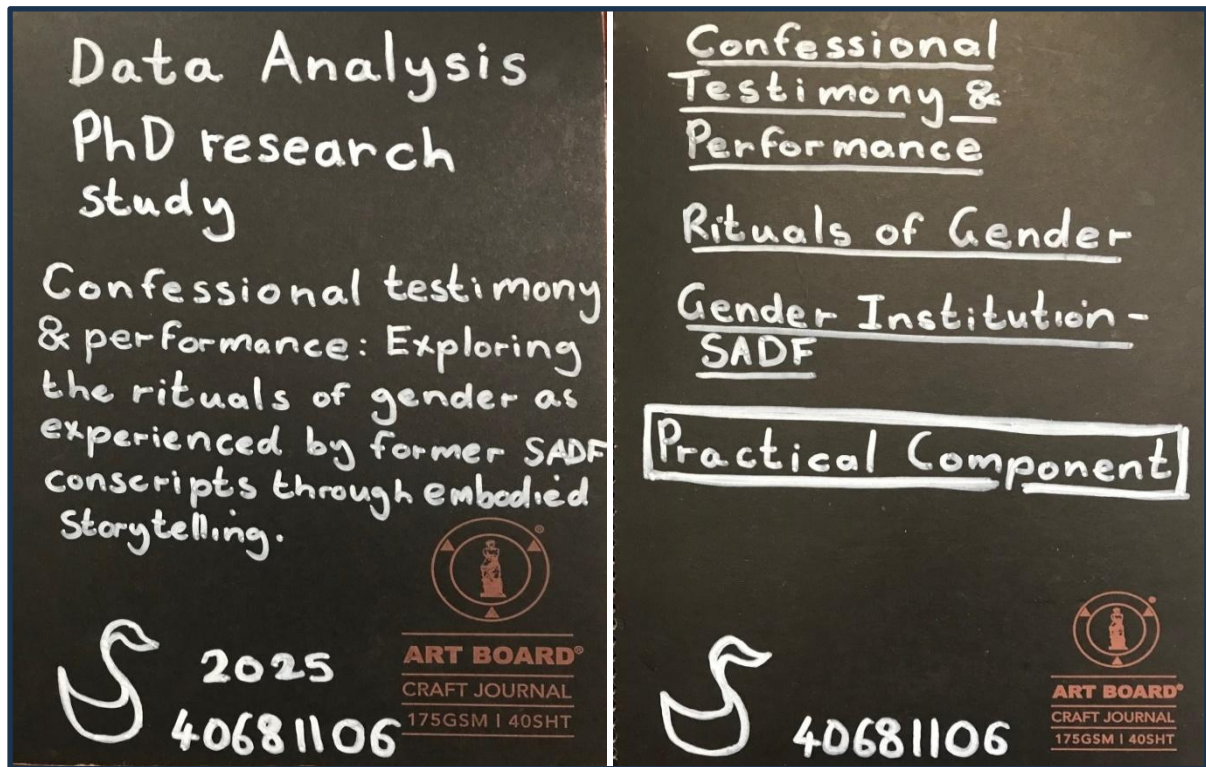


Figure 14: The covers of the research journals (A4) for this study, one for my analysis exercise and the other for the conceptualisation of my creative artefact. Swanepoel (2025).

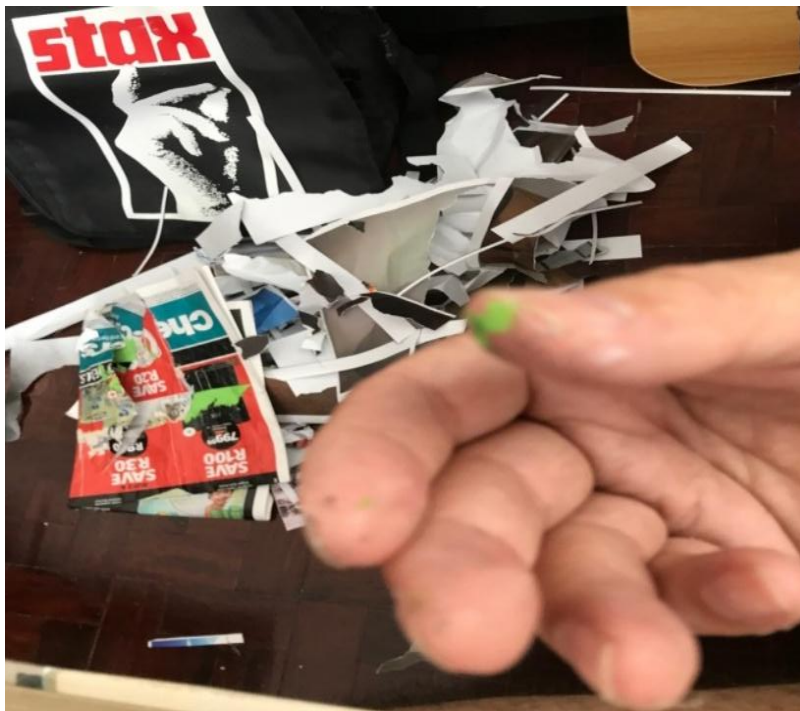


Figure 15: Sticky fingers with bits of paper stuck to them as a result of my 'hands-on' coding and thematic analysis process, and discarded pieces of paper in the background. Swanepoel (2025).



Figure 16: Wood glue because a glue-stick is just not good enough, with paper offcuts covering the floor of my work area (my lounge). Swanepoel (2025).

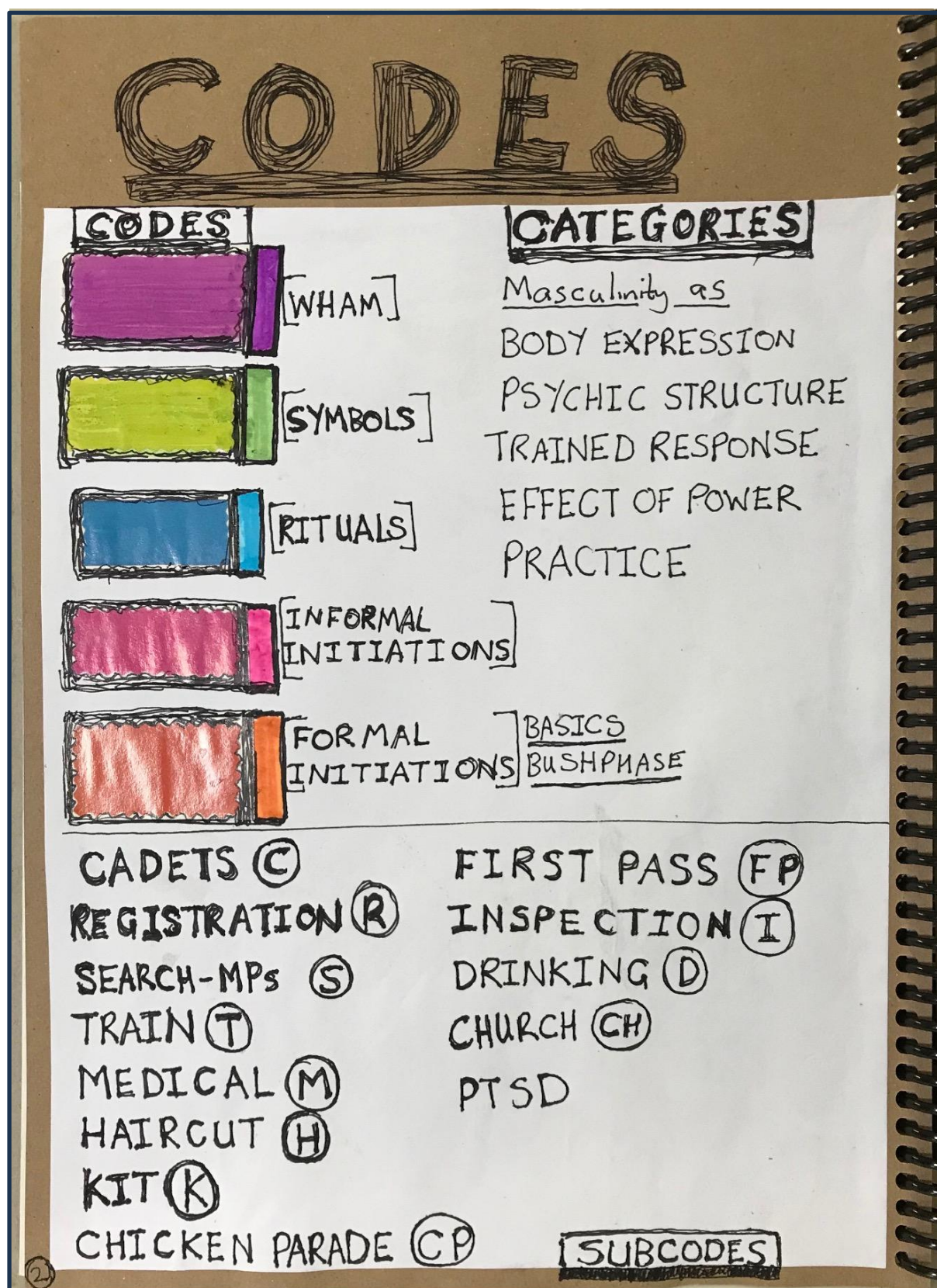


Figure 17: The emerging codes, subcodes and categories in my analysis journal. Swanepoel (2025).

CODES	SUBCODES
WHAM winning hearts and minds	cadets, lectures, material received such as Paratus(magazine), Church
SYMBOLS ↓	Cadets, registration, military police search, medical categorisation, haircut, kit(uniform), chicken parade, rank, insignia, behaviour, protocol
RITUALS ↓ although there were standard rituals generally they varied from corp to corp and unit to unit.	cadets, registration, Military police search, train trip to the base, medical and categorisation, haircut, kit (uniform) receiving, first pass, inspections Church attendance
INFORMAL INITIATIONS ↓ generally implemented by non-com rank	cadets, chicken parade, return from first pass, opfoks
FORMAL INITIATIONS ↓ basics and bush phase	Cadets, registration, Military police search, train trip to the base, medical and categorisation, haircut, kit (uniform) receiving, chicken parade, inspections,

Figure 18: The emerging codes and subcodes in my analysis journal. Swanepoel (2025).

CATEGORIES	THEMES		
<u>A Function of Biology</u> - an expression of the body.	Gendering practises & structures	Organising processes	REGULATIVE - they control and govern our behaviour
<u>A State of Mind</u> - a psychic structure	Gendering cultures	Organisation culture	
<u>A Trained Response</u> - repeated, learned behaviour	Gendering Interactions	Interactions on the job	NORMATIVE - they dictate what the norms in society are
<u>An Effect of Power</u> - hegemonic masculinity	Internal gender constructions		CULTURAL- COGNITIVE - the ideas and customs which inform social behaviour
<u>A Practical Accomplishment</u> - a practice/performance	Creating & conceptual- ising social structures	Gendered identities	

(77)

Figure 19: The emerging categories and themes in my analysis journal. Swanepoel (2025).

Informed by my research focus on men and masculinities, and based on my review of literature, I used Edley's (2017) observations regarding the approaches to studying masculinities for coding purposes (see chapter 4.1-4.5). This provided five categories to organise my data under. The first is masculinity as a function of biology, that is, an expression of the body. The SADF strongly regulated the male white South African body, chiefly through formal state and military legislation, as well as hierarchical command system. The second approach was as a state of mind, that is, a psychic structure. My research provides insight into the siege mentality that existed in South Africa, as well as the militarisation of its societies. Further, it was argued that military conscription became a rite of passage of white South African boys into manhood. Thirdly, masculinity was viewed as a trained response through repeated, learned behaviour. The SADF was an exemplar of an institution consisting of organisations applying this approach; basic, second and third phase training being the chief mechanisms of this. Fourth, focuses on masculinity as an effect of power, including that of hegemonic masculinity. The SADF was a strongly hierarchal institution organised according to rank - rank and its associated insignias being symbolic representations of actual power within the institution. The final category is masculinity as a practical accomplishment, and as such, a practice, and or performance. The successful performance of strongly regimented behaviours taught during the training phases was rewarded in the SADF. These encompassed amongst others, marching drills and battle drills, where precision and endurance during these drills was lauded while failure was often seen as unmanly.

My themes focus on how these approaches (categories) to masculinity factored into the gendering of the SADF. Here, similarly informed by my review of literature, I used Acker's (1990; 2012) formulation of the institutional organisational processes. I included Scott's (2014) formulation of the three broad pillars of institutions as broad umbrella themes. These broad themes comprise the regulative, normative, and cultural-cognitive. The SADF regulated and constrained the behaviour of the former conscripts through rule-setting, formal and informal monitoring, and sanctioning activities. It established norms and values which were prescriptive, evaluative, and obligatory. In addition, it established a cultural belief system, and used symbols and actions imbued with constructed meaning particular to the institution. It is through these thematic lenses that I analysed the data collected from my participants.

The tables below illustrate the filters I used to analyse the data received, commencing with codes and sub-codes, and the categories these might fall under. Table 2 presents the three main themes, being the pillars of institutions, with two columns of sub-themes. The table illustrates the ever-narrowing focus of the analysis process.

CODES	SUB-CODES	CATEGORIES
WHAM – Winning Hearts and Minds	Cadets, lectures, <i>Paratus</i> magazine, Church, materials received	<u>A FUNCTION OF BIOLOGY</u> An expression of the body
SYMBOLS – Visual, Linguistic, Gestural	Medical category, haircut, rank, insignia, uniform	<u>A STATE OF MIND</u> A way of thinking
RITUALS – Sequences of actions and words	Cleaning (boots/rifles/bed), marching, 2,4, inspections	<u>A TRAINED RESPONSE</u> Repeated learned behaviour
INFORMAL INITIATIONS – Introductions into a role or group	By <i>ou manne</i> on new troops, on arriving at a new base, on receiving rank	<u>AN EFFECT OF POWER</u> Hegemonic masculinity
FORMAL INITIATIONS – Structured, ritualised processes	Various phases of training, specifically Basics, cadets, registration at school.	<u>A PRACTICAL ACCOMPLISHMENT</u> A practice/performance

Table 1: Thematic Analysis - Codes, Subcodes and Categories. Swanepoel (2025).

<u>SUB-THEMES</u> ACKERS (1990)	<u>SUB-THEMES</u> ACKERS (1992)	<u>THEMES</u> SCOTT (2014)
GENDERING PRACTISES & STRUCTURES	ORGANISING PROCESSES	<u>REGULATIVE</u> INSTITUTIONS CONTROL & GOVERN THE BEHAVIOUR
GENDERING CULTURES	ORGANISING CULTURE	
GENDERING INTERACTIONS	INTERACTIONS ON THE JOB	<u>NORMATIVE</u> INSTITUTIONS DICTATE WHAT THE NORMS IN A SOCIETY ARE
INTERNAL GENDER CONSTRUCTIONS	GENDERED IDENTITIES	
CREATING & CONCEPTUALISING SOCIAL STRUCTURES		<u>CULTURAL-COGNITIVE</u> THE IDEAS & CUSTOMS WHICH INFORM SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR

Table 2: Thematic Analysis – Themes. Swanepoel (2025).

Below are examples of the pages of my thematic analysis work, featuring excerpts cut from printouts of anonymised interviews. The blue blocks which appear on some of the pages are areas that I have redacted in order to protect the participant due to the sensitivity of the information. The appearance of these pages reminded me of the way our letters to home were redacted by the Intelligence officers at our bases. I further anonymised the data by providing each participant with a codename. The participant codenames were derived from the call signs associated with the letters of the alphabet that we used in the military: Alpha, Bravo, Charlie, Delta, Echo, Foxtrot, Golf, Hotel, India, Juliette, Kilo, Lima, Mike, November, Oscar, Papa, Quebec, Romeo, Sierra, Tango, Uniform, Victor, Whiskey, X-ray, Yankee, Zulu.

Alongside the printed excerpts are my handwritten responses and impressions to both the questions I posed and the participant answers. These handwritten annotations include recollections of my own experiences sparked by the participant answers. The capital letters next to text blocks indicate subthemes identified in the data.

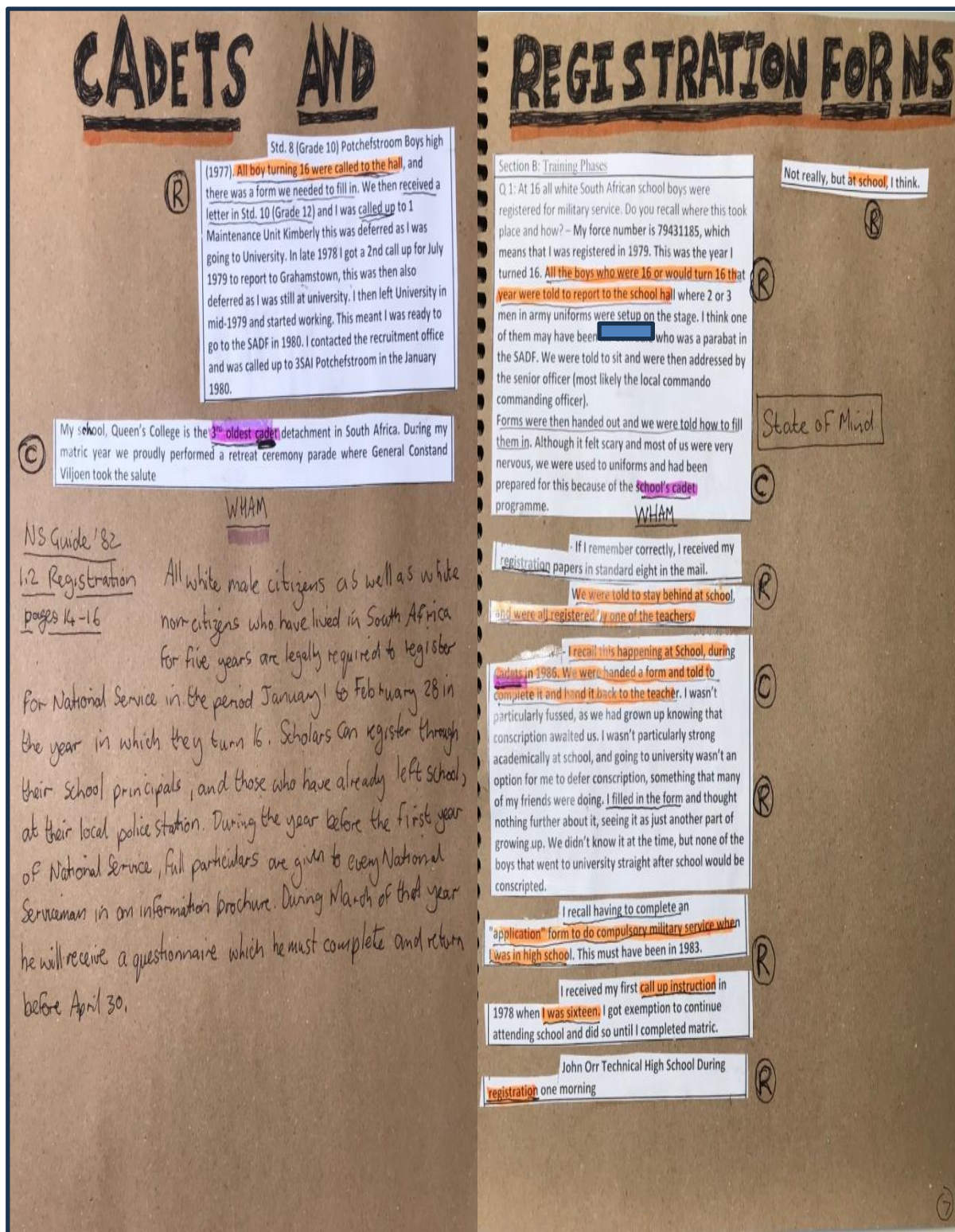


Figure 20: Coding and Thematic Analysis under Cadets and Registration Section. Swanepoel (2025).

DEPLOYMENT

NS Guide '82

1.16 Border Duty

pages 40-43

After a National Serviceman has been fully trained in all aspects of soldiering, he may be sent to the operational area. Allocation for border duty is determined by prevailing requirements. Active service is, after all, the whole object of military training.

Section C: Deployment

Q 1: Following your training where were you deployed to and what role did you fulfil? - Military Area Walvis Bay



(date.) An interesting insight into life at Walvis Bay was the 2SAI flash, when you 'read' it from top to bottom...



Walvis Baai...

2 Jaar se

Rondvok

Vir ons land.

My first deployment was to an Ops room where any breach of security in South Africa was noted in terms of seriousness on a map of South Africa by way of different coloured pins.

I then was transferred to Operations and deployed to Rundu where I was to ferry arms, ammunition, equipment and food to UNITA bases in Southern Angola. From time to time we traversed the breadth of Southern Angola, visiting tribes giving mealie meal, coffee and sugar and enquiring about enemy movement, numbers and equipment.

On my return I worked as a clerk processing security clearance applications.

It is here in the operational area, that the serviceman gets the opportunity to put into practice all the things which he was taught during his training.

WHAM

A man who shirked his duty during training could endanger the lives of his comrades here. Things which may have seemed senseless during training begin to

(38) make sense now.

In February 1980, our Company (B Coy) drove up to Messina with an entire brigade for the Zimbabwean Elections, after six weeks we were returned to base and then we were sent to 61 Mech - Owamboland.

WHAM

Teacher of English and Afrikaans at 121 Battalion (Duku Duku Forest).

Figure 21: Coding and Thematic Analysis under Deployment Section. Swanepoel (2025).

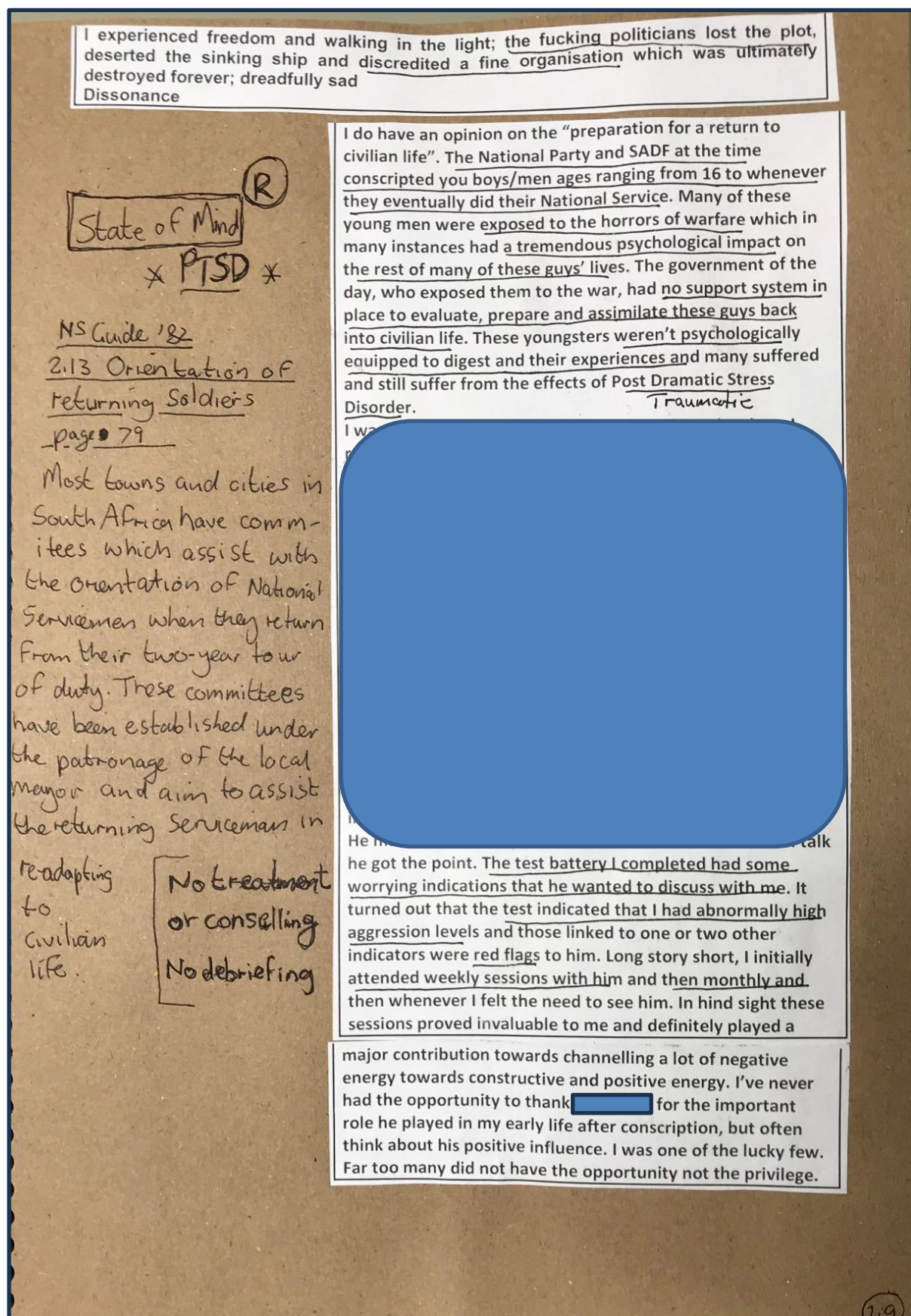


Figure 22: Coding and Thematic Analysis under Reflection Section. Swanepoel (2025).

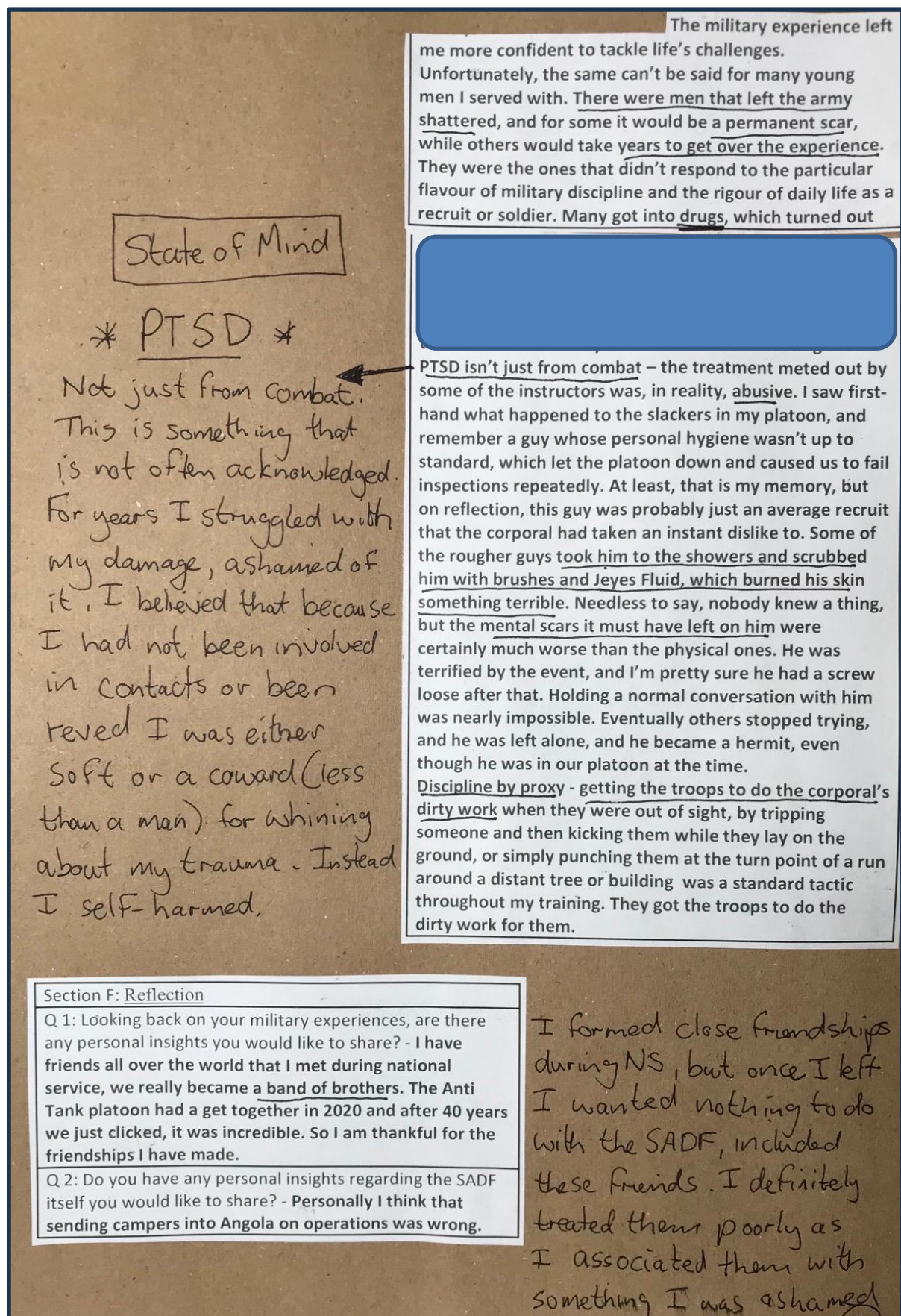


Figure 23: Coding and Thematic Analysis under Reflection Section. Swanepoel (2025).

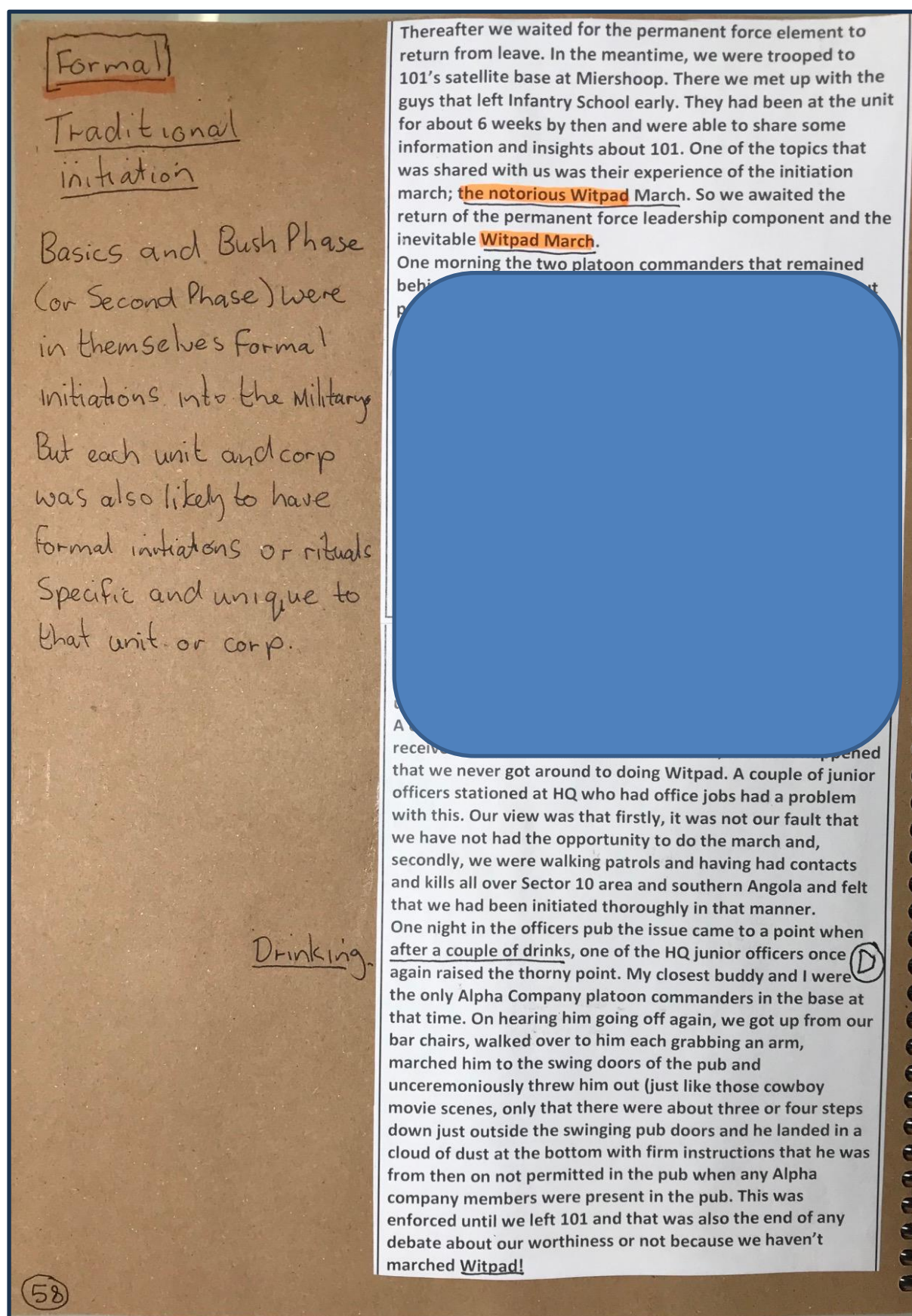


Figure 24: Coding and Thematic Analysis under Rituals and Initiations Section. Swanepoel (2025).

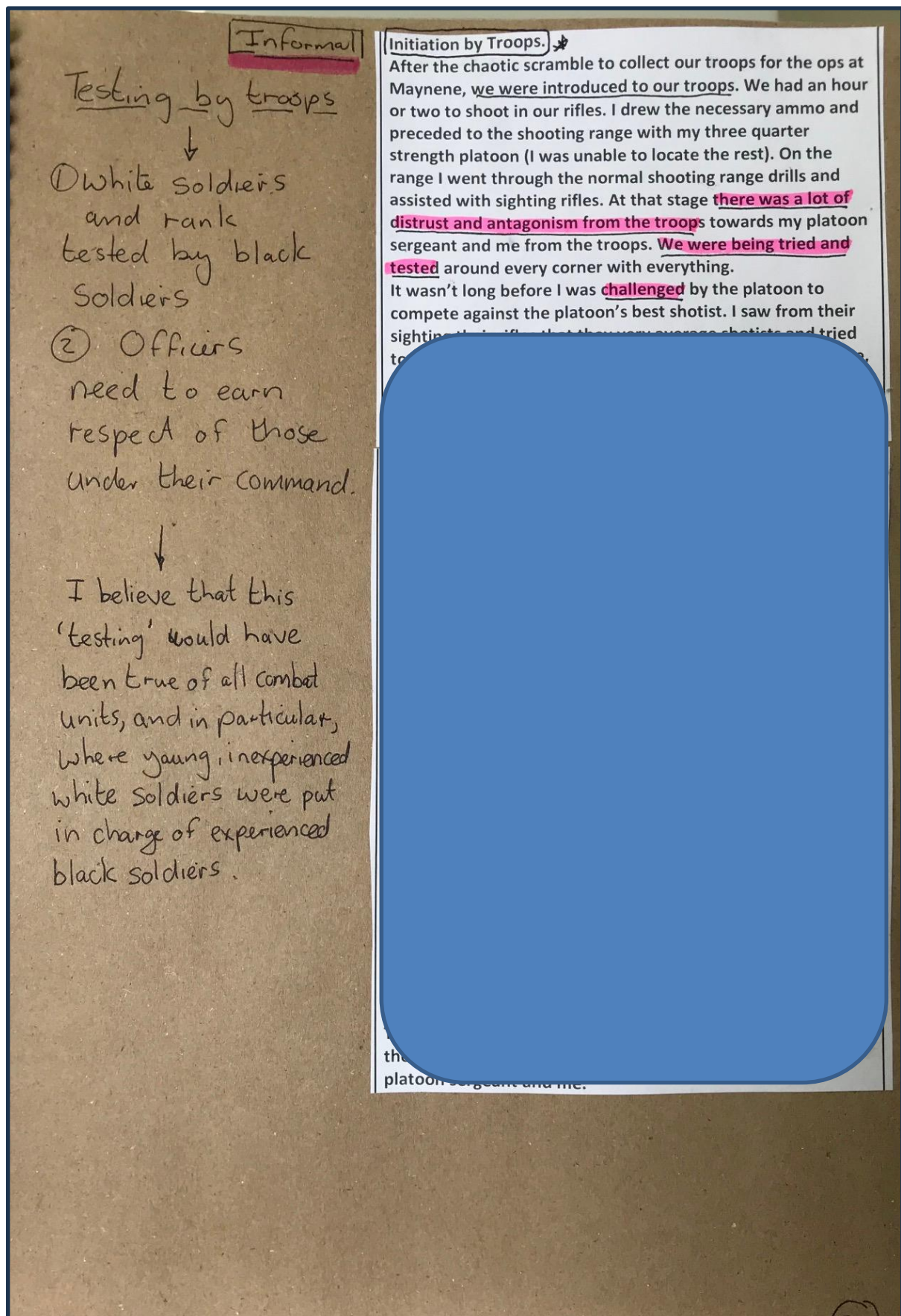


Figure 25: Coding and Thematic Analysis under Rituals and Initiations Section. Swanepoel (2025).

Terminology or vocabulary or language specific to an institution (jargon)

Specialised terminology

① Skuimbolle -

→ affirmative

→ things went to plan, according to plan

② Ons trek die leeu se draad -

→ patrolling seeking the enemy

↓
Ons trek die leeu se snor

③ Punishment -

→ buy a tree

→ pay for the casting of a stretch of paving

↓
and planting or laying completed by the offender.

↓
The Base Tree & Pavement Plan.

Rituals.

Being deployed in Angola for most of the time and having had the absolute minimum exposure to regimental life, there weren't the kind of rituals in our lives that regimental personnel honoured. A custom that did develop among the then Alpha Company and later carried over to the Romeo Mikes were a couple of radio procedures or metaphors that we used to convey a certain message or just used as a means of expressing solidarity or esprit de corps.

When things went well and according to plan or indicate an affirmative to a comment or instruction the word

"Skuimbolle!" was used.

When on normal patrol and seeking enemy the expression "Ons trek die leeu se draad." Would be used. This was used until one day unbeknown to me, 101's OC, lieutenant colonel [redacted] had flown in to Xangongo for a visit and was in the Company Operations Room when I radioed in to give a sitrep and among others used the term "ons trek die

leeu se draad." I was told later that this caused a little consternation as our company commander captain [redacted]

[redacted] call sign Tango Fox had to explain the metaphor to the OC, who frowned on the usage thereof. From then on we were only pulling the "leeu se snor."

Another habit that warrants mention is that 101's home base was at Uluno, neighbouring Koevoet's base. Uluno was a flat desolate area on the outskirts of Ondangwa. Once the base buildings were built, there were only buildings and sand.

[redacted] became OC in November 1981. From then on, when someone was brought on orders for any wrongdoing the person would be issued his punishment, whatever that might be, and depending on the severity of the offence would also have to buy a tree or more or pay for the casting of a stretch of paving as determined with his other punishment.

Of course the tree(s) would also have to be planted or the casting of the paving to be done by the offender. The tree or casting could not be casted or planted anywhere, but had to be planted in accordance with the Base Tree and Pavement Plan as developed by the Unit Regimental Sergeant Major.

This had the effect that within a couple of years, 101 Base Camp became a green oasis and a beautiful base and received numerous awards for its neatness and beauty.

Figure 26: Coding and Thematic Analysis under Rituals and Initiations Section. Swanepoel (2025).

5.7 Findings

Once I had filtered and organised my data, I then began the process of constructing a narrative structure which explained the connections between my data and the themes, and was informed and supported with illustrative quotes. The narrative structure was guided by two research questions:

- 1) Which gendered rituals, markers and directives were experienced by former conscripts in the SADF?
- 2) How did the former conscripts experience gender rituals, markers and gender directives during their time in the SADF?

As indicated, I chose to use Scott's (2014) proposal of three institutional pillars as my main themes with Dye and Mills' (2005) formulation of Acker's (1990) original five general categories of institutional/organisational gendering processes, and her refined version (1992), as sub-themes (see table 2 above). It is Scott's (2014) contention that all three of the institutional pillars or systems operate simultaneously, and in fact, often working in conjunction with one other. This is certainly clear when analysing the normative and cultural-cognitive spheres of influence. The regulative are the formal rules while the other two deal with the way members think, and behave, and what they believe and why, and how these relate to the choices they make.

Scott (2014:45-46) notes that each of the three pillars provide a basis for legitimacy, noting that "organisational legitimacy refers to the degree of cultural support for an organisation". The three pillars he conceptualises elicit three related but distinguishable bases of legitimacy (Scott, 2014:47). The regulative emphasis is on conformity to rules, while "a normative conception stresses a deeper, moral base for assessing legitimacy" (Scott, 2014:47). This is likely to be internalised and therefore the incentives for conformity can include intrinsic as well as extrinsic rewards (Scott, 2014:47). The cultural-cognitive approach stresses the legitimacy that comes from adopting "a common frame of reference or definition of the situation" (Scott, 2014:47).

In essence, Scott's (2014) three pillars offer a framework for understanding how institutions, including the military, create and maintain order, legitimacy, and a sense of shared purpose among their members. By understanding how these pillars interact, one can gain insights into how the military leaders within the institution effectively managed personnel and achieved their organisational goals. By ensuring rules and regulations were clear, arguably fair, and aligned with the organisation's values the military leaders built a very powerful and extremely effective institution. This was assisted by fostering a strong normative culture that emphasised teamwork, loyalty, and ethical conduct; and by building a shared understanding of the military's mission and values, which guided each soldier's

decision-making and behaviour. Not only did my research support this but this is one thing that virtually all participants agreed upon:

Participant Charlie – “I think the SADF was one of the best fighting forces of its time.”

Participant Echo – “The SADF was very much like the Israeli Defence Force. It was all powerful, but it ended up buckling under international pressure to end apartheid.”

Participant Foxtrot – “I experienced freedom and walking in the light; the fucking politicians lost the plot, deserted the sinking ship and discredited a fine organisation which was ultimately destroyed forever; dreadfully sad Dissonance.”

Participant Golf – “The border war made the SADF the army with certainly the most experience in the world and definitely the army with the biggest multiplier effect.”

Participant Kilo – “I think that we had good equipment and received good training.”

The following section provides an in-depth analysis of the data received from my participants through the lens of Scott’s (2014) formulation.

Regulative

The behaviour of the members of the SADF was controlled and empowered through explicit regulative processes such as “rule-setting, monitoring, and sanctioning activities” (Scott, 2014:35). These regulative processes were established formal rules, which included role assignments (a hierarchical rank system), the monitoring of the adherence to the rules, and rewarding compliance or sanctioning deviance (Scott, 2014). The SADF controlled and governed our behaviour through military law, codes of conduct, and formal procedures. This included rules regarding conduct, training, promotions, and discipline, which were enforced through established procedures and the accompanying consequences of not complying. The most severe consequence was prosecution and being sentenced to an extended period in prison for refusal to comply with the National Service call-up.

Rules and regulations provided a structured framework for how the institution functioned, creating clear guidelines for behaviour and operations. There was a focus on measuring compliance against established standards to ensure that the SADF, as a whole, could function effectively in its combat role. For the conscripts, particularly during the training phases, this measuring was pervasive and constant. Inspections of living quarters, equipment, and the soldier’s body, from head-to-toe, were part of his daily lived experience. Further, discipline, fitness, competence, and the ability to function as part of a cohesive unit were tested. Military discipline was a core focus and was characterised by, not only the soldiers' prompt and willing responsiveness to orders, but also understanding compliance to regulation.

Participant India describes his experience of basic training:

Basics was a total shock to their system, two hours drilling every morning, non-stop shouting and screaming, we ran everywhere, regular chasing "*om daai boom*" (around the tree), push ups etc. We were messed around every night, with long roll calls, throwing sand and water on our already polished floors, an absolute nightmare. The guys were exhausted, falling asleep during lessons, bush craft etc. and so we would get chased again and again.

Participant Juliette provides further reflection, concluding that, "[T]he rule during basics was that no matter what you did, it never seemed to please anyone":

In a word, basic training was intense. We were not permitted to take shortcuts over any grassed area. We were not permitted to walk, unless we were marching. We marched a lot, and ran a lot. Nothing seemed good enough for the corporals, and we were punished for the slightest transgressions. Cleaning was a religion during basics. Everything had to be free of dust, rust and fingerprints. Everything had to shine. Blankets were a notable exception, but they had to have square edges.

Participant Echo provides similar insights, whilst discussing the cleaning of rifles:

This was the bane of my life during basics. I could never get the barrel clean to a point of satisfaction for the rank during inspections. They always said there was dust in the barrel, or grease or some such debris. I eventually just gave up trying to do it to their standard. I thought it looked pretty clean.

Some of the words which were often repeated by participants when discussing the training phases were: dust, mud, cold, heat, sleep deprivation, shame, threat, kit, *trammel* (steel trunk), rifle, boots, *balsak* (kitbag), browns, overalls, waiting, cleaning, running, pushups, chased, lugging kit. Actions or rituals that emerged were as follows: running to and/or around a distant tree, or pole, or fence, as punishment; waiting in line; endless cleaning; lugging one's kit over long distances; leopard crawling; fitness tests such as the 2,4's (2.4-kilometre run) and route marches; chicken parades. As Participant Charlie quips, "it was a lot of 'Hurry up and wait'". However, even waiting was part of training and installing a sense of duty, as the National Service Guide (1982:19) explains:

One sometimes hears of a national serviceman 'sitting and doing nothing' during national service. It is unfortunately a fact that the purpose of a Defence Force is to wage war and that in peacetime some of its members will have to play a less active role than others. The threat against the RSA is of such a nature, however, that a stronger onslaught may arise at any moment and then there would be no time to call up a lot of Citizen Force men.

The regulative pillar emphasises conformity to regulation, rules and legal requirements (Scott, 2014). Discipline was key, and a coercive power that ensured that this took place. The conscripts conformed

to laws and rules not only because they wished to avoid sanctions, but also because of the attendant rewards.

Most participants indicated the futility of trying to keep things clean in extreme (dusty, muddy, windy, heat and cold) conditions. As Participant Omega notes, “[E]ventually we learned that no matter how well we did inspection, if they wanted a reason to give us an *opfok* (physical punishment) they would find one”. As reflexive researcher I noted the parallel with the futility of a doomed mission that a number of the participants indicated, with the SADF’s larger mission in the context of geo-political situation in southern Africa at the time. Participant Foxtrot observes:

We only bought SWA and SA time to hand over political power to our erstwhile enemies; this came as a great shock to the conservatives who were in the majority and lead to great disillusionment and betrayal – which I did not really feel or experience as I was not ideologically focussed or orientated. Ironically, a very progressive and dynamic organisation which failed in the PR realm, despite the racial policies – we were integrated long before it became ‘normal’ in SA; I met some fine junior and senior officers who would have succeeded and commanded respect in corporate SA as well; I was proud to have served – but I knew that we were ultimately doomed and would not win the propaganda and political war.

Whether the conscripts experienced or perceived it negatively or not, the regulative processes were aimed at clearly defining what was expected of members of the SADF, providing clear guidance on desired and undesired behaviours. This clarity instilled understanding among individuals on how to interact within the institution and how to contribute positively. Ultimately, rules served the purpose of advancing the broader objectives and mission of the military institution and the government.

I witnessed and experienced the consequences of not adhering to the regulations firsthand. The most extreme instance was on our first day out at the shooting range, one of the conscripts was shot by another while we were having lunch. The offending conscript had not followed the protocol required when using a firearm and had left a round in the chamber. We never heard whether the conscript had survived or not, but it was unlikely as a round fired from a high velocity rifle such as a R1 does not produce flesh wounds but tears off limbs and blows out huge exit holes on a body. We also never heard what happened to the careless, clueless shooter either. They were both taken away and we did not see or hear of either again. We were not given time to react or even reflect, but were instead chased by the screaming corporals and lieutenants back onto the shooting range and ordered to commence shooting again. After this incident very early on in my National Service, I lived in a perpetual state of what I called in hindsight, an anticipation of violence. There were very real consequences to not following the institutional directives, mostly resulting in punishment, but some a matter of life and death.

As Participant Delta stresses:

My rifle was always spotless for different reasons though. First year a spotless rifle in Infantry School ensured marginally less physical exhaustion; that margin being the difference between dying of exhaustion or not. The second year at 101 BN, mostly deployed in Angola, a spotless rifle was the difference between dying in contacts or not.

Normative

Scott's (2014:40) normative pillar is a far more complex formulation than the regulative pillar. This is because it refers to social beliefs and norms that are both internalised as well as imposed by others. In this system there is the element of self-evaluation that accompanies the decision to conform to, or violate, norms. If regulative means simply obeying direct instructions because of the existence of accompanying enforcement mechanisms, normative refers to the norms and values that structure the choices made. In this there is a measure of agency.

Earlier I highlighted the term 'ritual' as things done in accordance with social custom or normal protocol, that is, an act or series of acts regularly repeated in a set precise manner. This relates to what the SADF, and importantly, its members, determined to be normal and accepted in the military institution, that is, social norms, shared values, and expectations that were considered the proper or moral behaviour of the soldiers. Standards are established on how something should be done, and values are identified, that is, what is preferred or desired. Similarly, through repetition and reiteration of gendered acts - doing gender - specific gender identities are naturalised, or normalised (Butler, 1988).

Under the previous section I noted this 'anticipation of violence' I experienced whilst a conscript. Extending on this, the question arises: what does a constant fear of violence and arbitrary punishment do to the conscript? Arguably it contributes to regulation and following regulations, as well as self-monitoring and self-surveillance. There is a blend of coercion and compliance. The aim of the SADF was to establish compliance through societal obligation and a sense of moral duty, instilled through training rather than through the enforcement of rules and regulations. In other words, this was a socially shared belief system where the decisions regarding which rules to follow, relied on the member's beliefs of right and wrong, and determined their decision to conform to or violate those rules. However, these norms were strongly intertwined with the regulative system. In the SADF the normative was informed and supported by, and ultimately enforced through, regulation, compliance through coercion.

Scott's (2014) formulation of institutions parallels Butler's (1988) performativity theory and Goffman's (1956) dramaturgical model, where he refers to actors and roles, and the performance of actions deemed appropriate:

Some values and norms are applicable to all members of the collectivity; others apply only to selected types of actors or positions. Such specialized values and norms are termed *roles*: conceptions of appropriate action for particular individuals or specified social positions. These conceptions are not simply anticipations or predictions but prescriptions—normative expectations—of what the actors are supposed to do (Scott, 2014:38).

In other words, normative rules, although imposing constraints on social behaviour, also empowered and enabled social action, because creating predictability and trust through shared expectations for behaviour encourages cooperation while reducing the need to monitor (Scott, 1988:38). In the SADF these rules structured choices within a specific socio-political context. The most obvious example in the military scenario was the hierarchical rank structure within the SADF and the associated roles each held, and the function or purpose of that role (the script they followed). By defining roles, promoting cooperation, and providing a basis for social sanction or reward, the norms in the SADF empowered individuals to act collectively, even when those actions were individually complex and contrary to personal beliefs. Although each conscript did possess agency, much like Butler's conceptualisation regarding gender, their behaviour was strictly policed with often severe repercussions for not conforming.

The military norms and culture of the SADF were intentionally shaped by the apartheid government and the militarised South African society. I have discussed this in-depth in my review of literature, but briefly, the SADF operated within a highly militarised state, where the military played a significant role in the political and social life of the country. Security threats were often framed in racial, cultural, and religious terms, reinforcing the justification for the military's reach and power, and its cultural impact on society which had become a garrison state as a result of a siege mentality. It was an institution that largely consisted of white men, the majority of whom had been compelled to serve, contributing to the overall militarisation of society and the military's pervasive influence. Its hierarchical structure emphasised white male dominance, which reflected the norm of the greater South African society. Many men often conformed not because it served their individual interests, but because it was expected of them; it was their moral obligation (Scott, 2014:39). Of course, equally, there were men who conformed because it 'empowered' them, and served their personal interests.

Part of the military norms, along with this hierarchal system, was that members were expected to serve with loyalty and pride, embodying values like duty and responsibility, discipline and loyalty, and courage and self-sacrifice. All of these were attached to the role of Christian white male protector.

As indicated in the literature review, masculinity was itself militarised, where in order to be considered a (white) man, one had to serve in the country's military. A government White Paper on Defence and Armaments Production (1973) clearly states that it was Defence Force policy to "make fullest use of the opportunities afforded by the National Service System to promote the physical and spiritual preparedness of our youth". One thing that is made clear is that national servicemen were "deeply educated in the norms, codes and values of the Defence Force" in order for them to be forged into a unified professional fighting force capable of ensuring the security of the state (Frankel, 1984:96). A divergent body of men, the shared norms were a racial (ethnic) compromise for the purposes of national defence (Warwick, 2019:143-145). As Biko (1971:4) argues, "[T]he overall success of the White power structure has been managing to bind the Whites together in defence of the status quo".

These norms were informed and supported by a cultural-cognitive framework where decisions and behaviour were based on learned and internalised choices. This cultural-cognitive pillar will be discussed next. Whilst conducting my analysis I found that the most applicable responses which related to the normative pillar revolved around the former conscripts reporting for National Service and returning to base and basic training after their first pass home. Reporting for military service was a social obligation for the former conscripts, enforced by regulation. Despite the knowledge of what awaited them on their return to base after their first pass home to family, they generally all returned.

Some of the responses were as follows:

Participant Echo - "Returning to the base after the first pass was one of the most depressing experiences of my life."

Participant Omega - "And if I thought that the induction process was terrible, coming back after the first pass was one of the worst and bravest things I ever had to do. I just wanted to run but I had to be brave for my Mother."

Participant Juliette - "My first pass did my head in."

Participant Foxtrot - "1st pass was at Infantry School – no one was interested in us and I felt alienated from society; civilians irritated me; it was an anti-climax."

Participant India describes what awaited us on our return from that first pass:

On our arrival at about 6.00 am we were met with lots of screaming and shouting which continued for the day to get rid of that '*sleg*' (bad) civvy (civilian) life. We got chased the entire day, I remember our 2nd in command - Major [redacted – commanding officer's name] telling us that up until then, we had it easy, "*ons gaan nou die skroewe draai*" (We are going to really turn the screws now). I could not believe that it could get any worse.

Participant Delta shares the inner anguish:

The amount of mental fighting I had to do with myself to return and undergo the same tormenting again and again was not a patch on the inner mental warfare I fought with myself that Monday when I had to return from my first pass!

Participant Bravo describes an incident he experienced resulting from the first pass:

I slept through most of my first 3-day pass! It was awful returning! One man shot himself rather than return to camp. A 'memorial service' was given as we returned to Oudsthoorn. His name was never spoken but it was a diatribe about what a coward he was and how we would be shamed by the Army and our families if we considered suicide. Friends of his walked out, and were punished later.

The power of establishing normative thinking and behaviour in the military institution is that the former conscripts, through a combination of social obligation, shared values, and self-regulation, carried out what the SADF required of them with minimal effort from its regulative system.

It is this normative thinking I would imagine, which was what saw the mostly adolescent soldiers serving in World War One to "go over the top". They would climb out of the trenches and into No Man's Land, the dangerous, exposed ground between opposing trenches, on the signal of a whistle blown by the officers, to initiate an assault. Or what saw the mostly adolescent soldiers serving in World War Two to storm the beaches of Normandy. As indicated in my discussion on the SADF's established military culture (2.3.3), it fostered a deeply politicised and ideologically driven military, which was a product of its operational environment and the political elite's worldview. This worldview defined the terms of nationalism and patriotism (social obligation) for white South African men, and attempted to instil a deeply held and shared belief system that justified military service and sacrifice as a civic duty. Compliance mostly occurs in these circumstances because other types of behaviour are inconceivable (Scott, 2014:44). For the men going "over the top" or storming the beaches, death or violent disfigurement was a high likelihood, and yet they still did it as it was inconceivable not to. Routines, as Scott (2014:44) argues, are followed because they are taken for granted as "the way we do these things."

Cultural-cognitive

Scott (2014:45) posits that "[A] cognitive conception of institutions stresses the central role played by the socially mediated construction of a common framework of meaning." As meaning-making, it focuses on how individuals and groups interpret and make sense of their experiences, attaching meaning to symbols, roles, and actions within the institution. As such it strongly aligns with the objectives of this research study. The cultural-cognitive pillar assists an institution in establishing its

identity and reputation, while providing its members with a way to understand and define themselves within their organisational and institutional roles. The most obvious way the SADF implemented this formulation was through the bodies of the conscripts, beginning with the uniform, and including such behaviour as marching, bracing and saluting. These coordinated actions and gestures were not merely personal acts, but public demonstrations of the military's hierarchy, unity, and values, representing the institution itself rather than the individual soldier. The precision of marching transformed individual soldiers into a single, unified force, representing the institution's discipline and collective strength. The act of bracing and saluting is a standardised gesture of respect for rank, tradition, and professionalism, and reinforces the military's hierarchical structure and sense of collective trust. These body-based actions become a public language that communicates military identity and power, transcending the individual to symbolise the entire institution.

The military culture and structure of the UDF became an ideological project of the NP when it came into power in 1948, and this continued with the advent of the SADF in 1957. Like gender, as social constructs, “symbols are generative and performative; they give existence to what otherwise would not be” (Meyer, Leixnering, Kornberger, Jancsary & Höllerer, 2024:3829). Much like the bodies of the conscripts, they possess an actual, manifest dimension, which is individually accessible through the perceptions of the senses, and, simultaneously, a conceptual dimension, which relates to collectively shared meanings (Meyer et.al, 2024:3828). In other words, according to Meyer et.al (2024:3828), symbols bring cultural phenomena into the world, taking physical form. Cultural phenomena might be forms of technology, social movements, language, or even an institution such as the SADF.

Afrikaner hegemonic masculinity was used as part of the nationalist ideology to merge divergent interests and goals of white Afrikaans-speakers (Du Pisani, 2004:160). In the SADF emphasis was placed on allegiance to the National Party, Afrikaner identity, and the military culture and traditions of the old Boer Republics (Van Der Waag, 2015:221). Participant Juliette notes that, “We were soon moved from tent city to the barracks, all named after famous Boer war engagements, Nicholson’s Nek was our bungalow, after the Boer War battle that took place north of Ladysmith in 1899”. Part of the SAINTS base in Kimberley where I underwent training was occupied by the Danie Theron Combat School. It was named after a famous Boer reconnaissance specialist, who formed the *Theron se Verkenningsskorps* (Theron Reconnaissance Corps). In reference and in homage of this, the most basic rank of the troops at the base was *verkenner* (scout).

As noted, the organisational and manpower transformation within the armed forces resulted in Afrikaner culture dominating the military institution’s language of communication, symbols and nomenclature (Van Der Waag, 2015:221). For most conscripts’ language was where this cultural

domination was most evident, and yet accepted as natural and as it should be. The perception was that the National Party ran the country and the SADF was its military wing, and both were Afrikaner institutions. As Participant Juliette observes:

We learned to march, with the usual confusion between your left and right. This is where a couple of years of attending Cadets at a bilingual school really helped me. Some of the English recruits really struggled with the Afrikaans drill commands – they were akin to guttural shrieks from alien creatures to them - hik yak hik yak, instead of left right left right... We were told that the army is bilingual - they talk in Afrikaans and laugh in English, and there is precious little laughter at 5 SAI.

Whilst undergoing training at SAINTS, we were told that the SADF, being a fair and just institution, alternated Afrikaans and English, and that this year was Afrikaans' turn. The following year we were told the same thing. Participant Omega shares a similar lived experience:

Basics was lots of learning new skills: rifles, inspection, ironing, and running and drilling, 2,4s, leopard crawling...and learning that I thought I could understand and speak Afrikaans fluently, but that I really couldn't.

Participant Hotel similarly indicates that “being English-speaking was a disadvantage even though I was fluent in Afrikaans”. Additionally, there were informal designations, sanctioned and encouraged by both commanding non-commissioned and commissioned officers. As English speakers, we English conscripts received the title, *soutpiel*⁴⁷. Further, my speaking what my commanding officers referred to as the “language of the communist”, signalled me out for especially brutal treatment during the training phases of my military service. The offence was exacerbated by the fact that I had an Afrikaans surname and lived in what was known as ‘the Last British Outpost’, Durban. This is representative of the symbolic use of language within the SADF. It is also indicative of how language was a tool used to determine where conscripts would be placed within the hegemonic and hierarchal structure of power that existed within the institution.

The brutality of the National Service system was also notably reflected in the language used. Language was used to advance, or thwart agendas in the conflict, and carried ideological weight. For example, how individuals were described and referred to; our enemy were ‘terrorists’ while we were ‘soldiers’. Language was weaponised, and used to demonise and dehumanise our enemy. The terms and phrases used to discipline conscripts frequently contained masculine traits due to its association with force, power, aggression, and amplified the male-dominated culture of military bases. “*Jy lag soos ’n hoer wat ’n sak vol piele gevind het*” (you laugh like a whore who has found a sack full of

⁴⁷ *Soutpiel* or *soutie* was a derogatory name given to English-speaking conscripts. It is derived from the metaphor of English-speaking South African men, who were described as having one foot in Africa and the other in Europe, with their penises hanging in the ocean.

penises) is an insult I recall a corporal screaming at a conscript. This reflects the disassociation from, and denigration of the feminine, that often occurred in the SADF.

Similarly, the terms and nicknames that my participants used in their descriptions, and which were commonplace during our National Service, reflected the gendered nature of the military institution. Some of the terms were: *balsak* – scrotum, for our military canvas kitbag; *boeshoed poes* – bushhat virgin or ‘pussy’ which was the vertical stitching line on the bushhat which had to face backwards when worn; *pisvel* – foreskin, for a mattress cover; Pussy Pink – army issue floor polish; *tampax tiffie* – slang term for a medic. The terms used often involved sexual organs or sexual acts, with men being associated with male sexual organs and masculinity, and conflating sex and gender within an all-male environment. *Tampax tiffie* for example is denigratory because it references women’s hygiene products

There was a personal, embodied connection to many of these military slang terms too. I recall having my bushhat jammed down over my ears by a corporal, and then having it violently wrenched around on my head so that the ‘virgin’, the seam, was facing backwards. My red ears were not only as a result of the shame of being violated like this alone. The wrenching of the hat would tear at your ears resulting in them turning bright red. This was known as ‘breaking the virgin’. In the context of Scott’s (2014) cultural-cognitive formulation this exemplifies the institutional use of symbols. A simple clothing item, a khaki bushhat, becomes a powerful symbol of the SADF which must be worn correctly, and if it was not, there was a symbolic public punishment associated with that error/failure.

Further, this was a culture of ingrained secrecy and limited transparency:

I don’t know if it was because we were conscripts, and whether troops in a permanent force military are given more information than we were, but I think that if we were given more information about what we were going to be doing, it could have made us more positive participants. I understand the concepts of operational security and need-to-know, but we were given little indication of what we would be doing from one day to the next, which led to many being quite negative and not very “paraat” (disciplined, ready/prepared) (Participant Kilo).

There is the old military adage: “Ours is not to question why. Ours is just to do and die”. The act of being conscripted into the military implied that the conscript’s private life would be subordinate to the institution’s demands. You did not question and you did not speak unless ordered to. From the outset individuals became part of a culture in which individualism was suppressed, the performance of assigned military tasks and missions took priority over personal problems and desires, and sacrifice for higher goals for the good of greater society, was part of everyday life (Kozina, 2019:50). Military culture became the lens through which many of the members of the institution viewed and perceived

the world. There was a cultural-cognitive element to the lens which comprised of shared symbolic representations. These were expressed in sets of collective meanings such as symbols, where words, signs, and gestures shaped the meanings we attributed to objects and activities.

The SADF itself was a symbol of the South African apartheid state. It was presented by the government as not only the epitome of white hegemony, in particular, Afrikaner male hegemony, but also as the protector of southern Africa against the forces of communism. The military institution was an ideological symbol of the Apartheid regime, representing white minority rule, state power, and an anti-communist Total Strategy weapon against perceived internal and external threats. However, it should be acknowledged, as I have intimated, that along with ethnicity (Afrikaans and English whites), the SADF did also practice forms of integration of races that certainly were not occurring in broader South African society. As Participant Foxtrot explains:

Ironically, a very progressive and dynamic organisation which failed in the PR realm, despite the racial policies – we were integrated long before it became “normal” in SA; I met some fine junior and senior officers who would have succeeded and commanded respect in corporate SA as well; I was proud to have served – but I knew that we were ultimately doomed and would not win the propaganda and political war.

Participant Bravo describes his experience of racial integration of soldiers:

Relations between black and white troops were friendly. There was not a lot of racism evident. We were “in it together” as it were. Both black and white soldiers bitched about the same PFs with rank (both black and white). Maybe it’s because it was such a small camp, but there was a certain camaraderie among the soldiers, both black and white, though not black with white.

This is not to say that discrimination did not exist in the SADF, or segregation, or the restriction of promotion according to race. Participant Juliette describes some of his experiences regarding this:

Our basics training was exclusively white males. Provost School was different, in that we were joined by permanent force soldiers from Zululand (21 Battalion, if I remember correctly) and a couple of soldiers from the Bophuthatswana Defence Force, who were undergoing specialist military police training. Sergeant [redacted – black Zulu male] was a quiet, humble and professional soldier. One of the most memorable occasions of my national service was when we were taught Zulu chants to run to – a novelty that saw hundreds of soldiers from other units line the roads of Army Battle School. There were some real boneheads in our platoon that wouldn’t give him the time of day, or help him when he needed a hand.

Nevertheless, the SADF, arguably, represented the commencement of some progressive thinking within state institutions. Much like the UDF came to symbolically represent the joining of white Afrikaans-speakers and white English-speakers and their associated ethnicities into a united force, so

the SADF, while continuing the unification project begun with the UDF, began to present the military institution as a multi-racial one, unified against the total onslaught of communism.

Military uniforms created a shared identity, including women and people of colour. They reflected ideology and created a homogeneous identity for group cohesion in the SADF. The identical appearance instituted by uniforms and haircuts served to strip each person of their individuality, and arguably displaced ethnicity and race as primary identity markers. As a symbol of national and cultural identity, uniforms served to project strength and power, and created a unified appearance for the SADF, distinguishing members from civilians and enhancing a sense of order, discipline, and professional pride. As symbols of rank, uniforms also served a number of practical purposes. Firstly, they ensured that each person's skills, training and expertise were immediately apparent. Secondly, by emphasising the hierarchical structure of the military, uniforms indicated where respect and deference was to be shown, much of that reserved for white Afrikaans men. Finally, the officers' uniforms served as a reminder that the individual officer's authority was derived from the institution itself.

Participant Juliette comments on the symbolic role uniforms played in the SADF:

Recruits weren't even allowed to wear 'browns' (standard uniform) – only overalls. Seniority didn't merely depend on rank – it could be indicated by something as small as a beret baltie (badge), or seams in your shirt and trousers. *Oumanne* (senior conscripts) would iron seams into the back of their shirts, one for each quarter they had served. Anyone with 3 seams was about to *klaar out* (demobilised), and was generally treated with respect by the recruits, whether the *ouman* had rank or not.

The SADF placed significant emphasis on the male body and bodily performance, making it central to the institutional construction of identity. Uniforms represented a commitment to military values as a basic manifestation of military discipline and professionalism. Further, the uniform projected power and physical toughness when adorning the satisfactorily fit and healthy, G1K1 body. In addition, the SADF uniform also established clear gender norms within the institution by creating a standard appearance of masculinity, emphasising uniformity, discipline, and physical toughness. Acceptable masculinity therefore had a specific visual dimension. The military uniform that was clothing the body served as a material and symbolic gendered marker of identity and belonging. By having distinct uniforms for men and women, traditional roles and societal expectations were reinforced. As such, this study argues that an additional lens was that of gender.

Policing masculinity was a main characteristic of the military culture in the SADF. As indicated, the SADF established a hegemonic, militarised masculinity which centred on the repudiation of femininity, emphasising physical ability, stoicism, heterosexuality, and a particular white Afrikaner

masculinity as the ideal. The military served as a site for constructing and enforcing these masculine norms, with soldiers trained to display strength and conformity while suppressing any traits deemed ‘soft’ or feminine. Participant Bravo describes being on the receiving end of this policing:

I have a French surname and certain feminine attributes (I am told!). As a result, I was considered a *sagte Fransman* (soft Frenchman); I was not bullied, instead, my fellow soldiers were quite protective of me. A couple even wrote me love letters! My ‘Frenchness’ seemed to let me off the hook in their eyes. There was one incident of sexual abuse. The two involved apologised but justified it by blaming my looks and *manière* (manner or ways). I reminded them too much of a *meisie* (girl).

He continues:

I have been aware since early childhood of the gender antics of school and did not expect any different from the army. Put men together without women and a lot of this sort of stuff goes on. The army is a more extreme environment, so more extreme stuff will happen. (Participant Bravo).

This classification of Bravo by fellow conscripts, and the license they took to therefore treat him like they may have a girl, reflects the extremely gendered nature of the institution. It also reflects how the feminine was viewed by some of the men, something that needed protection, and as the protected became ‘owned’ by the protectors. This is evidenced by the non-consensual abuse and the blaming of the victim’s manners and looks (feminine).

Participant Bravo mentions “extreme stuff” happening within this military culture, this included what Participant Juliette refers to as:

Discipline by proxy - getting the troops to do the corporal’s dirty work when they were out of sight, by tripping someone and then kicking them while they lay on the ground, or simply punching them at the turn point of a run around a distant tree or building was a standard tactic throughout my training. They got the troops to do the dirty work for them.

He goes on to describe the practice of *borseling* (scrubbing violently):

PTSD isn’t just from combat – the treatment meted out by some of the instructors was, in reality, abusive. I saw first-hand what happened to the slackers in my platoon, and remember a guy whose personal hygiene wasn’t up to standard, which let the platoon down and caused us to fail inspections repeatedly. At least, that is my memory, but on reflection, this guy was probably just an average recruit that the corporal had taken an instant dislike to. Some of the rougher guys took him to the showers and scrubbed him with brushes and Jeyes Fluid (disinfectant cleaning fluid), which burned his skin something terrible. Needless to say, nobody knew a thing, but the mental scars it must have left on him were certainly much worse than the physical ones. He was terrified by the event, and I’m pretty sure he had a screw loose

after that. Holding a normal conversation with him was nearly impossible. Eventually others stopped trying, and he was left alone, and he became a hermit, even though he was in our platoon at the time (Participant Juliette).

Participant Kilo shares a similar occurrence:

There was a guy in another platoon in our company that seemed not quite right mentally. He always struggled to follow any instructions and also had a problem with personal hygiene. He was warned several times to shower every day but didn't. This resulted in fire buckets of water and scrubbing brushes being brought to the parade ground and him being scrubbed down while the whole company watched.

Finally, Participant Echo describes his own lived experience of being the target of such policing:

One incident I experienced personally when some of the bigger guys in the platoon tried to give me a shower because they hadn't observed me showering for a couple of days. It was an unpleasant scene where I had to fight these oafs off and have them watch me shower in the cold water in the middle of winter.

In the extreme environment of the military where a specific and sometimes harmful view of what it means to be a man, based on traits like aggression, stoicism, and endurance, is passed down, these types of incidents occur. Individual masculinity is often tested and even questioned, and is part of the cultural-cognitive pillar Scott (2014) conceptualises.

Scott's (2014) formulation of institutional pillars, although broad and not specifically addressing gender, does align with the notion of gendered institutions by highlighting how rules, norms, and taken-for-granted meanings may reinforce gendered power dynamics. The regulative pillar provides insight into how specific laws such as the conscription of only white men into the SADF, resulted in an institution and culture that favoured such men, and ensured that the power remained in their control. The normative pillar shows how ingrained professional and social norms that favour one race and gender resulted. The values, social roles, and professional norms created by those in power, shaped what was considered legitimate or proper behaviour within the SADF. These norms subtly, and often not so subtly, reinforced racial and gendered power dynamics. Finally, the cultural-cognitive pillar reveals how the most deeply held beliefs about gender, and what is considered 'normal' can create a powerful, often invisible, foundation for gendered inequalities. Assumptions, beliefs, and shared understandings about gender were deeply embedded within the institution.

In this respect, Acker's (1990, 1992) theory and concepts regarding gendered institutions operated as subthemes in my thematic analysis (see Table 2: Thematic Analysis – Themes). They were used to critically analyse the data received from the participants in this research study, with a focus specifically on their experiences of a gendered institution, the SADF.

Acker's (1990, 1992) gendering practices and structures

The South African military played a pivotal role in masculine construction. Military service acted as a rite of passage into manhood, moulding young men into a uniform (no pun intended) masculine ideal. Basics (basic training) was essentially an initiation process aimed at transforming boys, and allowing them transition into the world of men. The first step was to separate the male 'initiates' (conscripts) from their mothers and all other females. Conscription was in itself considered a rite of passage for white South African boys. In fact, state discourse presented the military experience as a transformative rite of passage for white South African boys (Conway 2012:60). The rite of passage, it was argued, taught them cultural traditions, norms, values, and responsibilities. These in turn allowed them to transition from boyhood to manhood, and prepared them for leadership and community roles. It was a means of gaining identity, honour, and belonging, both symbolic and real, within a community, solidifying the individual's place in the white South African social structure, and that place was determined by race, sex and gender. This gendered social and political structure was embedded in everyday white South African life, represented as both natural and acceptable.

Associating military service with strength and dominance, it conferred power, status, and a sense of superiority, aligning it with the greater white male Apartheid project. It was white South African men who were conscripted and it was white South African men who occupied the uppermost positions of power amongst the permanent force members. Along with this gendering organising structure and processes, gendered symbolism and imagery existed, the uniform being chief amongst them. Uniforms, designed for the male body, separated the conscripts from not only civilians and their civilian lives, but also from the feminine.

The entire military service experience, from induction to completion, was designed and constructed as a rite of passage (Conway 2012:61). Basic and bush phase (second phase) training was a formal initiation into the military institution. Participant Omega submits that "whatever 'masculine' institution" he entered, he was initiated. He continues:

In the military, the mother-of-all initiations (or rather, the father-of-all) was Basics. But within the companies and platoons initiations took place. '*Ou manne*' would initiate the new troops arriving on bases. When I arrived with the other 2 Intelligence troops at Omega, we were initiated over an entire night by '*ou manne*' and the other Intelligence officers and Civic Action rank. We had to run with 2 firebuckets full of sand while being chased with a gary (jeep) into the dark. We had to squeeze into a *staalkas* (steel cupboard) and close the door and then on the hour open it and call, "*kook kook, ou manne! Dit is nou 12 uur.*" If we were wrong we had to run again. The initiators drank and partied while initiating us – listening to OMD. The Americans call it hazing.

Here the military mirrors the power of the old men, '*oumanne*', in patriarchal societies where 'old men' occupy positions of symbolic and real superiority. Fear and reverence are demanded and often instilled through humiliation and tortuous activities.

In addition, as Participant Omega and Participant's Juliette and Delta indicate, formal initiations were accompanied by informal initiations:

Initiation for all the new officers was done at the officer's bar, and consisted of a consuming a boot of beer with Stroh Rum (80% / 160 proof) floating on the top. Needless to say, vomiting ensued. A second round of initiation by the *oumanne* from the provost unit entailed the new guys running up Dune 7, which was not as hard as I thought it would be, mainly because of our 11 months of training (Participant Juliette).

All infantry members who were seconded to 101 had to do the "*Wit Pad*" (white road). This was a march from 101's then satellite base called Miershoop along a dirt jeep track up to the Etosha Game Reserve fencing some 30 km's distance and back. This route was in the "Pannetjies Veld" very much like our Springbok Vlakte only without any trees. It was a flat desolate area where anything higher than ankle high was considered high. If I recall correctly, the march began at 08h00 when the sun was already up and the day's heat could be felt. It became notoriously hot in the Pannetjies Veld. On the march and the initiate had to carry his rifle, first line ammunition, sufficient water and food for the day (Participant Delta).

These traditions and initiation rituals were generally believed to foster social solidarity and fraternisation, and thereby creating group cohesion and a feeling of belonging (Krögera, Venemab & Van Baarlea, 2023:11) As Krögera et al. (2023:11) posit, group cohesion can be entwined with homogeneous perspectives on perpetuating a unifying masculine identity, or in fact, hypermasculinity. "Homogenous perspectives" (Krögera, Venemab & Van Baarlea, 2023:11) refers to viewpoints and experiences within a group that are similar due to the members sharing common characteristics, such as age, sex, race, and/or socioeconomic status, as was the case in the SADF. While this similarity can foster comfort and unity, it often leads to a lack of diverse insights and a greater risk of groupthink, which was, I would argue, the goal of the SADF. As Trudy de Ridder, a psychologist at the Trauma Centre for the Victims of Violence and Torture testified at the TRC:

[T]he national education system consistently presented military training as a given part of the rites of white men and the moral duty of anyone concerned with defending order and morality (Christianity) against the forces of evil and chaos (Soviet-inspired Communism) ... They could not have had the tools or information to challenge this view - especially at the age of seventeen or eighteen (TRC 1998:226).

De Ridder (1998:226) intimates that although eighteen was a common age for conscription, being the age of legal adulthood, and where men are physically mature enough for military service, psychologically they were less able than older adults to make informed choices about the military. Further, they are more susceptible to the long-term impacts of such high-stress environments. Medact, an organisation that represents a wide variety of health professionals, presents evidence that military service has a detrimental impact on the mental health of young recruits (UK Parliament, 2018). Medact (UK Parliament, 2018) found that the psychological effects of military training alter the personality, emotional stability, and social function of the individual. The medical professionals (UK Parliament, 2018) characterised these adolescent men as being in a “window of vulnerability”, which is what De Ridder’s testimony reflects.

Participant Delta provides further insight into the notion of trauma visited onto the youthful conscripts:

It always struck me as the epitome of the politicians’ hypocritical thankfulness. It was the easiest for them to get you battle ready and expose us at average 19 years to the horrors of war, but never took responsibility to address our emotional/psychological scars; scars that remain with many till today. Not even an effort to reincorporate us into civil life. Nothing.

Acker (1990:139) argues that organisational structure is not gender neutral, and that institutions’ gendered nature is hidden by obscuring the embodied nature of work. This cannot be said of the SADF where its gendered nature was never hidden by obscuring the embodied nature of its task to be carried out by its chiefly white male members. The defence of this country was believed to be a man’s job, and it was men that were conscripted. My research and the data received from my participants, support the notion of not only the gendered nature of the institution and its inherent hierarchical structure based on sex and ethnicity, but also its whiteness. Nevertheless, on a more intimate and personal level, the data also provided individual thick descriptions which provided insights into boys becoming men, placed into a situation beyond their control, and their embodied experience thereof.

By utilising Scott’s (2014) pillars of institutions theory and Acker’s (1990, 1992) conceptualisations of gendered institutions I was able to critically analyse the thick descriptions I collected from my participants. This in turn allowed me, based on my findings, to unpack which gendered rituals, markers and directives were experienced by former conscripts in the SADF, and how they experienced gender rituals, markers and gender directives during their time in the military institution. It was these insights that I focused on for the purposes of my practical component. I discuss this in the following chapter.

5.8 Conclusion - reflexivity and the data analysis process

Key elements of this analysis chapter have included detailing how the themes were generated and reviewed, explaining how the themes answered the research question, and critically examining how my own background or assumptions may have influenced the analysis. A discussion of the analytical process included a description of my embodied journey, including the physical immersion of myself while working with the data, was presented. This indicates a research methodology where the researcher engages in deep, personal, and often physical involvement with the narratives, subjects and data being studied. This approach is most prominently associated with research methods like participant observation and ethnography. In addition, I was transparent regarding my choices of the codes which were used and how the final themes were defined and named. For each theme, I provided direct quotes or data excerpts that supported and illustrated the theme.

Importantly, I provided reflection on my role as the researcher. This included a consideration of my influence on the study. I acknowledged that I was not only an active participant in the analysis and how my background, assumptions, or theoretical perspective may have shaped the results, but that as a former conscript myself, I used this insider position as an analytical tool for critical insights and understanding. Part of this reflexive research approach was the use of self-interviews. I not only completed the research questionnaire along with the participants, but included reflective annotations and memos to explore my own experiences and biases related to the research topic. Evidence of these is in my journal pages of which I have included examples in this thesis (see Figures 20-26).

My reflexive thematic analysis approach, which included auditing by my supervisor of my analysis and findings in relation to the data, allowed for the uncovering of rich, multifaceted findings that, I posit, go beyond the simple summary of what participants have said. Acknowledging that the researcher's background, experiences, and perspectives shape how they understand and interpret the data, leads to a deeper, more nuanced analysis and resultant findings.

CHAPTER 6: MAKING THE INVISIBLE VISIBLE

The chapters that precede this one form the theoretical component of this research study. While this chapter reflects on the practical component of the research study, focusing specifically on my artist's praxis, and performative research processes. It emphasises embodied and performative practice-based inquiry where knowledge is created through doing and experiencing rather than just observing, reading, writing, and documenting, with the aim of bridging the gap between theory, practice, and lived experience. Further, it explores the potential of presenting creative artefacts as research outcomes, representing the findings of a research study, and the processes involved in doing that. The aim of the chapter is to provide insights into how artists may leverage their studio practice as a form of practice-driven research by using it as a space for exploration, experimentation, and knowledge creation. Further, it strives to present evidence of how, by integrating research questions into the creative process, and vice versa, as well as using studio activities as a further instrument of data collection, and then reflecting on the outcomes, valuable insights may not only be gained into the selected research topic, but also of the practice and discipline. In this case, the research topic is gendered institutions, and in particular the SADF, and how conscripts experienced it.

This thesis, I would argue, provides evidence of a long-term research process⁴⁸ that is cyclical rather than linear, and while returning to central subjects such as masculinity and gendered institutions, through practice-driven research, always delves deeper into the self and through the self. My ongoing research is a living, intimate, interconnected thing in this scenario. The standard research study process consists of the following: identifying the problem or focus; a review of the literature; setting the research questions, objectives, and hypotheses; choosing the study design; deciding on the sample design; collecting data; processing and analysing data; and finally writing the report. Although the researcher is required to look forward and project possible future research which might arise from the study, it is typically a linear process. My long-term, cyclical research process uses creativity to question assumptions, connect disparate ideas, identify patterns, and develop new hypotheses, allowing for the generation of creative outputs alongside traditional written research. This approach, I posit, provides a rich and unique contribution to the field.

6.1 The Inscribed Body and Intercorporeality

The body is the inscribed surface of events (traced by language and dissolved by ideas), the locus of a dissociated Self (adopting the illusion of a substantive unity), and a volume in perpetual disintegration. Genealogy, as an analysis of descent, is thus situated within the

⁴⁸ I have included annexures attached to this thesis which provide evidence of, and further insights into, this process stretching back as far as 2007.

articulation of the body and history. Its task is to expose a body totally imprinted by history and the process of history's destruction of the body (Foucault, 1977:148).

The title of my research study indicates that it will explore the rituals of gender as experienced by former South African Defence Force conscripts through, and this is an essential qualifier, *embodied storytelling*. From a research perspective, I am not only intrigued by the variances of performance I can present, and how these speak to the viewer of the lived experiences of my participants as well as my own, but also the concept of *embodied research*. Merleau-Ponty (1962) argues that all human perception is embodied, and that we cannot perceive anything, and our senses cannot function, independently of our bodies (Nettleton, 2021: 52). Merleau-Ponty's (1962) conception of embodiment identifies the body as the vehicle of being in the world, and engaging with that world, produce the resultant "perceptual experience"; there is meaningful interpretation of those perceived experiences, always in relation to a particular location of the body in the world (Crossley, 1995; Allan, 2005:175). In this conceptualisation there is no separation between the mind and the body. Further, I would posit, that although separation between gender and the body is argued by some gender theorists, it should also be acknowledged that this perspective does not deny the material nature of the body but rather emphasises how bodies gain cultural meaning through gendered practices (Gattario, Frisén, Teall, & Piran, 2020). As Julia Coffey (2013) argues, it is through body work⁴⁹ practices that gender is continually reasserted and reconstructed. Further, research reflexivity acknowledges the presence of the researcher in a study, and can even, as this study does, acknowledge the materiality of that researcher's body. For the purposes of my research, it should be considered that my 'body' does not only generate the conclusions to the findings but also embodies and expresses them. My body is the researcher, the research tool, and the research focus.

Michel Foucault (1977:148), in the quote introducing this section, employs the metaphor of inscribing, that is, to write or carve words or symbols on something. He employs this as a way of illustrating how events, practices, and discourses may leave their marks on the body. My research study has explored this phenomenon through focusing on former conscripts' experiences of the SADF. It may be argued that these often formal or permanent records or experiences will shape the body's form, habits, and even the perceptions of the being or self who is attached to that body. Foucault (1977:148), a philosopher as well as historian, further argues that the body, as the inscribed surface of events, that is, history and discourse, is also a site where the self is fragmented rather than a unified, natural entity. By fragmented, Foucault means the self is a collection of fragmented identities,

⁴⁹ Coffey (2016:4) utilises the term 'body work' to describe the dynamic process by which bodies and societies shape each other, operating in relation to broader socio-historical and cultural contexts. The term 'body work' entails a consideration of the body beyond only the individual, and includes the range of relations between bodies and the social world, and those complex engagements which mediate 'what a body can do' (Coffey, 2013:4).

experiences, and representations. The data gathered by my fieldwork certainly provides evidence of this fragmentation, the major one being the conscripts' vacillation between civilian identity and the military identity. These are further complicated for the white former conscripts by the Apartheid identity and the post-Apartheid identity, and then everything between those four identities, including religion, ethnicity, class, sexuality, and more, sometimes all existing simultaneously.

As Participant Delta acknowledges when asked if he had any personal insights regarding the SADF:

I have been involved in hours of discussions over many a bottle of red wine on this topic. One would think that those thoughts have by now crystallised and would be easy to reproduce and pen, but in all honesty those discussions seldom left the topic concluded, but left one with even more questions than answers. These insights are complicated, philosophical and obviously subjective in nature.

Delta's response indicates the absence of resolution and certainty. The responses from my participants varied widely. Some felt varying degrees of pride to have been part of the military: "I think the SADF was one of the best fighting forces of its time" (Participant Charlie); "I was proud to have served – but I knew that we were ultimately doomed and would not win the propaganda and political war" (Participant Foxtrot); "It was an honour to have served my country, but happy that my kids don't have to go through it" (Participant Hotel); while others were resentful, "I am resentful of the fact that we were forced to do the 2 years in the prime of our lives" (Participant Echo). Most admitted to forging strong friendships and bonds with fellow conscripts which have endured. However, as Participant Juliette notes:

The military experience left me more confident to tackle life's challenges. Unfortunately, the same can't be said for many young men I served with. There were men that left the army shattered, and for some it would be a permanent scar, while others would take years to get over the experience. They were the ones that didn't respond to the particular flavour of military discipline and the rigour of daily life as a recruit or soldier.

The masculinities and the gendered institution that are the focus of this study were created within specific historical circumstances, and socio-political context. Significantly these masculinities and bodies were inscribed by the societies and cultures within which they existed. They were imprinted by, and with, the history of that society, and in many cases went on to perpetuate that same society and culture to varying degrees (Foucault, 1977:148; Coffey, 2016:4). The bodies linked to these masculinities are white and male, and their state-sanctioned privilege have subsequently been contested and displaced by the demise of Apartheid. As a result, due to past and current socio-political forces, the masculinities are in flux and undergoing a process of transformation, and are arguably being fragmented (Chadwick, 2007; Reid & Walker, 2005; Morrell, 2001b). Foucault (1977:148) refers to this fragmentation as a state of "perpetual disintegration", where the body as a continuously

changing entity and a fragmented sense of self reflects the impact of these past events and is perpetually in a state of transformation and disintegration.

It should be noted that my academic research and artist praxis has from the outset explored and investigated how the body is 'written', drawing initial inspiration from second wave feminist performance artists. My live performance piece, *Gaze* (2012), and my documented performance work, *Proof of Life* (2013), addressed the existential angst of this process of further fragmentation, and of a new identity being birthed (see Annexure H). Amelia Jones (1998:31) opines that the artist uses the inscribed body to draw the viewer (and their own interpretive body) into the work of art as an intersubjective exchange between artist and viewer. The viewers' opinions are mediated by personal history, experience and socio-cultural beliefs. The body, and therefore the artwork and artist, becomes a site of intertextuality and intersubjectivity. The subject (the body) derives meaning in relationship to others, and importantly, the source of identity (how it was constructed) is always elsewhere (Jones, 1998:14). In the case of this study, the data which the military veterans who participated in the study provided certainly indicates that a powerful influencing factor on their identities remains the experiences of being conscripted into the SADF, something that occurred over forty years ago in an institution and society that no longer exists. This is something my own lived experience and artist praxis corroborate. Following the two performances in 2012 and 2013, both creative artefacts resulting from the research conducted for the purposes of, and in pursuit of, my qualification in Visual Arts at the University of South Africa (UNISA), I turned my focus to exploring my own fragmented identities resulting from gendered institutions, specifically the SADF.

Of significance in relation to my time spent in the military, is the fact that my body bears literal, self-inflicted 'inscriptions' as a result of the metaphorical ones Foucault (1977:148) refers to. I have scars resulting from self-harming; the most notable on the inside of both wrists. As somatisation⁵⁰ of my past experiences, they are evidence of the interplay between Foucault's (1977:148) metaphor and reality of my experiences within the military, and their aftereffects. Within a few months of completing my National Service and my demobilisation from the SADF, I had resorted to drinking regularly and heavily. This was something that I had neither done before nor even during my National Service. The alcohol and binge-drinking were forms of self-medication, and was interspersed with, and accompanied by, moments of violence and risk-taking. Approximately a month after I had returned, there was an occasion when I spoke to my family about my post-military emotional and psychological state. "I don't like who I am anymore," was the phrase I recall using. It was representative of chaotic inner turmoil for which I did not have the words to express. I was twenty years old. Eventually this lack of words for what had been inscribed on me led to self-harming, the

⁵⁰ The manifestation of my psychological distress by the presentation of physical symptoms.

most life-threatening leaving scars that remain with me now on my wrists, when I hacked at them with a broken beer bottle. The nursing sister, who scrubbed out my wounds with a steel brush before stitching them closed, angrily informed me that if I wanted to do the job properly, I should cut along the veins, not across them. Tough love, I guess. But no-one understood that these were not suicide attempts, but rather efforts to make physical those ‘inscriptions’ which caused me such agony within, hidden and unseen, and yet no less real to me.

Eventually, I did, through my immersion in art and academic scholarship, discover that language with which I could express these ‘inscriptions’. Through performance work, I began to explore this interplay between metaphor and reality that I have described. This was accomplished by beginning with my own body and presenting it as the medium, subject and primary work in my artistic practice. Informed and supported by my research within academic institutions, I was cognisant of the semiotic, political, ethnographic, cartographic and mythical implications associated with that same breathing body. The metaphor of the body being inscribed upon, and the constitution of the body through those inscriptions, as well as their use to theorise the body, was something that resonated with me as both artist and researcher (Brush, 1998:22).

Further, I began to amplify these associations through ritual, artefacts, symbols, a sacred space and significant gestures. Part of my performance praxis is the construction of installations which provide what I term, ‘sacred spaces’, within which I can carry out my performative rituals. My art therefore provides platforms where symbolic inscription of the body, and through the body, is sanctioned. As I progressed through a number of postgraduate research studies, my work increasingly encompassed the consideration and questioning of academic methodologies, and I explored critiques and analyses of qualitative research and practice-driven research. More detailed insights into this and my praxis may be found in Annexure H.

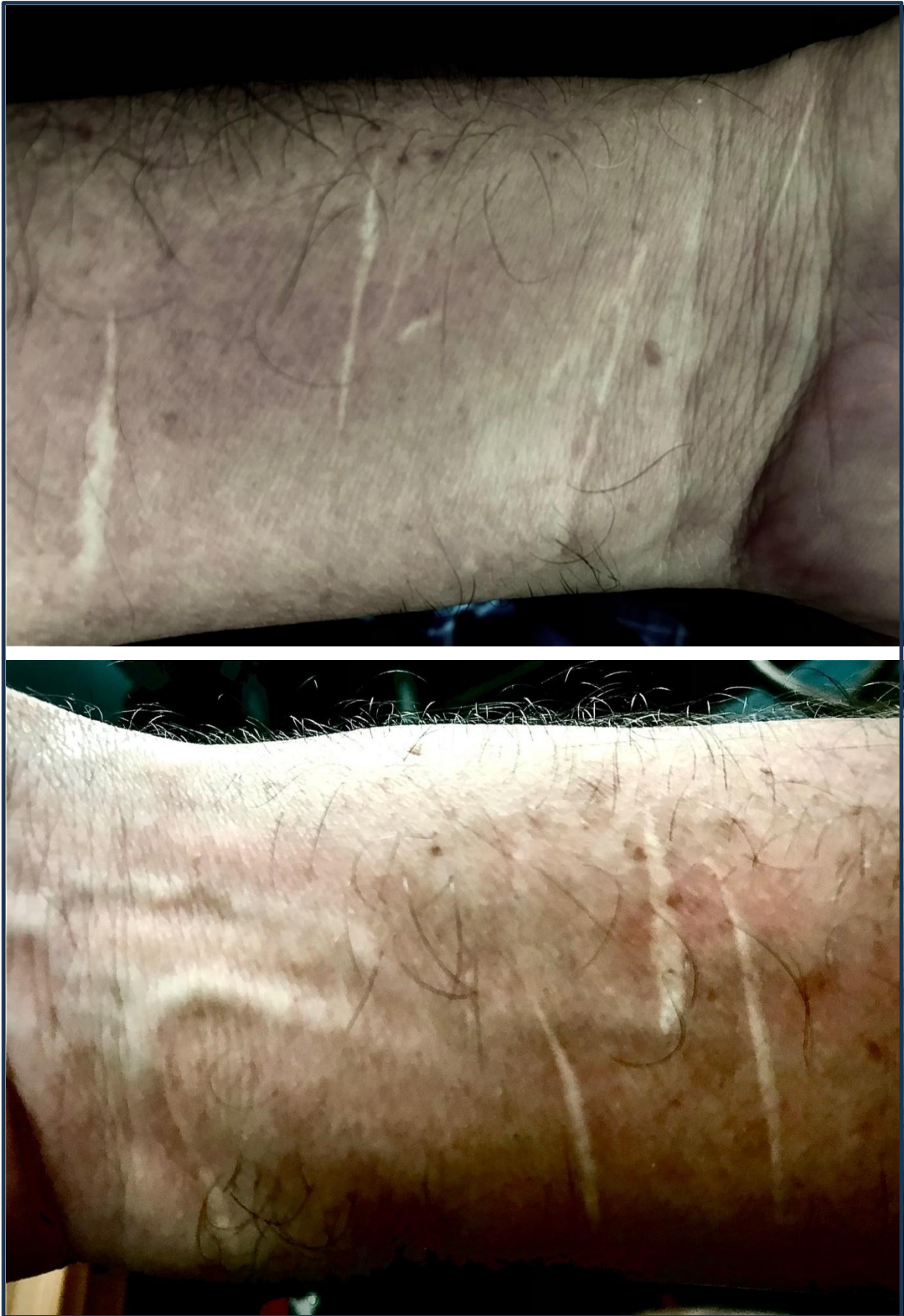


Figure 27: Somatisation: Images of my wrists. Swanepoel (2025).

6.2 Cathartic discussions

In the television series, *Peaky Blinders* (2013-2022), the main protagonist, Thomas Shelby, suffers from PTSD as a result of his experiences as a soldier in World War One. He describes his condition as, “I know what this is: it’s just myself talking to myself, about myself” (Peaky Blinders, 2013-2022). Shelby’s words succinctly, albeit overly simply, aptly describes my process of coming to terms with my own condition. Using the focus and rigour required of the pursuit of postgraduate degrees within academic institutions, I began what has ultimately been a cathartic discussion with ‘myself’. The practice and research done for my Honours and Masters, and the performance work done between and after these degrees, all paved the way for my PhD research study which builds on these earlier studies and artworks.

Both my Honours and Masters research studies were deeply reflexive exercises, whilst still adhering to the stringent requirements of academia. However, to avoid excessive contemplation of myself at the expense of a wider view, and overt emphasis on the autobiographical element of my Masters research, I included an analysis of other fellow artists and their praxes. The artists studied for the purposes of my Masters were Willem Boshoff (1951), Paul Emmanuel (1969), Peet Pienaar (1971), Peter van Heerden (1974), and were selected because they are all white South African men, whose gender identities were likely to be impacted by apartheid’s gendered institutions, including its schools, sport and the military. This Masters analysis of art praxis and works moved beyond its original purpose and continued to inform my own as I conceptualised my doctoral practical artefact. In the case of Paul Emmanuel many of his works are performative in nature, where the sheer physicality of the processes he employs draws attention to his body and how it is affected by these processes. Notably, for example, his *Transitions* (2004) work, where the artist created the images by scraping away at photographic print paper with a surgical blade, a ritualistic, laborious, exhausting process of mark-making. I resonated in particular with the series of images depicting a conscript having his head shaved, as this was an enforced rite of initiation into the military, manhood and apartheid society. In his project statement, Emmanuel indicates that this was in fact his starting point: how the military influenced and perpetuated notions of masculinity in South Africa (Emmanuel 2011:3).



Figure 28: Transitions. Paul Emmanuel (2004).

By focusing on these selected artists for the purposes of my Masters, I was arguing that we, the men of my generation, are not necessarily trapped by how our gender identities were formed, and that within the institution of art, self-aware artists, as an expression of agency, may in fact present visual representations of resistance and transformation. I analysed their works in an attempt to uncover proof of my hypothesis, comparing my own works with theirs. The findings from the study of the praxes of the selected artists and my own, along with the identification of our commonalities, resulted in the research artefact, the performance piece, *Blou Steen/ Blue Stone* (2018) which was presented in the UNISA Art Gallery, Pretoria (see Annexure H).

My post-Masters process, while conceptualising my doctoral focus, involved a Gender Studies Honours degree where I not only analysed the *Blou Steen/ Blue Stone* (2018) performance, but added to my knowledge and understanding of gender and gendered institutions. In addition, I began to revisit past themes, physically revisiting and experimenting with some of the performance elements. This resulted in a guerrilla performance in 2019, *Untitled (This is My Gun)*, performed at the historic Natal Command precinct (see Annexure H). This revisiting of themes and experimentation is indicative of my review and analysis process during post-performance periods which is an integral part of my praxis. These processes of review, reflexivity, analysis, and synthesis, allowed me to consider different perspectives and approaches for this doctoral study. The most notable difference between this project and past performances, is my inclusion of live participants in order to generate primary data of an ethnographic nature.

6.3 The creative artefact as the embodiment of insights gained

In my previous academic research studies, the primary data generated was auto-ethnographic, that is, my experiences and insights, informed and supported by secondary sources. Although the auto-ethnographic approach remains an important component in this study, the inclusion of the testimonies of fellow former conscripts allowed for the triangulation of data, I was able to delve deeper into the selected subject matter in order to explore different perspectives and gain fresh insights. Further, my focus had shifted to the communal rather than the individual. As a result, my praxis for the purpose of this research study is a co-operative one, meaning that the process of co-creation of knowledge was designed to be inclusive, producing outcomes that are not only for academic purposes, but are useful and beneficial to the group being studied.

The data and its analysis and findings were presented in chapter five. At that juncture most studies are followed by a conclusion and the findings are disseminated in a text-based document. An important part of my individual research approach is conceptualising how I might present my findings in a creative, visual and performative manner. I ask myself the question, how do I take that written academic requirement and make it a living and breathing and moving thing which allows people to feel and experience my research? For example, after the exploratory *Untitled (This is My Gun)* (2019) performance intervention, I also asked myself whether my standard approach to signification⁵¹ for the purposes of my performance work, would or should change.

Generally, I search for and select symbols, props and actions to be used in my performance work. They become artefacts to be used in rituals incorporating significant gestures. These significant gestures - simple body actions - take on special significance through repetition, exaggeration, isolation, or context. The intent is to present signifiers, that is, visual clues, which will assist with the communication and understanding of the work, helping the viewer to interpret it. An example of a signifier for the *Blou Steen/Blue Stone* (2018) performance is the sea salt (see Annexure H). Its connotation is the Afrikaans term for English-speaking conscripts, *soutie*. That signifier was developed over a number of years, until its final iteration in my performance. During this period of conceptualising, I would drive by fields being fertilised during the fallow seasons, and I would see these mounds of white powder on farms. This was most likely agricultural lime, which is finely ground limestone or chalk used to raise the pH of acidic soils. I stopped on a number of occasions and documented these mounds (see Figure 28). This allowed me to envision the potential of the sea salt as

⁵¹ A signifying system, or signification, is described by linguist, Ferdinand de Saussure, as the basic process where a signifier (a word or image) combines with a signified (a concept or meaning) to form a linguistic sign (Barthes, 1964:45-49; Barker, 2004:180-182).

a signifier in a performance space. I began similarly, to conceptualise possible signifiers for the purposes of my doctoral creative artefact.



Figure 29: Documented agricultural lime, Ballito. Swanepoel (2016).

Using the data generated from my research participants, I searched for items and experiences that were ubiquitous and common to the shared experience of military conscription. In addition, as indicated, one of the findings of the study was that a very specific and unique institutional jargon or terminology existed, *blou steen* being one such term (see Annexure H). Another was the *pislelie* (piss lily), a men's field urinal. Participant Echo remembers:

We had piss lilies all over the place in Kimberley. They were on the parade grounds, in the PT areas, out in the field when we did “*veldkuns*” (field craft), in the vehicle lots, on the 2,4 routes, etc. I recall being a bit repulsed by them and I didn't want to use them to relieve myself at all, but the instructions from the rank were that if they ever found a troop taking a piss in anything other than a toilet or piss lily they would *klaar* us on DD1 (disciplinary offence document). Didn't want that to happen.

6.4 The Piss Lily and the Natal Command

Signifier 1: men's field urinal

For the chief signifier of the doctoral creative artefact, I originally selected what was known as the piss lily or *pislelie* by SADF soldiers. Essentially, it was an outdoor men's urinal. A pit of approximately one cubic meter was dug, and filled to two thirds with rocks. The 'lily' was then planted in the pit, and the pit was filled with gravel. Finally, the sand from the pit was compacted over the gravel and the lily was ready to be 'watered and pollinated' by the soldiers.



Figure 30: *Pislelie*/Piss Lily collage of the SADF men's field urinal. Images available at <https://www.pioneerplastics.co.za/collections/urinals/products/army-urinal>

This signifier was of the earliest I considered but was always dependent on my finding the actual item, the field urinal or piss lily. I was eventually able to locate a factory that was willing to manufacture the urinals for me. In addition, I was able to ask for a custom colour from the manufacturer, the electric blue in the figure below.



Figure 31: Men's Field Urinal, Pioneer Plastics (Pty) Ltd. Swanepoel (2025).

This notion of signifier and its connotation is strongly underpinned with Saussure's science of signs, and Roland Barthes' semiotic approach, as presented in *Elements of Semiology* (1964), where myth takes a purely cultural and/or historical object such as wine and transforms it into the sign of a supposedly universal value (Allen, 2003:36). The denotative, or the obvious, literal meaning of the selected object is that it is a men's urinal to be used in the field, generally by the military. The connotative, that is, the associations of the 'lily', relate to the associated meanings of the real and the metaphoric artefact. One of the most immediate connotations is the association of the urinal with men and the exclusion of women, and as a result, the link to gender. Further, accompanying the 'lily' signifier is the electric blue which I used as the signifier for *blou steen* or blue stone. This was the name given to the substance supposedly given to conscripts in training to restrain their libidos. It was generally accepted that the SADF subscribed to the practice of chemically castrating or chemically restraining the virility of youthful recruits during their training period. The practice has long been associated with military institutions, stretching back as far as World War One, where British soldiers were said to have been given bromide to suppress their sexual urges (Ferris, 1993:33-54). Amongst the conscripts it was a common point of discussion, further fuelled and informed by

‘evidence’ of the blue tinge to our food and the odd taste to whatever we drank. This was supported by the data provided by my participants, for example, as Participant Echo recalls:

[M]y memory of the coffee (and tea) was that it had a strange metallic taste to it. When I brought it up in conversation one of the guys explained that they put copper sulphate (blue stone) crystals in the beverages to suppress the troops libidos. I thought it was plausible but then several others said it was untrue as they still had ‘urges’.

Whether it was true or not, what remained a fact was the conscripts’ belief that the SADF had the power to do this to them, and that they, as conscripts, had little recourse if it was being done. The absolute belief of the power of the military, and the extent of its control, even its ability to control sexual desire, left conscripts with no choice, particularly if they wanted to eat. Evidence of this attempt to restrain our sexual libidos was sometimes more blatant. During my time on the training base in Kimberley the doors to the toilet stalls in our barracks were removed, with our staff sergeant explaining that it was to ensure that we kept our hands off ourselves and our fellow soldiers. The memory of brushing my teeth or shaving while trying to avoid making eye contact with a fellow conscript emptying his bowels is a strong one. The connotations of the electric blue that I negotiated with the manufacturers to cast my urinals in, not only signifies the toxic effects of *blou steen* itself on the conscripts, but represents the possibly toxic effect of the military experience on the psyches of conscripts and wider society.

Signifier 2: Natal Command

The other major signifier that I chose for my doctoral practice-based research was the Natal Command precinct, and specifically the main building and base entrance. Natal Command was granted to the Department of Defence on 12 February 1937 by the City Council of Durban of Durban on behalf of its citizens (Averwag, 2019). The SADF base was responsible for the security of the region, forming the primary level of command for military operations (Averwag, 2019). In addition, it provided logistic, administrative and service support to units operating in its area of responsibility (Averwag, 2019). However, for most National Servicemen in the greater Durban area, it was where they reported for their two-year military service, and it is likely to have remained a stark reminder during the Apartheid-era of the servitude they owed to the country. I recall this feeling of a lack of liberty to determine my own course of action every time I saw the base. After Apartheid, the base has become a reminder of that past. A number of participants indicated similar experiences of the bases they now encounter, causing a mix of emotions. As Participant Charlie shares:

[T]he other day I was in Potch at the Med Clinic just across the road to where 3SAI was I could not stop looking at it. So sad to see it now. I do think about my time in the army a lot and just wish I could find more of the guys I was with.

Decommissioned in November 2000, abandoned and gradually deteriorating, Natal Command's dereliction for me, and likely for many other former SADF conscripts, has become representative of our military identities as aging white South African men (Averwag, 2019).



Figure 32: Overhead drone shot of Natal Command. Swanepoel (2025).

The Journal of the KwaZulu-Natal Institute for Architecture (KZ-NIA Journal, 2012:14) describes the building as “Natal Command Headquarters building: Slouching along Oliver Tambo Drive (Snell Parade), Durban”. Kirk White (2012:14-15) the author, identifies himself as a conscientious objector, and asks an intriguing question with reference to the National Heritage Resources Act that replaced the National Monuments Act, 1985 in 1999, under the new democratic government.

As a conscientious objector to the apartheid army, and to millions of South African citizens, it stands as a reminder of the horror of the recent past. Its presence tests my capacity “to empathise with the experience of others” and to have any wish to “affirm our diverse cultures”, as cited in the Preamble to the Act. But would its removal allow me to understand the sweep of history over the site, to know the building for what it was, and would removal strengthen my resolve to believe “never, never, and never again...”? (White, 2012:14-15).

Coming across this article and its insights, was a reminder for me that readings of these artefacts will vary, and it provides a strong counterpoint, or alternative take to this monument. For me it represents my militarised youth. For participant Charlie, the base in Potchefstroom where he reported evokes

feelings of nostalgia. White (2012) acknowledges that he is referencing W.B. Yeats' *The Second Coming* (1919): "And what rough beast, its hour come round at last, slouches towards Bethlehem to be born?" The poem written at the end of the Great War, World War One, and reflecting personal anxieties, is a dark vision of the possible future of humanity. I recall feeling the same way upon the completion of my National Service, with the possibility of years of camps ahead.

Untitled (Pisilelie/Piss Lily) (2025)

Having identified a major signifier for the purposes of my creative artefact, and having finally acquired the field urinals, I began a further process of ideation and experimentation. In addition, there is an element of explorative design included in this experiment which is characteristic of not only my creative praxis, and my practice-driven academic research process. The original conceptualisation was for the performance to be a site-specific one in the Natal Command. However, the Natal Command Precinct is now, sadly, inaccessible, having been fenced in and security services manning the site. The heritage site has been occupied by the Anant Singh Enterprises and is under construction and being refurbished as I write this (Pillay, 2026). South Africa's pre-eminent film producer plans to convert the site into the Durban/ eThekwin Film City. As a result, I improvised and used the beach sand dunes approximately 30 metres from, and directly opposite, the site.

At this stage I was conceptualising a short film using video of my performances at Natal Command as well as my extensive documentation of the site, with a narrative and voiceover informed and provided by the responses from my participants and me. This concept was driven by my belief that it was important to also take my work outside of the gallery space and to make it more accessible to not only the other former conscripts but the general public.

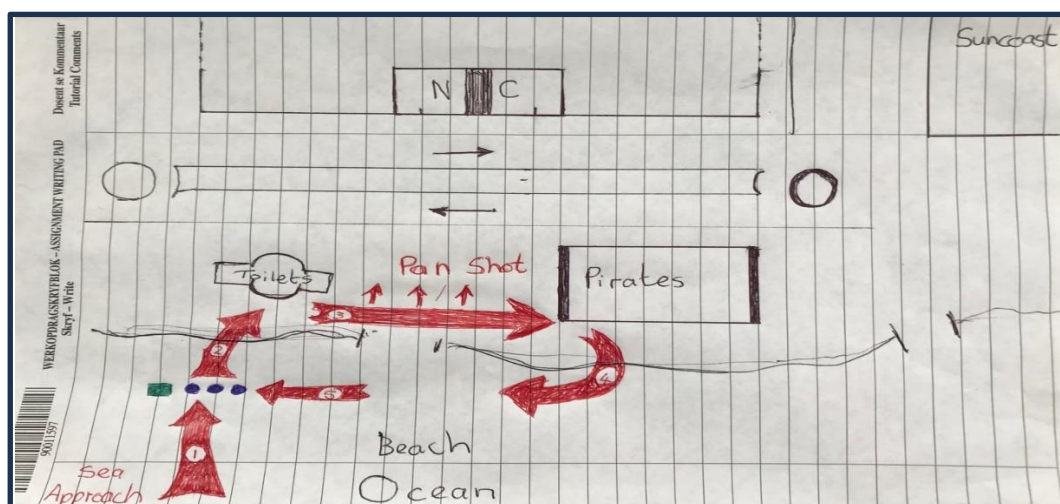


Figure 33: Flight plan sketch for the drone pilot. Swanepoel (2025).

I plotted a flight plan of the shot I envisioned for the drone pilot. This too is part of my performance practice, where I provide the documenters with my vision and clear instructions on the shots I require. Prior to the performance I set up my 'sacred space' on the beach where the intended ritual was to take place. In the performance I wore my SADF uniform, another important signifier of the military institution and its connection to my body, but intentionally created a disheveled appearance to mirror the deterioration of the Natal Command prior to reconstruction and refurbishment. In addition, I included a headpiece which I created in 2018 named *the Mask of Masculinities*. The headpiece was created specifically for the *Blou Steen/Blue Stone* (2018) performance but I have since used it in other performances (see Annexure H). It consists of two hundred white resin Ken doll heads and a wire frame. In a laborious process, each head was cast in resin using a mould I created, and then wired to the frame. I included the headpiece in this performance as a linking device to the recurring themes my work deals with, one of them being Connel's (1995) formulation of multiple masculinities as opposed to a singular masculinity. The headpiece is extremely uncomfortable to wear as it is heavy and confining, and allows for limited vision. As a result, the pilot had to inform me when he had the drone in position. I then interacted with the urinals, mimicking urinating in them with a blade as a penis. The blade was chosen to speak of the weaponisation of the penis within the military. The performance took approximately sixty minutes and was documented with video and still photography.

Signifier 3: Testimony

As indicated, I intended to use a selection of the testimonies I collected through interviewing and analysing the questionnaire responses. It was envisioned that the testimonies of the former conscripts, including my own, would provide the narrative for the creative artefact. The intent was to create a combination of strong storytelling, impactful cinematography, and the strategic use of sound and music, to draw the viewers into the former conscripts' world and experience. The purpose of this was to create an emotional connection with the viewers, with the hope that empathy and deeper understanding might be fostered.



Figure 34: swany, *Untitled (Pislelie/Piss Lily)*, 2025. Detail of 3 men's field urinals, a spade and the performance headpiece, *the Mask of Masculinities*. Photograph by Swanepoel (2025).



Figure 35: swany, *Untitled (Pislelie/Piss Lily)*, 2025. Overhead drone still of performance on North Beach, Durban.



Figure 36: swany, *Untitled (Pislelie/Piss Lily)*, 2025. Drone still of performance on North Beach, Durban. Natal Command is approximately 100 metres behind the artist.

Reflection

The entire performance exercise proved to be an extremely surreal experience. The thick beach sand reminded me of the sand up at the Omega base on the Caprivi Strip where I served as a Communications Operations specialist. This memory was intensified by my wearing my uniform and the headpiece. The weight and confinement of the mask made the performance an insular and claustrophobic one. I then repeated the performance but without the headpiece. Apart from the drone pilot, there were approximately thirty viewers. Many stood on the pier and observed the performance with interest, but none approached and engaged with me. Personally, I found the performance experience to be unsatisfactory as it lacked the intensity of performing in front of a gallery audience, and the specificity of a site performance, both of which I have experienced before. Nevertheless, the documentation did provide interesting and compelling photographs and video.

In discussion with my supervisor, and after consideration of the visual documentation, I realised that while the final video work would, I believe, certainly resonate with my research participants and other former SADF members, it was more of the same, that is, my pre-PhD work. I have been focused on the SADF and the human bodies that constitute its membership and staff for over a decade, as both an undergraduate student and postgraduate researcher. However, the chief body, experience and memories of my artistic focus have been my own. As per my established praxis, along with my body, I have the visual clues: Natal Command, the military uniform, the piss lilies, my monstrous *Mask of Masculinities* (2018). Here my physical body becomes a symbol for a collective experience. However, for the purposes of this study I now have the confessional testimonies of those who participated in my research and shared their lived experiences, to consider. Reflecting on the *Untitled (Pisselie/Piss Lily)* (2025) performance I believed that I had not achieved my goal which included drawing on the data and theory to examine the gendered institution, and narrativising untold histories.

6.5 Doctoral creative artefact: *War Stories* (2025)

My post-performance reflection and analysis process, including discussions with my supervisor, brought me to the realisation that in my role of academic researcher I was abstracting and intellectualising my research findings in the creative artefact. This was in fact removing me from the experiences that had been shared with me by my participants. Furthermore, I was viewing the data through the lens of empiricism, reducing things to what I could directly perceive, rather than focusing on the structures that made the perceptions and experiences of my fellow former conscripts and me possible. Those structures had been brought to light through my thematic analysis of the rich data and thick descriptions I collected. Essentially, it was the realisation that I should be shifting my approach from the fact of existence to the nature of existence; the former being the acknowledgment that something exists and is real, while the latter being an exploration of what existence is, or was.

Therefore, as is true to my cyclical process and the returning to old themes, I returned to the body; the body not as an object, but the living body as a means of expression and, notably, recall. However, by thinking about the body and embodiment while interacting with my participants, I realised that the experience of being embodied is never actually a private affair (Weis, 1999; Vidolov, 2024:246). It is always already mediated by our continuous interactions with others (Weis, 1999; Vidolov, 2024:246). This thinking is described by Merleau-Ponty's (1974) theory of intercorporeality, which suggests a constitutive interconnection between bodies that are always already embedded and intertwined in what he calls an "interworld" (Vidolov, 2024:246). This world is one of mutual bodily understanding, which happens in interaction.

As Thomas Fuchs (2011:92) posits:

[I]n the bodily experience structures, the other is always already included, he is understood in expression and intended in desire. Before I can reflect on what I am communicating through my gestures or speech, my body always already creates the feeling of being-with; it expresses itself through attitude and gestures, and at the same time reacts to the impressions of others.

Fuchs (2011:92) is also informed by Merleau-Ponty's theory of intercorporeality, which he describes, quoting Merleau-Ponty (1974:166), as:

[A]n overriding, inter-subjective system in which, from childhood on, forms of bodily interaction are established and constantly updated anew. It comprises the self and the others, the conscious and the unconscious: 'I do not need to look for the others elsewhere, I find them within my experience, they dwell in the niches which contain what is hidden from me but visible to them'.

Fuchs (2012:92) is proposing that the understanding of self and other is not purely mental, but is rooted in the reciprocal, embodied relationship between bodies.

Merleau-Ponty's (1964a:118) core ideas of embodied intersubjectivity and the body as expression, strongly inform this study's final creative artefact:

In perceiving the other, my body and his are coupled, resulting in a sort of action which pairs them. This conduct which I am able only to see, I live somehow from a distance. I make it mine; I recover it or comprehend it. Reciprocally I know that the gestures I make myself can be the objects of another's intention.

This is a notion of 'co-experience', or a unified and unifying experience, that is, shared physical experiences and bodily resonance. In this study I am an empathetic, embodied listener who has insider knowledge of what the participants went through. In a way, I 'hear' and 'read' with my body when listening to the interviewees and reading their written responses, because I have somatic memories of many of the things they have experienced. As this notion of the interworld suggests, because

consciousness is embodied, I was unable to merely read and listen to these accounts with only my mind. In addition, the concept also speaks of a dissolution in the boundaries of self and other: my experiences of the military were always in relation to and with other conscripts or staff, whether they were acquaintances, friends or vindictive instructors. Aligning with the concept of intercorporeality is somatic memory, that is, body memory representing all past bodily experiences that are stored and may affect our behaviour (Parma, Doria, Zulueta, Boscarino, Giani, Lunetta, Parati, Picozzi & Sattin, 2024). These experiences, particularly the overwhelming ones associated with an experience such as conscription, and the bodily sensation or memory brought to mind when reading about them, can equally be brought to mind through embodied movements or gestures.

During my performances I have found this to be true. By carrying out the movements and gestures I experienced during my National Service, my body assists in evoking not only the memories but how my body felt during the experience. Interacting with the ritual artefacts in my sacred performance spaces I recall and evoke history. A senior lecturer at UNISA, when speaking to me after my Masters performance piece, observed that my installation functioned as a ‘time machine’. Through this doctoral process I have additionally noted that my performing body operates in a similar manner. Equally, and this is somewhat of a surprise, I found that by completing the research questionnaire that my participants completed myself, I also accessed many memories, some very visceral. One such memory was the accidental shooting of one of my fellow conscripts during basic training. I had neither thought about that incident nor ever spoken about it in forty years, and then it was there.

For purposes of the creative research artefact, I selected two mundane rituals that SADF conscripts would have carried out daily for their entire time in the military. Cleaning rifles, as Participant Echo indicates, was particularly time consuming and “the bane of my life during basics. I could never get the barrel clean to a point of satisfaction for the rank during inspections” (see page 153). There were very real consequences for not completing this task satisfactorily. As Participant Delta notes, these could range from physical punishment resulting in physical exhaustion; or dying in a contact situation with the enemy. The other was polishing boots which was a never-ending chore for the soldiers. At SAINTS we were required to ‘bone’ our boots. ‘Boning’ was a time-consuming technique of shining an army boot using melted polish, but most of the participants indicated that they were prohibited from using the technique. Participant Kilo provides an explanation, “We were expected to shine our boots but explicitly forbidden to bone them because it was said to destroy the waterproof qualities of the boots”. This provides evidence of the fact that although we former conscripts all experienced the military institution, there was no uniform experience. The experiences varied according to things such as corps, base, section leaders, and commanding officers.

Activities such as polishing boots and cleaning rifles were relatively quiet, focused moments in the barracks which provided a natural setting for conversations, jokes, and more casual interactions that built rapport between conscripts. Performing similar duties, however mundane, created common ground and shared experiences that built bonds between individuals. It was while engaged with these tasks in our barracks or field tents that we conscripts would talk and share. We would also write letters to loved ones and friends, and even pen pals. Sometimes we might even read portions of our letters to each other. I conclude my doctoral performance with the more personal and intimate ritual of letter reading.

In my introductory chapter I referred to Goffman's (1956) dramaturgical model (see Figure 1). The back region of this model, which is the off-stage region, is where 'the performer' (the conscript) is likely to rid himself or herself of some of the vestiges of a societal role and reflect a truer version of themselves. Nevertheless, although we were supposedly off-duty in these spaces, the 'soldier' designation remained, and as such there was always a measure of the performative, even if only subconsciously. Preparation for the 'role' performed on the stage continues in this region. Goffman's (1956) 'back region' might be found in less formal spaces such as the barracks, and recreational areas such as base bars, or sports fields. In current times, some forty years on, these conversational moments generally take place on the internet and in social media. The colloquial term used to describe these conversations is 'war stories', and as such, I have given that title to my creative artefact. My research study has arguably created, via the self-guided questionnaire, a form of the barracks environment where the former conscripts could engage in conversation and share experiences and opinions.

The performance space

The first step of the performance was to create my 'sacred space', where I could carry out the rituals and significant gestures with selected artefacts. I chose to use a dark basement storage room at the university where I lecture and where I could control the light, and that was secluded, silent, and secure. In it I set up the military gear retained from conscription, as well as the field urinals. The 'barracks' I created included various self-portraits I have created over the years which are representative of my self-analysis and reflection following military service.



Figure 37: Performance space with artefacts. Photograph by Swanepoel (2025).

Ritual 1: Boning boots

The first ritual consisted of ‘boning’ my boots. As conscripts at SAINTS during our training phases, we would do this to our boots prior to the large formal company inspections. It is a method of achieving a high shine by rubbing on layers of melted Kiwi Military Tan polish. Using the lid of the polish tin, the conscript would either place a firelighter or methylated spirits in it. As can be seen in the images below, a firelighter was placed in the lid of the polish tin, lit and the polish melted using a heated metal spoon. The melted polish on the spoon was wiped onto the boot, and the soft polish was then rubbed into the leather with a cloth in small, circular motions. This would result in a hard, mirrored finish once the melted polish had dried.

During the performance the effect of the open, candle-like flame evoked the scenario of a ritual taking place. This was intentional, as candlelight and the act of lighting candles have long symbolised the sacred, and been used to create an atmosphere for spiritual connection across numerous cultures and traditions. An open flame may also become a focus for mindfulness, and a means to personal reflection. The flickering flame's gentle nature creates an intentional pause, inviting stillness and transforming ordinary moments into meaningful practices. This evocation was intensified by the inclusion of more than one ‘candle’ surrounding me in the dark performance space. I sat on my

trommel, the steel trunk issued to conscripts to store items in. It was marked with both my informal and formal designation: *soutpiel* and my military force number. While I polished my boots, I spoke to the camera documenting the performance. This was in the form of embodied storytelling. As my participants had shared with me their experiences of the SADF so I shared my experiences with them, imagining them in the performance space with me. I told ‘war stories’ to the research study participants, of my experiences in the SADF, and of the SADF. This was what I had anticipated taking place in my original conceptualisation of the face-to-face interview process. The performance thus allowed me to do this. I began by speaking of the scars on my wrists and how they reminded me of watching two soldiers playing ‘chicken’ with a large hot coal pressed between their wrists while they grasped hands screaming at each other. This took place one late night around a fire at 201 Battalion after they had been drinking. The two conscripts had to be flown to One Military Hospital in Pretoria to undergo skin grafts. They never returned to the base and were certainly charged for self-harming.



Figure 38: *swany, War Stories* (2025). ‘Boning’ boots section showing the lighting of a firelighter in the lid of the polish tin. Photograph by Swanepoel (2025).



Figures 39 & 40: *swany*, *War Stories* (2025). 'Boning' boots ritual. Photographs by Swanepoel (2025).

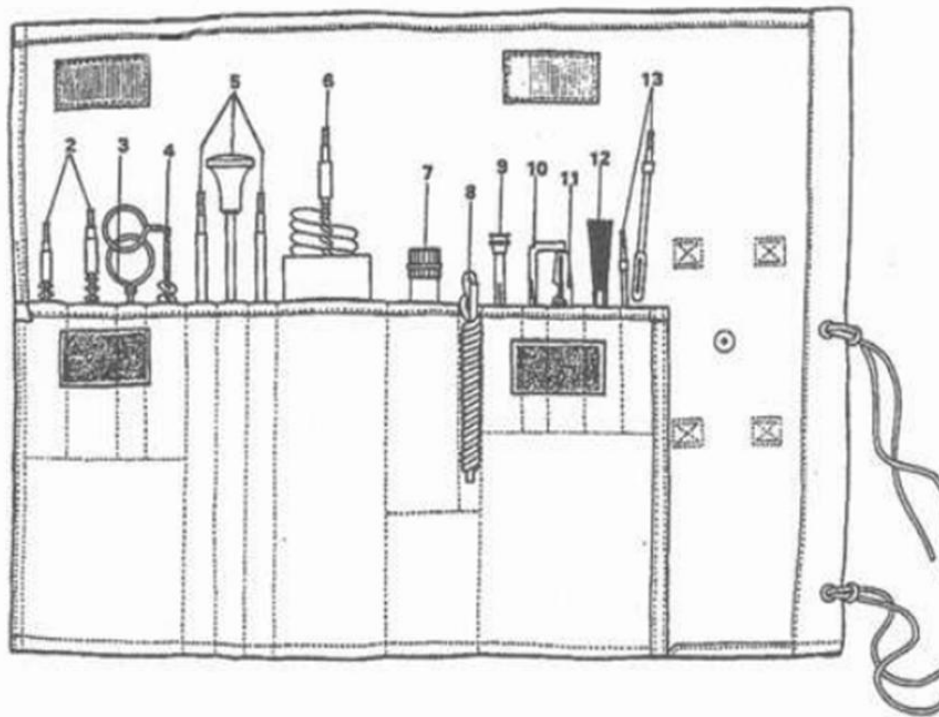


Ritual 2: Cleaning the rifle

Following the boot-polishing ritual, I then cleaned my rifle with the SADF rifle cleaning kit issued to me as a conscript (Figures 41 & 42). Like the rifle, the cleaning tools themselves have the appearance of implements of violence. They have the appearance of a bygone era's surgical tools. Upon receiving our rifles during training, we memorised the rifle's serial number. We also learned how to disassemble and reassemble the rifle, and were timed while doing it. Eventually we had to be able to do it blindfolded, by touch alone. We were told that this was our new girlfriend; it was a rifle, not a gun. A gun was what was between our legs, however, both were considered weapons.



Figure 41: swany, *War Stories* (2025). The rifle cleaning ritual. Photograph by Swanepoel (2025).



1. Canvas Pouch.
2. Barrel Brushes.
3. Exhaust Port Scraper.
4. Chamber Cleaning Brush.
5. Cleaning Rod Assembly.
6. Gas Piston Guide Tube Brush.
7. Oil Bottle.
8. Pull Through.
9. Cartridge Case Extractor.
10. Gas Hole Scraper.
11. Combination Tool.
12. Nylon Rifle Cleaning Brush.
13. Jag.

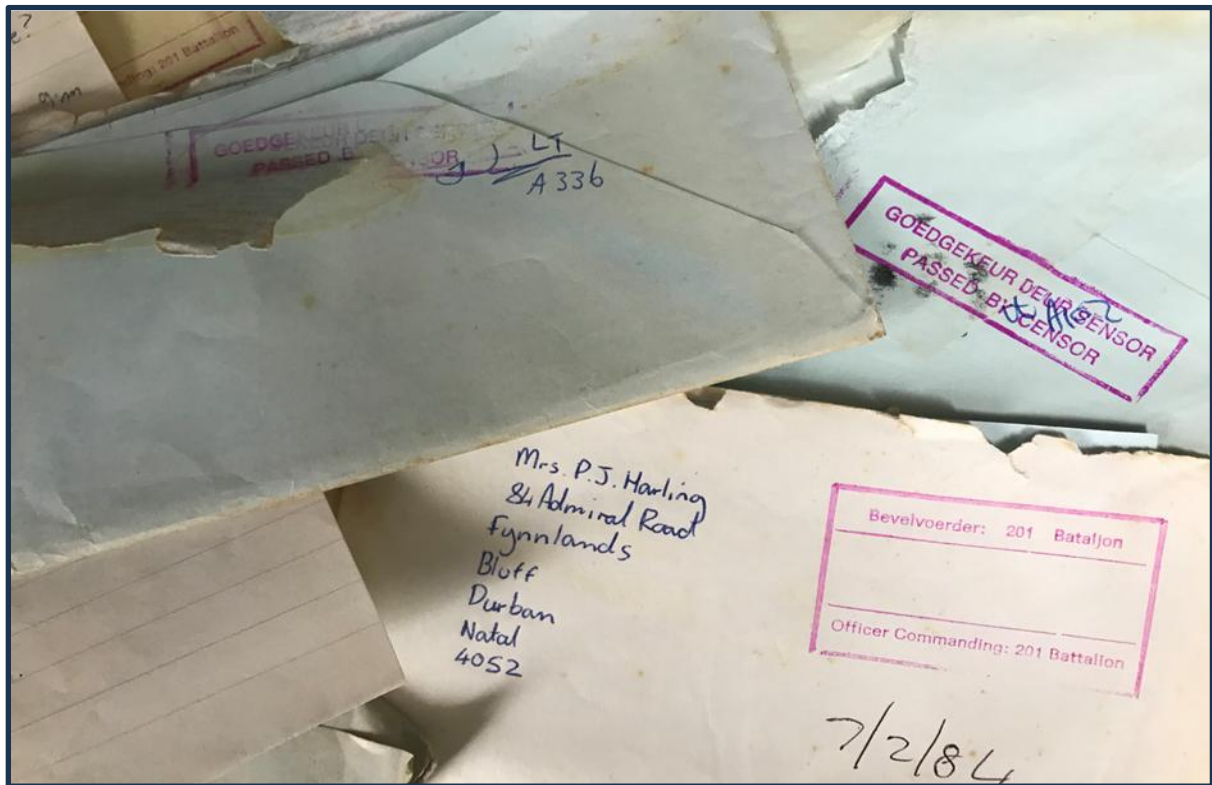
Figure 42: SADF rifle cleaning kit diagram (2025). Available at <https://hatchfive.wordpress.com/2021/12/15/r4-cleaning-kit/>.



Figure 43: swany, *War Stories* (2025). The rifle cleaning kit. Photograph by Swanepoel (2025).

Ritual 3: Letter reading

I concluded the performance by reading from the actual letters that I wrote to my mother while serving in the SADF. She kept them and gave them back to me years later before she passed away. Prior to this performance, I had not looked at them since I took part in the *GIKI* exhibition in 2014 where I displayed them as artefacts (see Annexure H). I asked the participants to send in, or share, letters, keepsakes, and memorabilia, and in this performance, I handled and shared my own. This was another shared experience, both then in the past - writing letters, keeping mementoes - and now, handling these again during the performance. The reading of these letters evoked emotional responses in me, and a longing for the boy I was before I went into the SADF, and my mother of that time, and great sadness at the loss of both.



Figures 44 & 45: Letters written to my mother during the two years of National Service. The military stamps on them indicate that they had been censored and approved. Swanepoel (2025).



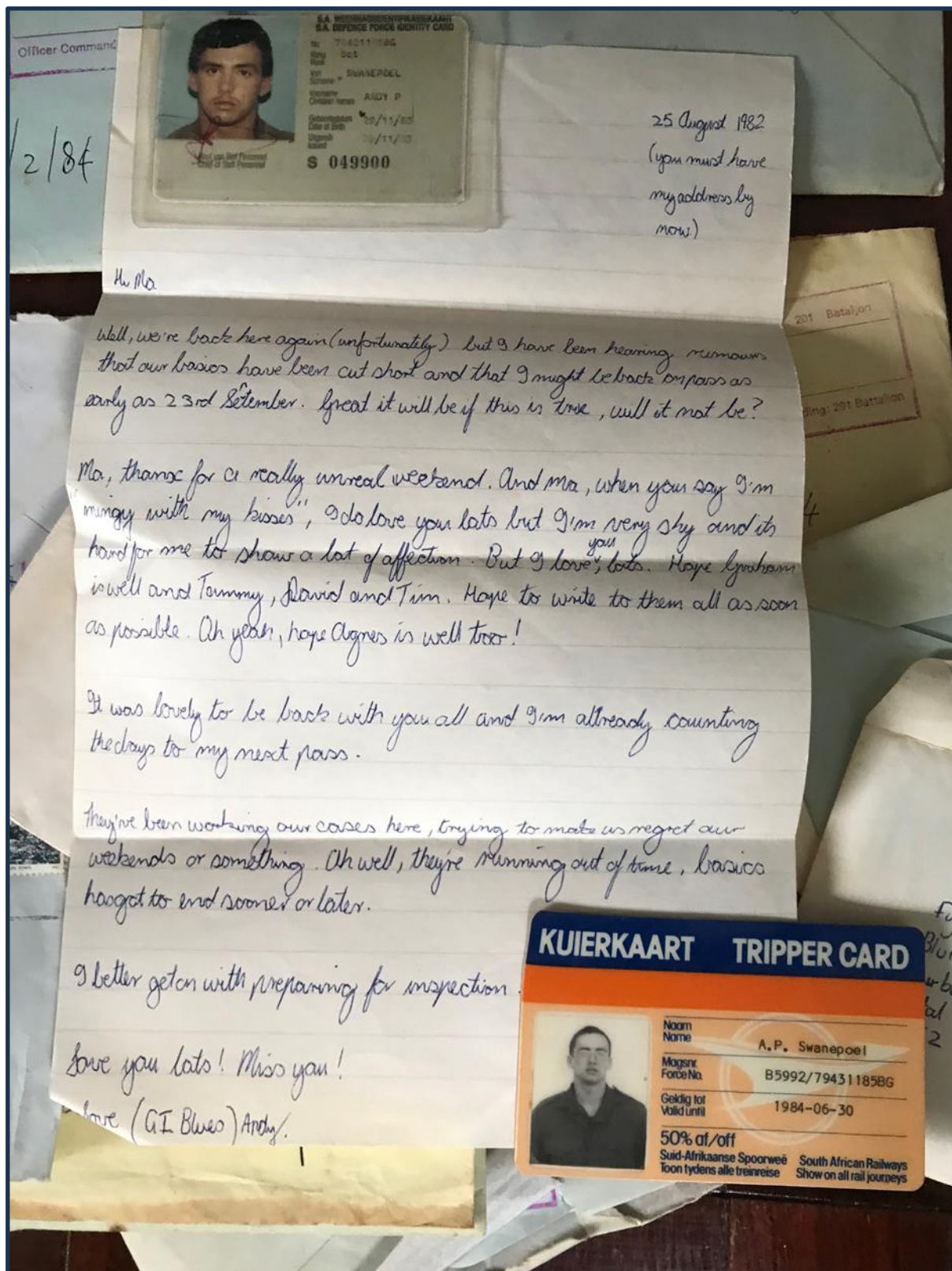


Figure 46: Letter dated 25 August 1982 (written during Basic Training). Swanepoel (2025).

Reflection

The telling of stories and reading of letters was a way to reciprocate for the lived experiences the former conscripts shared with me. Through the speaking and the doing, I invoked their presence. Although their bodies were absent from the space, they were, in fact present, through bodily resonance⁵², and it is to them that I speak, much as we might have, forty years ago in some SADF barracks. The conceptualisation here is that by being interwoven in a symbolic space (the ‘barracks’ space), the sensorial perceivable phenomenon, that is my performance, invokes that which is not perceivable by the senses, that of the absent (Meyer et.al, 2024:3829). The interconnectedness is something that is achieved through my embodied research and my interaction with my participants and the records of their testimonies. They told of their lived experiences of things that I have shared or have experience or knowledge of. A portion of my life has left its mark on my body, as it has similarly done to the participants. As Fuchs (2011:99) proposes, our bodies have been marked more deeply and permanently by our experiences in the SADF, than any autobiographic memory could or should have done. For most, the collection of personal experiences that form an individual's life history and contribute to their sense of identity does not include those that are described by my participants.

Referencing my thematic analysis and findings, the *War Stories* (2025) performance and installation visually and performatively presents the white South African male body engaged in the tasks that were required of that body by a military institution, the SADF. In this performance the white male body is representative of a gendered institution that conscripted similar bodies in order to maintain and perpetuate itself. In addition, it is a vulnerable body that has retained traces of inscribed events and histories, and is still haunted by memories - whether positive, negative or both - of the institution. Societal constructions such as gender were built around and attached to these bodies. Repetitive drills and training were used to build ingrained discipline, automatic responses, and muscle memory. We also became compliant weapons and property of the state. Despite the simplicity of the performance, it reflects, and it is representative of, my main themes. The three institutional pillars are visualised in the cleaning of boots and rifles: by doing this the coerced conscripts followed regulative commands; this behaviour in the barracks was normative and appropriate; and finally, there was a social-cognitive ‘taken-for-grantedness’ to these mundane tasks. The social-cognitive ‘taken-for-grantedness’ reflected an internalising of military standards, group identity and responsibility, as well as the conscript status attached to the mastering of such tasks.

⁵² Merleau-Ponty, in *The Visible and the Invisible*, and particularly in the chapter, *The Intertwining— The Chiasm* (1968:130-155), discusses the role of embodied interactions between the self and the other in the process of social Intercorporeality. He argues that our understanding of others is grounded in our bodily experiences and interactions, and social contacts, and that our lived bodies become extended and intertwined with those of others. He believes that “each one of us is pregnant with the others and confirmed by them in his body.” (Merleau-Ponty, 1964b:181).

The symbols I present become, in this manner, generative and performative, giving existence to what otherwise would not be (Meyer et.al, 2024:3829). The performance and the symbols I use give presence to the researcher's and the former conscripts' collective meanings that "transcend space and time in the here and now" (Meyer et.al, 2024:3829). The represented, through this manner, are brought into presence as I perform.

Here follows a brief analysis of the signifiers used in the performance.

Body

Description: My performing body within the 'sacred space' was the main vehicle/medium of the artwork. In the 'sacred space' the body, inscribed by gender and societal constructs, and its associated meanings were amplified by the rituals and repetition of significant gestures. It was anticipated that these gestures would convey a deep meaning, idea, or emotion beyond their literal form, particularly to former and current conscripts.

Reflection: As I performed the rituals and their associated significant gestures within my 'sacred space', I found the past being evoked and memories stimulated as I repeated the movements ingrained through endless repetition decades ago. When I began to speak to the camera it was that past and those memories which I spoke of. Physical sensations and actions, rather than conscious thought, enabled me to recall experiences. Through this form of embodied memory, I became more and more aware of the presence of my participants. This was further aided through the lived experiences they had shared and my analysis thereof, and as the performance progressed and the smell of the leather, polish, fire-lighter, metal and gun oil filled the sacred space. These scents also assisted in evoking memories.

Sacred space

Description: A small dark room without windows where the light and sound could be controlled. The space was silent, as it is in the basement of a building and removed from general campus life. My sacred spaces that I conceptualise as consecrated, or spiritually significant. For my purposes it is a focal point for engaging, through rituals, with the past and various societal issues. The sacred space is also one that is safe, where I can be open and vulnerable.

Reflection: I was able to simulate a 'barracks' scenario, with the military equipment I still have which was conducive to the recalling of the past. It was dark, silent and confining, as a result the space was extremely conducive to self-interrogation and self-reflection, while carrying out the introspective acts.

Uniform and kit

Description: I wore my old SADF uniform with my South West African Territorial rank and insignias. I was surrounded by my military kit and keepsakes, some of which I interacted with.

Reflection: The rifle, SADF/SWATF uniform and kit (including urinals) were used as signifiers to indicate context. Former conscripts would easily be able to identify with them, while those who had not served would, at the very least, grasp the military theme of the performance. Further, being surrounded by these artefacts assisted in recalling the past and those moments spent in the barracks, sitting on a footlocker, frequently surrounded by fellow conscripts engaged in the same daily tasks.

Ritual: Boning

Description: The melting of the polish, its application to the boot, and the circular rubbing of it into the leather is repeated until a high gloss is achieved.

Reflection: The ritual was carried out while relating 'war stories'. The routine was almost meditative in its simplicity. The smell of the polish and its texture, accompanying the heating of the polish and the rubbing action, brought back the experience strongly. This was something we carried out daily during our time in the military. The tin of polish, its contents and its colour (Kiwi Military Tan Leather Shoe Polish, 50ml) are extremely specific to this time and experience.

Ritual: Cleaning of the rifle

Description: The cleaning of our rifles with the supplied SADF cleaning kit was equally a daily ritual. I managed to obtain a replica AK47 rifle for the performance. Although it was not standard issue for SADF soldiers, on the Border many soldiers used them in the field because they did not often jam. In addition, I still have an original SADF gun-cleaning kit which I used to perform the ritual.

Reflection: The cleaning of the rifle was more vigorous and ominous than the 'boning' ritual. Even the cleaning tools spoke of the violence associated with the deadly weapon placed in our care; a terrible responsibility. That the cleaning tools speak of their association with the rifle was ominous for me. The cleaning act itself heightened the angst of my anticipation of violence. This remains so. I have a strong aversion to firearms as a result of my experiences in the SADF, having seen their resultant violence. They allow a distancing from the violence that is not healthy: point, pressure on the trigger and the world is irrecoverably altered. The sound of metal rubbing and scratching against metal (the brush used to remove rust and ingrained dirt), the smell of the gun oil and the feel of the cool, smooth metal, all assisted in propelling me back into those barracks and this dreadful task. Upon reflecting on the performance of this particular ritual, I was able to see the connection between the

nurse vigorously scrubbing the open wounds on my wrists with a brush, and the scrubbing of the barrel of rifle, and why subconsciously this would add to my unease and discomfort.

Ritual: Confessional testimony

Description: War stories were shared with my participants while I performed the two previous rituals. As a final ritualistic sharing, letters were read to them. These letters were the voices of the 18-year-old, the 19-year-old, and the 20-year-old me, and his feelings he shared with his mother.

Reflection: Sharing my memories and reading the letters became further tools, along with the body movements and gestures, to recall experiences, sensations, and emotions. Former conscripts have opened up to me, and I shared my experiences, resulting in a new space opening up. There was a vulnerability that results from my sharing of my own stories, particularly, the letters written to my mother. This was my way of acknowledging that my participants had equally made themselves vulnerable by taking part in the study and sharing their stories. Although their stories did not influence my own, they did influence how I told them, as I felt their presence as I shared mine.

An unexpected insight that arose from these performances was the juxtaposition of the masculine and feminine in these performances. The physical acts of a militarised masculinity, followed by the vulnerability of sharing fears and uncertainty with the female figure of my mother, highlights the tension between societal expectations of this militarised masculinity - which often emphasises strength, stoicism, and a lack of emotional expression - and the very human need for comfort and connection, and to feel secure enough to allow oneself to be vulnerable. The act of sharing fears and uncertainty with a mother figure can represent a safe return to an authentic self, a place where the performance of masculinity can be momentarily dropped.

Final thoughts

Post-thesis, the intent is to revisit this performance, which I now consider exploratory in nature. The cyclical, iterative nature of my praxis is reflected in this intent. Much of what I did in the *War Stories* (2025) performance was intuitive and reactive. I put myself in the space, with the artefacts, and did what came naturally. For the purposes of creating a work to share with my participants and a broader audience, I will continue experimenting and crafting a suitable performance that can be presented to an audience.

CHAPTER SEVEN: CONCLUSION

7.1 The Thesis

The intention of this research study was to explore gendered institutions, specifically the apartheid-era SADF, and the experiences of the men within the institution. By exploring these lived experiences, this study hoped to contribute to the public discourse in the form of collecting and sharing people's stories, and creating ethnographic performance work. The study, along with the more traditional qualitative research methods, relied on artistic processes and creative output, using practice-driven methods to concurrently further develop the relationship between those activities and outputs, and the nature of research for the purposes of academia and my chosen discipline. The methodology focused on uncovering on the embodied nature of institutional processes, where the consideration is that institutions are not simply abstract systems, but are deeply ingrained in human bodies, accompanying habits, emotions, and daily practices.

Whilst engaged in the research process itself, by including reflexive practices I noted that through intentional physical exploration and embodied practice, it is possible to discover new ways of understanding and expressing ideas that are difficult to articulate verbally. In addition, the process fosters creative exploration and builds authentic connections with research subjects. Ultimately, this thesis capitalises on the strength of the creative-academic hybrid, asserting that to truly understand the reach of a gendered institution, one must look not only at its archives and its laws, but at the traces it leaves upon the bodies of those who served within it.

7.2 Key Findings

The research questions I endeavoured to answer were as follows: 1) which gendered rituals, markers and directives were experienced by former conscripts in the SADF; 2) how can the testimony of these experiences be collected and analysed; and finally; 3) how did/do the former conscripts experience gender rituals, markers and gender directives during their time in the SADF? My secondary research, the review of literature, as well as the primary research generated by my auto-ethnographic and ethnographic fieldwork, supports the hypothesis that the SADF was a deeply gendered institution. In addition, the fact that I am a member of the focus group means that I have knowledge and understanding of the subject and the data as a result of my own lived experience. As a result, this afforded me unique insights, and the ability to interpret the data in a deeply reflexive manner. A significant finding of my study is that although the institution was manifestly gendered, there was no uniform, single experience of the SADF, or even group experience. Instead, despite similar circumstances, and commonalities and similarities of events experienced, each experience was as

unique as the individual, and unique to the individual. Further, the experiences varied according to the corps, unit, company, platoon, and base the former conscripts were located in, as well as who they served under and with. The experiences were, however, specific to a generation of white South African men.

As such the relationship between the men's gender and their 'situatedness' within specific historical contexts, and the way their identity and behaviour were formed and structured were equally specific. Before the men even commenced their National Service, as boys they were already exposed to gendered rituals, markers and directives in order to prepare them for it. The participant data provided insights into the former conscripts' interaction with the military institution, within a militarised state, with fellow conscripts and the varying degrees of compliance, compulsion, and contestation that occurred as part of their individual experience. Conscripts were sometimes complicit in enforcing (formally and informally) the military's directives.

After the data analysis, and because this is a practice-driven research study, I investigated how the former conscripts' testimonies could be used to inform my performance practice as an artist, and result in a creative and academic artefact. The final objective was to provide evidence of how, by firstly using a practice-led process, a practice-based creative work that engages with/reflects on the former conscripts' experiences in embodied manner could then be crafted. This practice-led process, included experimentation, making, and the identification of artefacts which might be used as visual clues or signifiers. Secondly, the practice-based creative work was to be informed by the conclusions of the research conducted, and visually present or represent them for further reflection and insight. The goal was to provide an alternative to the traditional academic research artefact, that is, dissertation or thesis. After exploring and reflecting on a site-specific performance near the Natal Command, the experimental performance, *War Stories* (2025) was executed and documented (see section 5.5).

Importantly, the performance, and experimentation leading up to it, contributed to the critical analysis of the secondary sources, the theoretical framework, and the empirical data found through my research. Finally, the work on the creative artefact allowed for personal and praxis reflection. I was able to not only conduct a review and critical analysis of my artist praxis, but an opportunity for further development and personal growth. This was chiefly driven by the consideration of intercorporeality and somatic memories that was required as a result of the inclusion of the participants' embodied lived experiences in the research process in both the theory and practical components. This thinking is indicative of the development and transition in my approach to my practice. It is knowledge-in-becoming, and is associated with performative research, emerging through the creative process itself.

In conclusion, a vulnerability emerged from my performance in my sacred safe space, that reflected the vulnerability of the participants in the sharing process. More of the same is needed for not only veterans but masculinities and men. While the study successfully maps the gendered rituals of a specific generation of white men, it opens up unresolved questions regarding how these ingrained hypermasculine norms continue to permeate post-apartheid South African domestic and social spheres. The vulnerability that emerged during the performance suggests that more work is needed to provide 'sacred safe spaces' for the sharing, study and deconstruction of veteran masculinities.

7.3 Implications

When considering the broader meaning and significance of my findings, I focused on what they mean for the fields of theory, practice, and future research.

Theoretical implications

My findings, informed by a review of gender and masculinity studies, supports the arguments for gendered institutions, as posited by scholars of gender and masculinity. Evidence of the socialising role institutions play in implementing the behaviours, attitudes, and expectations considered appropriate for boys and men is provided. However, my study adds to this critical discourse, and in the case of the SADF and its conscripts, extends on the existing body of scholarship about the institution and masculinities, by addressing a gap in the research field. The existing scholarship about the SADF and conscripts' experiences focuses chiefly on the Border conflict, while those that do investigate the military institution, do not address gender in any depth if at all.

The study reframes the SADF through the lens of institutional gendering. By synthesising auto-ethnographic insights with the testimonies of former conscripts, the study provides evidence that the military's power was not just ideological, but deeply embodied: enforced through rituals, markers, and physical directives that sought to standardise manhood. Crucially, however, this research has uncovered that this process was never monolithic. The findings reveal a spectrum of compliance, compulsion, and contestation, asserting that white South African masculinity during this era was a fragmented and often vulnerable identity rather than a uniform state of being.

Finally, my extensive literature review and interviews with conscripts, contributes engagement with international scholarship on masculinities from a uniquely South African perspective and context.

Practical implications

A central pillar of this research is the assertion that certain nuances of institutional power are inaccessible through verbal articulation alone. By employing a hybrid methodological model, this study has demonstrated that the artistic process - specifically 'performing the archive' - functions as a rigorous mode of inquiry. Firstly, the research provides evidence to transform anecdotal accounts of conscripts' experiences into recognised areas of social concern, thereby, arguably playing a vital role in raising awareness of, and potentially addressing these concerns for military veterans. This might lead to future studies and continued attention to evolving veteran needs. As an iterative process, reflecting on research and delving deeper into the data, it may also contribute to addressing relevant challenges, such as the gendered nature of the institution, as well as the specific experiences of female, minority, and LGBTQ+ members and veterans.

Secondly, my inclusion of the performative research methodology and the resultant creative artefact of this study, have, I would argue, significant practical implications for the research field as it pertains to military and gendered institutions, the history of the SADF and conscripts' experiences. This contribution is primarily made by expanding methodological possibilities, providing unique insights, and challenging academic norms that are slow to change. It validates practice-driven research, where my creative practice was itself both a method and an outcome of inquiry. I provide insights into how artists may leverage their studio practice as a form of practice-driven research by using it as a space for exploration, experimentation, and knowledge creation. I also indicate that it attempts to present evidence of how, by integrating research questions into the creative process, and vice versa, as well as using studio activities as a further instrument of data collection, and then reflecting on the outcomes, valuable insights may not only be gained of the practice and discipline, but also into the selected research topic. This approach allowed for the generation of embodied, non-representational, and multi-sensory knowledge that would have been difficult to access through conventional, text-based research. Thus, ultimately the performance is not an adjunct to the thesis but a vital academic artefact that provides an alternative, sensory-based understanding of the militarised body.

7.4 Limitations

There were a number of limitations affecting this research study, the main one being the required distancing between researcher and participants. Although I do understand the ethical considerations involved, and accept that the concerns were valid, I believe that the study would have benefitted by allowing me to be in the same space as the participant. The study focused on the performative and embodied lived experiences, and yet the bodies were not visible or in the same space as the researcher. Sharing the space would have also allowed for a more natural conversational sharing of

stories and keepsakes. My position as fellow former conscript would also have allowed for an improved rapport.

In addition, funding was lacking for the research study which would have limited who I would have been able to interview face-to-face. Lack of funding and access to sites (military and theatrical) also had an effect on my creative artefact. I was therefore compelled to be pragmatic and inventive, and use what I had access to.

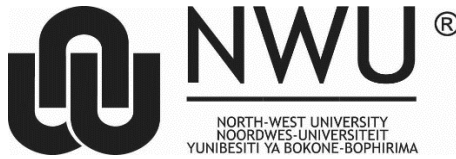
7.5 Future Research

My motivation for this future research is the belief that performance, in all the forms I present it in this thesis, contributes to scholarship by saying those things academic words cannot.

For the purposes of this study, I focused solely on former conscripts of the SADF who had served two years National Service. A future study could incorporate other members of that military institution, including all races, permanent force members, women, and those that identify as LGBTQI+. This would provide a far more inclusive and nuanced view of the gendered nature of the SADF. To provide a counterpoint, a similar study could be made of the armed liberation organisations involved in the war with the SADF, or in the struggle against Apartheid.

Regarding the practical component, the entire research process resulted in not only the *War Stories* (2025) creative artefact but a number of possible future practical works, such as *Saeculum* (2025) proposed for future development (see Annexure G). This interdisciplinary project would include a university drama department, and/or theatre group. In addition, a future iteration of *War Stories* (2025) for public performance is also planned. My motivation of these projects is threefold. Firstly, I feel a debt to the men who participated in this study, making themselves vulnerable and sharing their stories. I would like them to see and experience what their contributions have led to, something that is more relatable than an academic document. Secondly, as I have acknowledged, my praxis is activist in nature, that is, it attempts to raise awareness and initiate conversations. This is an ongoing process. Thirdly, I am an artist who uses the academic framework and processes to focus my creative drive and to generate possible art projects. This research study has been successful in achieving this.

ANNEXURE A: GATEKEEPERS LETTER



Date: 2023

RE: APPLICATION FOR POTENTIAL SUPPORT WITH RECRUITMENT OF ORGANISATION MEMBERS

Dear ...

My name is Andrew Swanepoel. I was a national serviceman 1982 to 1984. I trained at SA Intelligence School in Kimberly and served in 201 Battalion as a non-commissioned officer under Commandant Adams as part of the South West African Territorial Forces (SWATF). At present, I am affiliated with North-West University where I am pursuing a PhD. My research specialisation centres on art, gender and in particular, men and masculinities. My qualifications include a Masters degree with a similar focus of study, the South African Defence Force (SADF).

I am conducting a study with the title of "Confessional testimony and performance: Exploring the rituals of gender as experienced by former South African Defence Force conscripts through embodied storytelling". The study seeks to contribute to an understanding of gendered institutions such as the SADF, and its effects on men. In gendered institutions, gender is used to organize men and women into different roles, activities and spaces. Within such institutions men and women, boys and girls, often perform different roles, and are valued differently. The focus and objectives of the study include the military culture that existed within the SADF, as well as the rituals and initiations of the men associated with it.

I am seeking participants for this study who were conscripted to the SADF for a period of two years between 1977 and 1989, but who are no longer serving members of the military including the South African National Defence Force (SANDF). I will request willing participants to share their recollections and memories in the form of an online interview. The participants who are not willing to participate in an interview may complete a questionnaire or submit their recollections and accounts in written form or video to me. I also encourage participants in the study to share objects from the time of their conscription such as journals, letters, keepsakes and trophies etc. With participants who are willing to be interviewed, I will use video-conferencing interviews (i.e. Skype, Zoom or Google Hangouts interviews).

Given the potential sensitivity of the topic and the importance I ascribe to undertake an ethically sound academic inquiry into the topic, the research study has received ethical clearance from the North-West University - Ethics number: NWU-00953-23-S. In addition, I, the researcher, have undergone training in ethical considerations.

I hereby wish to request your assistance.

- If you agree to assist me, you will be requested to post a supplied advertisement and a summary of the study on their social media and/or online platforms (e.g. online blogs, Facebook or Twitter-pages, among others) or email it to individuals who may possibly wish to participate in the study. Potential participants may then visit the research website or *voluntarily* contact me, the researcher, for further information about the study and decide on whether they want to schedule an appointment for an interview with the researcher.
- I will gladly oblige to forward the informed consent statement and interview questions to the participants beforehand, if they request this.

- Access to one session with a HPCSA registered psychologist, will be available to assist participants if they experience any unforeseen emotional, social and/or psychological distress during or directly following the interview. Participants will have the right to withdraw from the study at any time, and they will also have the right to terminate the interview if they are uncomfortable.
- The above procedures therefore foreground the fact that the researcher will *at no time* during their study, directly contact participants if the latter have not already agreed to participate in the current study beforehand. Any contact from me, the researcher, will be restricted to gaining informed consent from the participant, and arranging and conducting the *fieldwork*. I, the researcher, will also, at the request of the participant, share the transcript of the interview with the participants for checking before submission for examination or eventual publication of the results in peer-reviewed academic journals. Participants will thus have the opportunity to remove certain statements and recollections if they are uncomfortable with them being included in the research.
- In addition to a research report, I, the researcher, will be presenting a performance artwork in a space or venue still to be determined. The participants will receive notification thereof, as well as an invitation to attend the event.

Based on the preceding background to the study and the sensitivity surrounding its thematic focus, I hereby request your participation in assisting me, the researcher, to gain access to/recruit participants through the noted measures above to participate in the study. You are welcome to note additional requirements from your side to further inform your decision and to also safeguard yourself and the participants.

If you require any further information from me, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely

Andrew Swanepoel
North-West University
Email address: andy.unisa@gmail.com
Cellular phone number: 0721848142

ANNEXURE B: PARTICIPANTS LETTER AND CONSENT FORM



Basic Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee (BaSSREC)

DATE: /05/2023

BaSSREC
Authorisation:
Ethics number: NWU-
00953-23-S7

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION LEAFLET AND CONSENT FORM

Title of the research project	Confessional testimony and performance: Exploring the rituals of gender as experienced by former South African Defence Force conscripts through embodied storytelling.
Ethics number	NWU-00953-23-S7
Principal investigator	Andrew Peter Swanepoel
Student number	40681106
Address	132 Dolphin Court, Prince Street, South Beach, KZN
Email address	andy.unisa@gmail.com
Contact number	072 184 8142

You are being invited to take part in a research project that forms part of my PhD research study. Please take some time to read the information presented here, which will explain the details of this project. Please ask the researcher any questions about any part of this project

that you do not fully understand. It is very important that you are fully satisfied that you clearly understand what this research is about and how you could be involved. Also, your participation is **entirely voluntary** and you are free to decline to participate. If you say no, this will not affect you negatively in any way whatsoever. You are also free to withdraw from the study at any point, even if you do agree to take part. Prior to publication of the study's results (or the point that publication is in process), you may also withdraw the data you generate.

This study has been approved by the **Basic and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee (BaSSREC) of the Faculty of Humanities of the North-West University** and will be conducted according to the ethical guidelines and principles of the international Singapore Statement on Research Integrity (2010) and the ethical guidelines of the National Health Research Ethics Council. It might be necessary for the research ethics committee members or relevant authorities to inspect the research records to make sure that we (the researchers) are conducting research in an ethical manner.

What is this research study all about?

- This study is an investigation of the South African Defence Force utilising the experiences of former conscripts, and will involve the use of personal experiences, online interviews, questionnaires, and written submissions.
- The objectives of this research are:
 - to critically investigate the gendered nature of institutions, in particular, the SADF and its military culture
 - the study of the participants' recollections and reflections on keepsakes
 - to create a performance work informed by the conclusions of the research conducted
- The researcher has been trained to use the methods mentioned in the previous sentence.
- Approximately 10-20 participants will be included in this study.
- The interview sessions are by no means, and should by no means be seen, as therapeutic sessions. The aim of the interviews is to gain data, not to offer therapy.

Why have you been invited to participate?

- You have been invited to participate because you are a former SADF conscript
- You have also complied with the following inclusion criteria: a white South African male conscripted to the SADF for a period of two years between 1977 and 1989, and are no longer a serving member of the military such as the SANDF.
- You will be excluded if you do not meet the above criteria.

What will your responsibilities be?

- You will be invited to participate in the noted study by participating in an online interview, completing a questionnaire, and or making a written submission.
- You will have 3 weeks to indicate whether you would be willing to participate.
- You will be requested to sign this Informed Consent Statement before the commencement of the study.

Will you benefit from taking part in this research?

- The direct benefits for you as a participant may be the opportunity to speak of and share your experiences of the SADF.
- The indirect benefit will be contributing to knowledge generation which may result in a raising-of-awareness, and the greater South African society may gain empathy and understanding as a result of the insights into the experiences of the institution of the SADF.

Are there risks involved in your taking part in this research and how will these be managed?

The possible risks in this study, and how these will be managed, are summarised in the table below:

Possible risk	Mitigation strategy
Sufferers of Post-traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)	• It is advised that those former conscripts who have suffered the effects of PTSD do not participate in the research study. However, as this is a voluntary participation study, the decision remains with the prospective participant.
Emotional distress of the participants.	Access to one session with a HPCSA registered psychologist, to assist participants if they experience any unforeseen emotional, social and/or psychological distress during or directly following the interview will be provided.
Tiredness and discomfort.	Comfort breaks of 10 minutes.
Lack of privacy and comfort during interviews due to unforeseen circumstances.	This will be addressed by immediately halting the interview and dealing with the issue. The interview may be rescheduled if the situation is not resolved.

- *However, we do believe that the benefits to you and to science (as noted in the previous section) outweigh the risks we have listed. If you disagree, then please feel free not to participate in this study. We will respect your decision.*
- *Should we learn, in the course of the research, that someone is harming you, or that you are intending to harm someone, then we must tell someone who can help you/warn the person you are intending to harm.*

Who will have access to the data?

The following procedures will be observed in line with the Protection of Personal Information Act (POPIA):

Principle	How will this be done?	When will this be done?
Anonymity	Anonymity will be ensured by the use of codes or fictitious names. I (the principal investigator) will assign a code or fictitious name to you before the interview	Before the interview commences.

	starts. Only this code or fictitious name will be used in the research process.	
Confidentiality	Confidentiality will include the use of pseudonyms or codes for participants, organisations and locations. It involves not disclosing any information gained from an interviewee deliberately or accidentally in ways that might identify an individual, organisation and location.	During the reporting of findings as well as during the publication of findings in the form of articles, books, conference proceedings, etc.
De-identification of data	All identifiable personal information will be de-identified to ensure that no information identifies any participants, organisations and locations.	After you, as participant, has signed-off on the interview transcripts/responses/any other relevant information sent to you to check.
Data storage	All data collected for the purpose of the research will be stored safely in electronic format/hardcopy format for a period of five years after which it will be destroyed. The primary investigator will ensure data that both hard-(printed) and soft copy (electronic) are safely locked away and password-protected, respectively. At the analysis stage, as will be the case throughout, the use of coding will reinforce participants' non-identification, hence upholding the assurance of confidentiality and anonymity.	During, and once the fieldwork has been completed. During analysis and the write-up of findings. During the reporting of findings. During the publication of findings in the form of articles, books, conference proceedings, etc.
Privacy	<i>Privacy</i> will be ensured by not probing unnecessarily if you do not wish to discuss particular matters.	During the fieldwork (interview).
Transcription/coding of data	I will not use a <i>transcriber</i> for the purpose of the transcripts after the interview. I will not use a <i>statistician/coder</i> for the purpose of the transcripts after the interview.	<i>If the primary investigator is responsible for transcribing/coding the data:</i> The primary investigator will be responsible for transcribing the data. Therefore, no other person will have access to the data. The primary investigator will be required to sign a NWU Confidentiality Agreement before the study commences.

Translation/interpreter services	I will not use a <i>translator/interpreter</i> for the purpose of the interviews/explaining the informed consent, etc.	
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Collection of only relevant personal information:

Collection of only relevant personal information	I, the principal investigator, will only collect personal biographical and opinion-related data about the topic I am studying.	These are likely to include: Military orientation at school, unit conscripted into, place of basic training, place/s where national service was served, camps served, return to civilian life.
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What will happen to the data?

The data from this study will be reported in the following ways: i) a study thesis, and, ii) a performance piece. In all of this reporting, you will not be personally identified. This means that the reporting will not include your name or details that will help others to know that you participated.

Data may be re-used in the form of further articles or art pieces.

Will you be paid/compensated to take part in this study and are there any costs involved?

No, you will/will not be paid/compensated to take part in the study. There will be no costs involved.

How will you know about the findings?

- The general findings of the research will be shared with you by me, the principal researcher.
- If you would like feedback on your personal results, then you may contact me with the details supplied.

Is there anything else that you should know or do?

- You can contact me (researcher) at 072 184 8142 (cell phone number) and andy.unisa@gmail.com (email address) if you have any further queries or encounter any problems.
- You can contact the chair of the Human Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee (Prof Erharbor Idemudia) at 018 389 2899 or Erharbor.Idemudia@nwu.ac.za if you have any concerns or complaints that have not been adequately addressed by the researcher.
- You will receive a copy of this information and consent form for your own records.

Declaration by participant

By signing below, I _____ agree to take part in a research study entitled: Confessional testimony and performance: Exploring the rituals of gender as experienced by former South African Defence Force conscripts through embodied storytelling.

I declare that:

- I provide *informed consent*.
 - Thus, I have read and understood this information and consent form and it is written in a language with which I am fluent and comfortable.
 - Thus, I have had a chance to ask questions to both the person obtaining consent, as well as the researcher (if this is a different person), and all my questions have been adequately answered.
- I provide *voluntary consent*.
 - Thus, I understand that taking part in this study is voluntary and I have not been pressurised to take part.
 - Thus, I may choose to leave the study at any time and will not be penalised or prejudiced in any way.
 - Thus, I am aware of the fact that I may request that the researcher does not continue with said recording if I request it.
- I provide *specific consent*.
 - Thus, I understand that what I contribute (what I report/say/write/draw/produce visually) could be reproduced publically and/or quoted, but without reference to my personal identity.
 - I provide *specific consent*. Thus, I consent to an audio and/or audio-visual recording of the interview.

Signed at (*place*) _____ on (*date*) _____ 20 _____

Signature of participant

Signature of witness

- | | |
|---|--|
| • You may contact me again | ☐ Yes ☐ No |
| • I would like a summary of the findings of this research | ☐ Yes ☐ No |

The best way to reach me is:

Name & Surname: _____

Postal Address: _____

Email: _____

Phone Number: _____

Cell Phone Number: _____

In case the above details change, please contact the following person who knows me well and who does not live with me and who will help you to contact me:

Name & Surname: _____

Phone/ Cell Phone Number /Email: _____

Declaration by person obtaining consent (if not the researcher/primary investigator)

I (*name*) _____ declare that:

- I explained the information in this document to _____
- I encouraged him/her to ask questions and took adequate time to answer them.
- I am satisfied that he/she adequately understands all aspects of the research, as discussed above
- I did/did not use an interpreter.

Signed at (*place*) _____ on (*date*) _____ 20 ____

Signature of person obtaining consent

Signature of witness

Declaration by researcher/primary investigator

I (*name*) _____ declare that:

- I explained the information in this document to _____
- I encouraged them to ask questions and took adequate time to answer them.
- I am satisfied that they adequately understand all aspects of the research, as discussed above
- I did/did not use an interpreter.

Signed at (*place*) _____ on (*date*) _____ 20 ____

Signature of researcher

Signature of witness

ANNEXURE C: INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

A. OPENING

1. Establish Rapport: My name is Andrew Swanepoel. I was a national serviceman from 1982 to 1984. I trained at SA Intelligence School in Kimberly and served in 201 Battalion as an Intelligence corporal under Commandant Adams at Omega base, Caprivi, near 32 Battalion and Rundu. At present, I am pursuing a PhD at North-West University. My research specialisation centres on the understanding of men's experiences in gendered institutions such as the South African Defence Force (SADF).
2. Purpose: I would like to ask you some questions about your experiences of the SADF and your life after those experiences. I hope to use this information to give insights into the SADF and the affects it had on conscripts. I will be producing not only a written thesis document but also a performance to shed light on our experiences as conscripts.
3. Confidentiality: I will not use your name or any identifying information in my research. All information collected during the course of this study will be kept in a safe and secure site.
4. Time: The interview will be between one and two hours. However, you may stop it at any time should you wish to.

B. BODY

1. General demographic information: Conscription date, unit, deployment etc.
 2. Chronological timeline of the phases the former conscript passed through: cadets, induction, orientation, basics, bush phase, specialisation training, deployment, exit, camps. The experiences of each will be discussed.
 3. Reflection: Looking back on military experiences, as well as any personal insights.
- *Note: Prompts will be utilised to aid the interviewee. I will do this by sharing my own experiences and memorabilia/artefacts. The interviewee may have his own artefacts to show.*

C. CLOSING

1. Conclusion: Final thoughts.
2. Rapport: I appreciate the time you took for this interview.
3. Action to be taken: I should have all the information I need. Feel free to contact me should you have any questions. I will keep you updated as to the progress of the study and the details of the performance piece.

ANNEXURE D: QUESTIONNAIRE

Online sadfmilitaryculture.org.za questionnaire

Disclosure:

1. Introduction: My name is Andrew Swanepoel. I was a national serviceman from 1982 to 1984. I trained at SA Intelligence School in Kimberly and served in 201 Battalion as an Intelligence corporal under Commandant Adams at Omega base, Caprivi, near 32 Battalion and Rundu. At present, I am pursuing a PhD at North-West University. My research specialisation centres on the understanding of men's experiences in gendered institutions such as the South African Defence Force (SADF).
2. Purpose: This questionnaire focuses on experiences of the SADF and life after those experiences. This information will be utilised to give insights into the SADF and its military culture and the affects it had on conscripts. The research will be used to produce not only a written thesis document but also a performance to shed light on the experiences of the SADF conscripts.
3. Confidentiality: Your name and any identifying information will be excluded from the research. All information collected during the course of this study will be kept in a safe and secure site.
4. Time: The questionnaire should take between 30 minutes and one hour to complete, depending on the depth of the information you provide.
5. Submission: You may review your answers before submitting the questionnaire, and you may stop at any time should you wish to.
6. Instructions: Please fill out the following blocks to the best of your ability and do not hesitate to expand your answers. When complete please feel free to review your answers, and then submit.

Questionnaire:

Section A: <u>General demographic information</u>
Q 1: Conscription date -
Q2: Unit conscripted to and where -
Q3: Unit deployed to after training and where -
Q4: Position and purpose of deployment -
Q5: Rank -

Section B: <u>Training Phases</u>
Q 1: At 16 all white South African school boys were registered for military service. Do you recall where this took place and how?
Q 2: Most white schools had cadet training. Did your school and did you take part? What do you recall about the school cadets programme?
Q 3: Induction compelled you by law to enter military service. Where did you report to begin your National Service? Did you report directly to your unit or were you transported from the induction point to your training base? What do you recall about the induction process and the trip to your training base?
Q 4: Orientation at your training base involved being assigned your basic uniforms and gear, a medical screening

and a haircut. What do you recall about the orientation process?

Q 5: The purpose of Basic Training was to assimilate you into the SADF and involved turning you into a soldier. What do you recall about your Basics? What was your first pass like during Basics? What was it like returning to base after that first pass?

Q 6: Bush Phase followed Basic Training and was aimed at preparing you for actual combat situations. What do you recall about your Bush training?

Q 7: Did you receive any specialist training after completing Bush Phase? If you did, what was the specialisation and what do you recall about it?

Section C: Deployment

Q 1: Following your training where were you deployed to and what role did you fulfil?

Q 2: Are there any particular experiences that you can remember about this period of your military service? For example, were you initiated at your new unit? What rituals and traditions were observed there?

Q 3: It was tradition that 'ou manne' celebrate their '40' days before completing their National Service. What do you recall about yours?

Q 4: Completion of National Service involved returning gear and preparing for a return to civilian life. What do you recall about this time?

Section D: Camps

Q 1: Upon completion of your National Service you became part of the Citizen Force and became eligible to be called up for yearly camps. Where did you serve your camps?

Q 2: Do you have any particular memories of the camps you served?

Section E: Civilian Life

Q 1: Do you recall any particular experiences of civilian life in relation to your role as soldier? These could be when you were on military pass or between camps.

Section F: Reflection

Q 1: Looking back on your military experiences, are there any personal insights you would like to share?

Q 2: Do you have any personal insights regarding the SADF itself you would like to share?

Conclusion:

Thank you for taking the time to complete this questionnaire. Your participation in this research study is greatly appreciated and valued. If you would like to share further material such as letters, memorabilia and other keepsakes, please feel free to use my contact details. In addition, feel free to contact me should you have any questions. My contact details are available on the site. Please note that updates regarding the performance piece will be posted on this site.

**PARTICIPANTS
REQUIRED:**

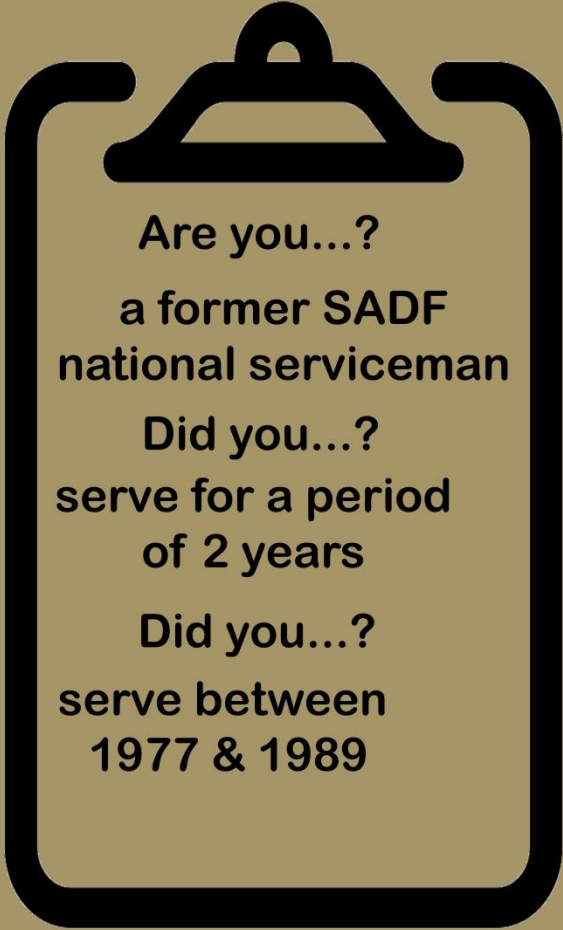
**For a research study
exploring the experiences
of national servicemen who
served in the SADF
(South African Defence force)
between 1977 and 1989**

**To participate
follow the link**

www.sadfmilitaryculture.org.za

**or
contact**

**Andrew Swanepoel
(PhD researcher)
at
andy.unisa@gmail.com**



**Are you...?
a former SADF
national serviceman**

**Did you...?
serve for a period
of 2 years**

**Did you...?
serve between
1977 & 1989**

ANNEXURE F: RESEARCH WEBSITE

RESEARCH WEBSITE

Title of site/ domain

SADFMILITARYCULTURE.ORG.ZA

Landing page tabs

About:

This is the official site for the research study, “Confessional testimony and performance: Exploring the rituals of gender as experienced by former South African Defence Force conscripts through embodied storytelling” - Ethics number: NWU-00953-23-S7. The study seeks to contribute to an understanding of men’s experiences of military culture in institutions such as the SADF. The findings will be in the form of a written thesis as well as a creative performance.

Researcher:

My name is Andrew Swanepoel. I was a national serviceman from 1982 to 1984. I trained at SA Intelligence School in Kimberly and specialised in Communications Operations (Comm Ops). I served in 201 Battalion as an Intelligence corporal under Commandant Adams at Omega base, Caprivi, near the Buffalo base (32 Battalion) and Rundu. At present, I am pursuing a PhD at North-West University. My research specialisation centres on the understanding of men’s experiences in gendered institutions such as the South African Defence Force (SADF) and the military culture associated with this institution.

Voluntary Participation:

I am conducting a study into the military culture of the South African Defence Force. The study seeks to contribute to an understanding of men’s experiences in gendered institutions such as the SADF. I am seeking participants for this study who were conscripted to the SADF for a period of two years between 1977 and 1989 but are not serving in the military at present. I will request willing participants to share their recollections and memories in the form of an online interview. The participants who are not willing to participate in an online interview may submit their recollections and accounts in written form to me or complete the questionnaire available on this website. I also encourage participants in the study to share objects from the time of their conscription such as journals, letters, keepsakes and trophies etc. With participants who are willing to be interviewed, I will use video-conferencing interviews (i.e. Skype, Zoom or Google Hangouts interviews), depending on the request of the participant.

Privacy Policy:

Information sharing and disclosure - Personal information is defined as information about an identifiable individual, recorded in any form. The researcher and North-West University will not share any personal information about the participants in the study.

Personal information is defined as information about an identifiable individual, recorded in any form.

The protection of identity and anonymisation of responses - As the research relates to your own experiences within the SADF, your identity will be protected. The researcher will respect the wishes of each individual participant because of the sensitive nature of the research. Your anonymity will be respected at all times, and you have the right to confidentiality, where any information you divulge will be treated as such. Only my supervisor, Doctor Annemi Conradie-Chetty, and I, will have access to the gathered data and informed consent forms. Please note that both of us have signed a Confidentiality Agreement to maintain the confidentiality of any data gathered in this research study. You do not have to give any personal details, and you will be referred to by a pseudonym or code to

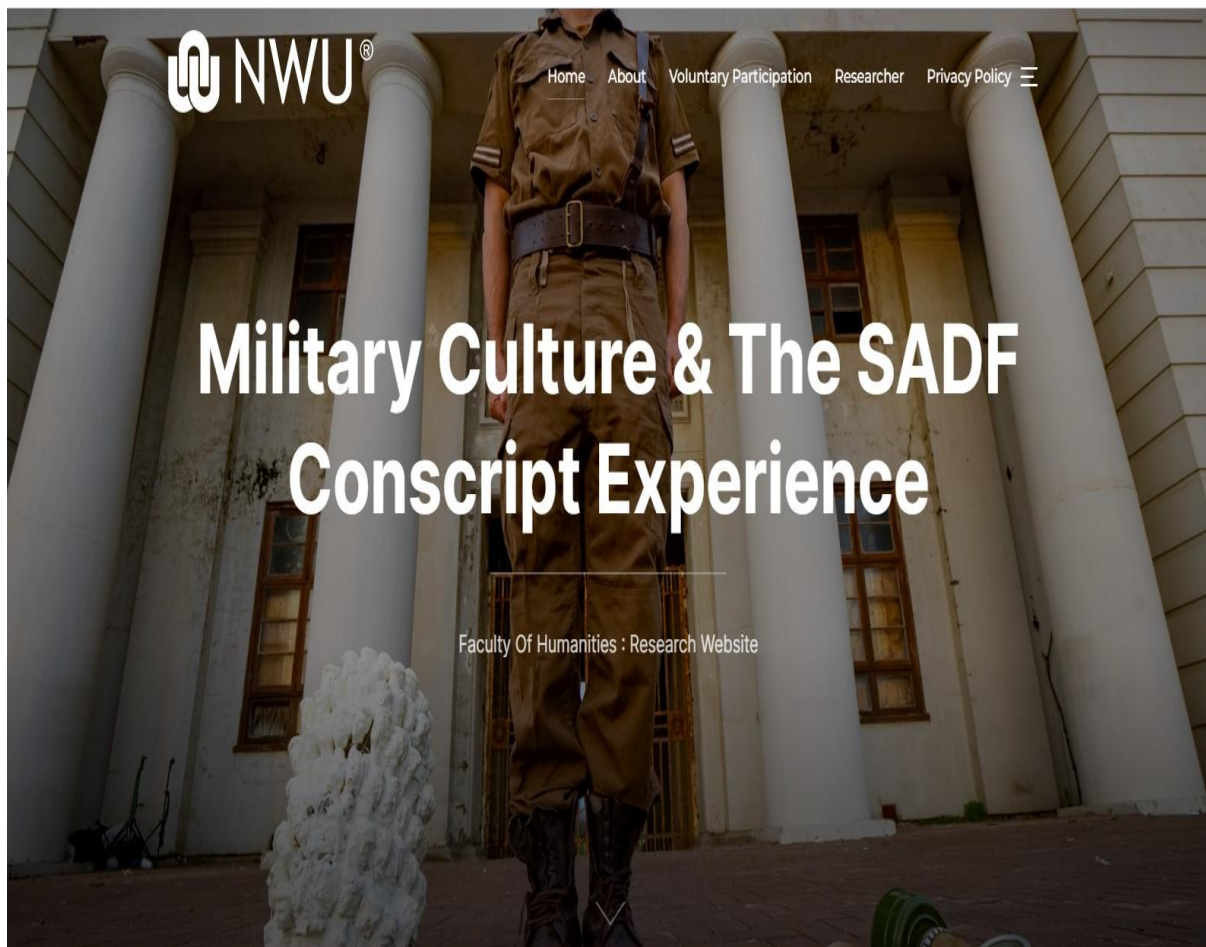
protect your identity. These matters will be discussed before each interview commences and participants will be assured total anonymity.

How information obtained during the interviews will be used - Each interview will be recorded and transcribed. The purpose of the interviews is to acquire an understanding of the way they experienced and perceived the SADF. After analysing the interview transcripts, I will be constructing and presenting a performance artwork in a space or venue still to be determined. I, the researcher, will be presenting a performance artwork in a space or venue still to be determined. The participants will receive notification thereof, as well as an invitation to attend the event.

Protection of information and research data - The research does not involve the collection of personal data, that is, names, contact details etc. for the purposes of analysis. The use of personal data only pertains to the use of participants' email addresses and telephone numbers in order to arrange the details around interviews. Where the researcher acquires participant contact information that is not in the public domain, such information will be stored securely on a password protected laptop and external hard drive.

Concerning transcripts and recordings of interviews, aside from participants' names, no personal data will be linked to the recordings or transcripts. Participants or responses will be anonymised through a pseudonym or coding system.

Mockups



Landing page

RESEARCHER

My name is Andrew Swanepoel. I was a national serviceman from 1982 to 1984. I trained at SA Intelligence School in Kimberly and specialised in Communications Operations (Comm Ops). I served in 201 Battalion as an Intelligence corporal under Commandant Adams at Omega base, Caprivi, near the Buffalo base (32 Battalion) and Rundu. At present, I am pursuing a PhD at North-West University. My research specialisation centres on the understanding of men's experiences in gendered institutions such as the South African Defence Force (SADF) and the military culture associated with this institution.

ABOUT

This is the official site for the research study, "Confessional testimony and performance: Exploring the rituals of gender as experienced by former South African Defence Force conscripts through embodied storytelling". The study seeks to contribute to an understanding of men's experiences in gendered institutions such as the SADF. The findings will be in the form of a written thesis as well as a creative performance.

[Privacy Policy](#)

Copyright 2022 Andrew Swanepoel

Demo website by Dahms Media

About tab

VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION

I am conducting a study with the title of "Confessional testimony and performance: Exploring the rituals of gender as experienced by former South African Defence Force conscripts through embodied storytelling". The study seeks to contribute to an understanding of men's experiences in gendered institutions such as the SADF. I am seeking participants for this study who were conscripted to the SADF for a period of two years between 1977 and 1989. I will request willing participants to share their recollections and memories in the form of an interview. The participants who are not willing to participate in an interview may submit their recollections and accounts in written form to me. I also encourage participants in the study to share objects from the time of their conscription such as journals, letters, keepsakes and trophies etc. With participants who are willing to be interviewed, I will use either face-to-face or video-conferencing interviews (i.e. Skype, Zoom or Google Hangouts interviews), depending on the request of the participant and the current challenges faced due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

Voluntary Participation tab

PRIVACY POLICY

Information sharing and disclosure

Personal information is defined as information about an identifiable individual, recorded in any form. The researcher and North-West University will not share any personal information about the participants in the study.

Personal information is defined as information about an identifiable individual, recorded in any form.

The protection of identity and anonymisation of responses

As the research relates to your own experiences within the SADF, your identity will be protected. The researcher will respect the wishes of each individual participant because of the sensitive nature of the research. Your anonymity will be respected at all times, and you have the right to confidentiality, where any information you divulge will be treated as such. Only my supervisor, Doctor Leandra Koenig-Visagie, and I, will have access to the gathered data and informed consent forms. You do not have to give any personal details, and you will be referred to by a pseudonym to protect your identity. These matters will be discussed before each interview commences and participants will be assured total anonymity.

Privacy tab

ANNEXURE G: SAECULUM (2025)

Saeculum (2025) is a project concept that emerged from the research processes of the doctoral thesis. In it I envision *swany* (my artist persona) engaged in a conversation with the voices of my fellow former conscripts and participants while I carry out mundane, ritualistic tasks such as cleaning a rifle, polishing boots, using a field urinal (*pislelie*), and listening to and singing along with a song. This will take place in a tent on a stage.

Signifier 1: Participant Lived Experiences and Chatbot personas

This is inspired by the scene from the television series *6 Feet Under* (2004) and informed by, and will be made possible by, Artificial Intelligence (AI) advancements. The New York Post reported in 2023 that ReflexAI had created an AI-powered Chatbot named Blake which can converse like an actual American military veteran (Stabile). The bot's persona is a 35-year-old Marine veteran from Colorado Springs facing several challenges that have affected his mental health (Stabile, 2023). Veterans were involved in Blake's creation, and it is engineered to sound and react authentically. As I have stressed, whilst acknowledging the effects of military experiences, this study does not focus on mental health issues. My intention is to create a number of chatbots like Blake. Once each chatbot is built, it needs to be trained on a large dataset of conversations to learn how to respond appropriately. The datasets will be those I have collected in this research study. It is with these chatbots that I will converse during the ethnodrama performance. It is envisioned that they will mimic similar conversations men such as myself experienced over 40 years ago as conscripts in the SADF.

Signifier 2: Sacred Space - stage set design or scenography

Using the rule of thirds as a compositional guideline, the stage would be divided into two thirds and one third, with the tent-interior being the greater and the field toilet with the three urinals being the lesser.

Rule of Thirds

In the tent space, stage left, there will be two rows of field cots running from stage front to stage back. The lighting will be dim apart from stage front over the left cot where *swany* will be seated performing various mundane yet ritualistic tasks. At the far back of the tent will be a second brighter light which will highlight a music centre including a record player. The sole figure will be in conversation with his fellow soldiers who are present only via their voices. Stage right will darker than the tent interior and is where the field ablutions will be, notably three field urinals. This is designed to establish the setting, mood, and atmosphere of the ethnodrama.

Signifier 2: Rituals

There are a number of rituals to be performed. Two of the main ones will be the cleaning of a rifle and the ‘boning’ of boots as carried out in my *War Stories* (2025) performance. I will also read from my letters to my mother again.

Signifier 3: Script

Although *swany* will have some scripted dialogue and prepared movements, he will also have to respond and converse with the chatbot conscripts who will have no scripts and interact uniquely based on the individual inputted data sets each received and their ‘learning’. This is a new conceptualisation built upon the initial *War Stories* (2025) performance

Signifier 4: Sound and Music

In addition to *swany*’s conversations with the chatbots and his monologues, singing, chanting and music will play a part in the performance. The performance will end with *swany* and the chatbots singing along to *In the Army Now* (1982), a song by the South African-born Dutch duo Bolland & Bolland. In South Africa, boosted by increased military conscription, the single peaked at number 9 in May 1982. The song was being played on the radio while I was engaged in training at SA Intelligence. It was as if my lived experience had been selected to be assigned its own musical theme to accompany it.

Requirements

In attempting to realise this performance, it is important that various departments of a university are included. Although I could create the basic AI chatbot personas, they would be better realised by a department who study and research such things. Similarly, the staging requirements such as venue, stage scenery and the like, ideally should involve the Drama Department. Getting the rights to using the music would also require some university assistance.



Figure 47: A Chronological Timeline of Postgraduate Performances (2014 – 2025). Swanepoel (2025)

Performance Beginnings

My experiments began in 2007 whilst I was an active member of a Durban dance studio. I was intrigued by the manner in which the body could be used as a tool and medium of communication, literally, figuratively and metaphorically. In addition, my experiences working with the 201 Battalion Bushmen and being exposed to their use of the body for the purposes of storytelling and communication further piqued my interest. Training and acquiring performance skills as a dancer, as well as the experience of performing on stage, further strengthened this interest in body language and body representation.

Academia and the Performance Artist

Below follows an overview of the development of my artist's practice within academia via a chronological presentation of my creative output follows.

Gaze (2012)

Gaze (2012) was my first performance art project and was strongly inspired and informed by second wave feminism. It dealt with the concept of the male gaze and attempted to subvert that by presenting the male subject instead as the object of the gaze. I incorporated the feminist concepts such as the male gaze into the work to critique its impact on both men and women. The use of my own body was inspired by the praxis and performances of five second wave feminists, namely, Mary Beth Edelson (1933 – 2021), Carolee Schneemann (1939 – 2019), Hannah Wilke (1940 – 1993), Ana Mendieta (1945 – 1985), and Marina Abramović (1946). These artists inspired me to present my male body in a way that challenged the traditional portrayal of masculinity and sexuality. However, in the *Gaze* (2012) performance I focused on the subjective experience of the male body rather than its portrayal as an object of desire. The first and most obvious way was to subvert the male gaze by simply reversing the gender roles. I conducted a number of experiments prior to the performance by inverting the gaze of the camera so that its focus was male objects of possible female or homosexual desire. At the core of these experiments was my exploration of the concept of masculine vulnerability, and how it relates to the idea of 'looking' as a relationship of power between the active and the passive.



Figure 48: *swany*, *Gaze* (2012) Shaving Ritual detail collage. Swanepoel (2025)

Proof of Life (2013)

Based upon the feedback received and the lessons learned from the *Gaze* (2012) performance, I undertook an interrogation of self for the purposes of my fourth-year university practical body of work. My use of the term ‘proof of life’, which references, not only the act of providing photographic evidence of their captive by kidnappers to those they have presented financial or political demands to, but to the search for life here, on Mars and in the afterlife, was inspired by Leora Farber’s (1964-) *Dis-location/Re-location* (2007-2008).

In *Dis-location/Re-location* (2007-2008), Farber addresses as her “post-colonial persona” (Farber 2009: 1). She presents an intense act of self-analysis which in turn encourages a dialogue on “post-colonial identity; post-apartheid identity; the dilemma of whiteness; the politics of Diaspora; cultural assimilation; post-feminist discourse; exile and alienation” (Farber 2008: 5). In *Proof of Life* (2013) I similarly address my dislocation as an older white male within contemporary South African society. This includes an acknowledged sense of alienation and loss of identity as a result of the displacement of white masculinity in the social hierarchy post-Apartheid. While utilising the self-portrait to identify and locate myself, I simultaneously subvert and deconstruct the medium. By commenting on myself I critique the society within which I find myself located and often at odds with. In an endurance performance I documented myself daily for a period of a year, three hundred and sixty-five days. I took daily proof-of-life photographs of myself holding up the local newspaper. Newspapers, as devices of documentation and communication, served to locate me within an identified society in a very specific context and time. In hindsight, I now note how strongly this documented performance resonates with Foucault’s inscribed body metaphor.



Figure 49: swany, *Proof of Life* (2013).

GIKI (2014)

Whilst pursuing the final year of my Visual Arts degree and documenting my endurance performance, *Proof of Life* (2013), I simultaneously worked on a performative art piece. I spent fourteen months (the length of time I spent on the Border in the South West Territorial Armed Forces as an Intelligence non-commissioned officer) collecting army boots, deconstructing them and re-assembling them to form canvases upon which I etched trace images of dislocation, trauma and melancholy. This dislocation was, of course, spurred on by my interrogation of self. Amongst these trace images are those of the following:

1) The Pro Patria Medal, named after the ancient Roman poet, Horace's lyric – *Dulce et decorum est pro patria mori*. Translated - it is sweet and fitting to die for one's country. It was mockingly called the 'ProNutro' medal by the SADF conscripts (after the breakfast cereal).



Figure 50: Pro Patria medal 161377 awarded to Corporal AP Swanepoel. Swanepoel (2025).

- 2) The NGK Church, whose history has been bound with the politics of the Afrikaner and whose symbol ironically reflects a sacrifice made to the Calvinistic God worshipped. In this case, 18 year old boys sacrificed to maintain a way of life.
- 3) Organisations that furthered the Nationalist Government's ideals such as the South African Broadcast Company (SABC) and its television and radio services.
- 4) Certain brands which reflected the time, such as Scope magazine and 'fotoboekies' (photobooks) such as *Grensvegter* (Border fighter), and even Chappies bubble-gum.

Untitled (Nightwatch/Two Comma Four/Natal Command) (2016) and 40RTY (2016)

As part of the process of experimentation, conceptualising and making for the purposes of my Masters research study; I carried out a number of performance works. The most notable took place in 2016 in and around the Natal Command precinct, the base where I reported to, in order to commence my two-year National Service duty. Not only did the performances interrogate the gendered institution of the military but they also attempted to dismantle rigid gender roles, and explore the fluidity of gender identity, disrupting traditional notions of masculinity.



Figure 51: swany, *Untitled (Natal Command – Site 3, Main Entrance)* (2016) performance documentation.



Figure 52: swany, *Untitled (Natal Command – Site 3, Main Entrance)* (2016).

40RTY (2016)

In October 2016, following the Natal Command performance, I returned to the gallery where I had begun my guerrilla performance in January. The *40RTY* (2016) performance, informed by the academic research I had been conducting for my Masters study, was also an experiment for the purposes of the envisioned creative artefact for that same study, that is, a practical realisation of some of the research. For the men of my generation, ‘40 days’ was a traditionally celebrated day: the first day of the final forty days of the two years as a SADF conscript. Interrogating Butler’s (1990) theory of performativity, I performed a performative act of masculinity. I selected to perform what is generally considered one of the most masculine of rituals; the shaving of the face. For *40RTY* (2016), however, I subverted the ritual by waxing my face instead of shaving it, using what are commonly described as ‘feminine waxing strips’.



Figure 53: swany, *40RTY* (2016) performance documentation.

Untitled (New Year's Day Waxing) (2018)

Although I had a photographer document the *40RTY* (2016) performance, I did not have a videographer do the same. I wanted video of the *40RTY* (2016) waxing ritual for possible use in my upcoming Masters performance work and installation, and therefore decided I would need to repeat the ritual. Further, as 2018 was the year I was to submit my research dissertation, I had to finalise my accompanying creative artefact, the performance art piece visually reflecting my research. This waxing performance was to assist with my conceptualisation as well as serving to prepare me mentally and physically for actual event or 'happening' later that year.



Figure 54: swany, *Untitled (New Year's Day Waxing)* (2018) performance documentation.

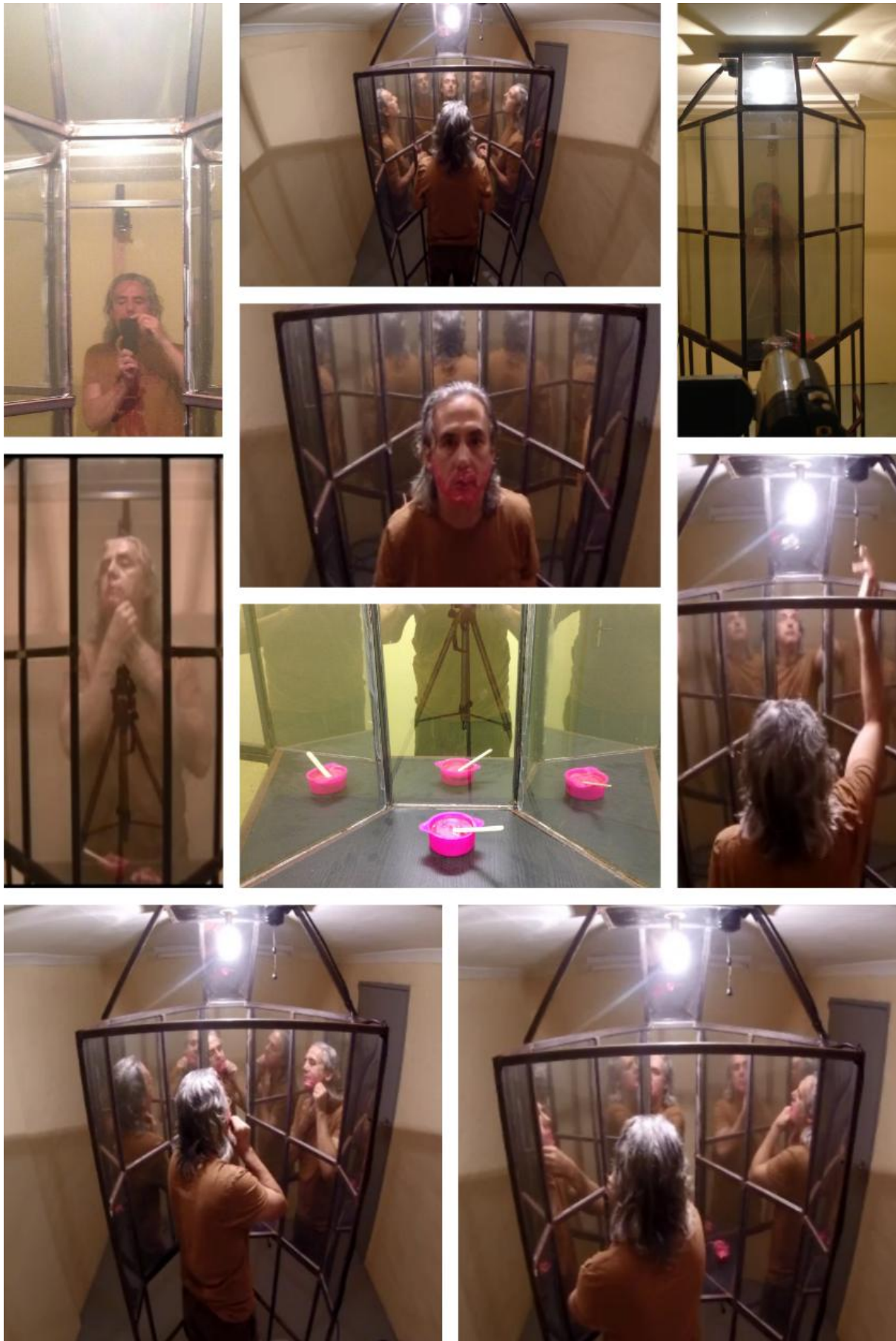


Figure 55: swany, *Waxing Collage, Untitled (New Year's Day Waxing)* (2018) performance detail.

Blou Steen/ Blue Stone (2018)

The *Blou Steen/Blue Stone* (2018) performance work addresses three specific problematic aspects of the Apartheid SADF institution: the use of blue stone, the weaponisation of the penis, and the use of gendered language and military designations. Various signifiers were employed, ranging from the toxic blue of my hair colour and my military uniform, to various military equipment including a realistic replica AK47 rifle, as well as 500 kilogrammes of sea salt in the performance space. In addition, I created a soundtrack to my performance which spoke of the military, and to which I reacted, as well as interacted with.

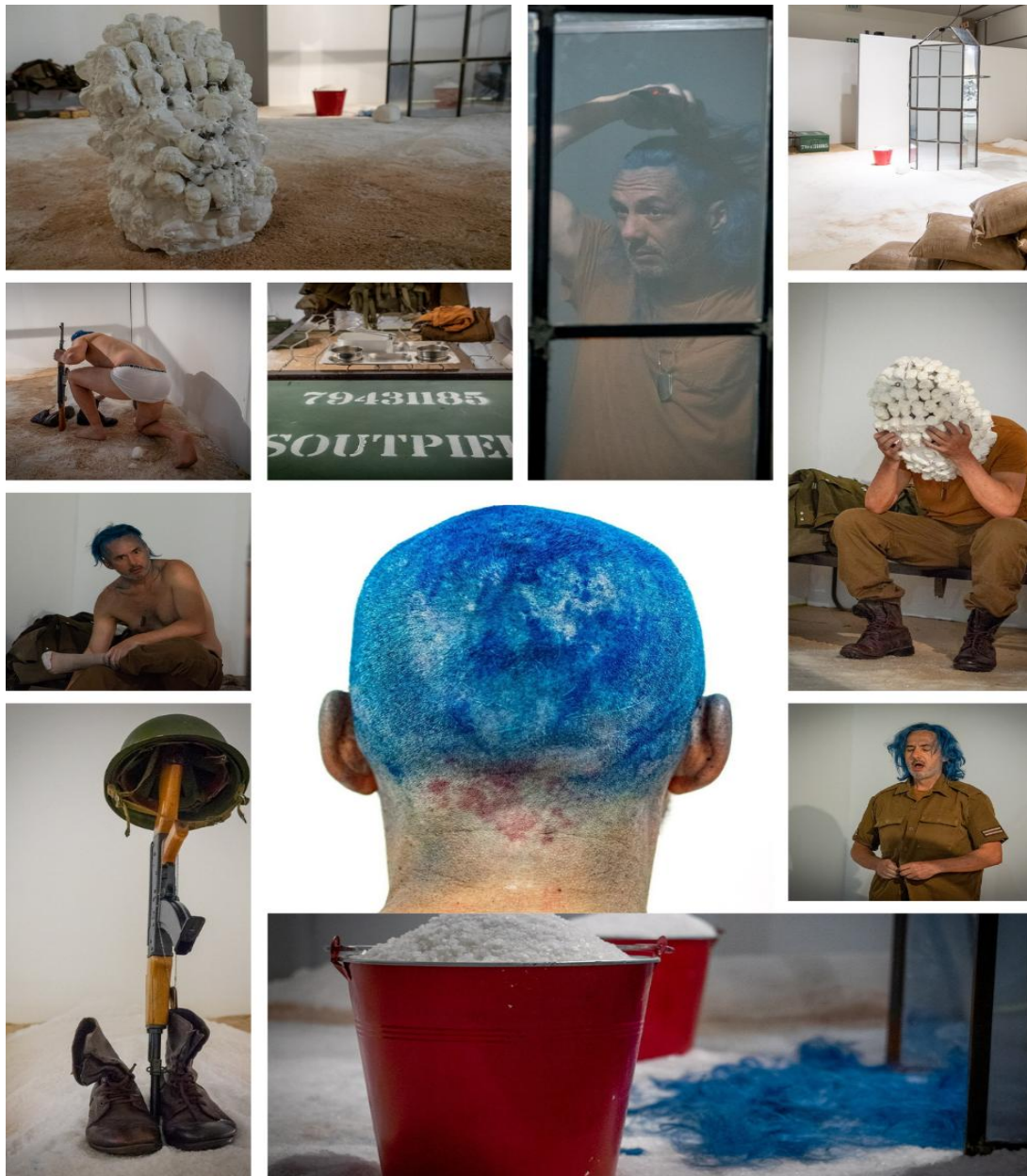


Figure 56: swany, *Blou Steen/Blue Stone* Collage (2018) performance detail.

One of central signifiers was *The Mask of Masculinities* (2018), a headpiece I created specifically for the *Blou Steen/Blue Stone* (2018) performance. It consisted of two hundred white resin Ken doll heads and a wire frame. In a laborious process, each head was cast in resin using a mould I created, and then wired to the frame. It is a prime example of the making process I include in my practice, and is indicative of the fact that my performances begin long before I step onto the performance site and into the performance space.



Figure 57: *swany*, *The Mask of Masculinities* (2018). Resin and copper wire.



Figure 58: swany, Creating the *Mask of Masculinities* Collage (2018) detail.

Untitled (This is My Gun) (2019)

One of the central tenets of my practice is that the answers often lie in the making. Whilst, as indicated, research is a vital part of my practice, being used to, not only inform and support my practical work, but also as an ideation tool, the real answers always lie in the actual doing, the making. In 2019, I carried out an experimental performance for the purposes of my anticipated doctoral research study. It would also be my final guerrilla performance piece at the Natal Command precinct. Revisiting themes, for the purposes of the guerrilla performance I selected one particular theme which I identified in my *Blou Steen/Blue Stone* (2018) performance; the weaponising of the penis. In the performance I wore my military uniform as well as *the Mask of Masculinities*. Using a replica AK47 rifle, I then carried out that same ritual which had been forced on me as a National Serviceman for calling my rifle a gun: “This is my rifle, this is my gun! This is for fighting, this is for fun!”



Figure 59: swany, *Untitled (This is My Gun)* (2019) performance documentation.



Figure 60: swany, *Untitled (This is My Gun)* (2019) performance documentation.

Exercises and experiments such as these allowed me to identify gaps in experience and any areas where I needed further development, and encouraged me to seek opportunities to gain the required additional experience. This was integral to the development of my creative artefact for the purposes of my doctoral research study.

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