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### **Perspectives on Community Policing of Durban Juveniles Living on the Streets**

Dena Cheng

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PERSPECTIVES ON COMMUNITY POLICING OF DURBAN JUVENILES LIVING ON  
THE STREETS

Dena Cheng

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School for International Training

South Africa: Social and Political Transformation

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## **Acknowledgements**

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## **Abstract**

The aim of this project is to critically analyze the structure and performance of the South African Police Service (SAPS) at the nexus of juvenile criminal justice and homelessness. Facing issues of social discord, legitimacy, and patterns of corruption following the era of apartheid, SAPS plays a critical role in both preventing as well as eliminating crime. Therefore, this project focuses on a particularly marginalized community, under-aged street children, since the treatment of youth crime and/or criminality in Durban serves as a microcosm of a larger system of practices implemented by SAPS. Through in-depth interviews with local social workers, a representative from the Durban police service, and Cato Manor township residents, I investigated the purposes, benefits, as well as critiques of community policing programs targeting juveniles within the city of Durban. The findings illustrate that the perception of street youth as well as the police may change depending on geography, age and gender of the street child. Moreover, there is an overwhelming need to support juveniles living in such conditions, since the lack of social support beyond shelter living often leaves children disproportionately impacted by Safer Cities-era policing strategies.

## **Introduction**

In a country grappling with rapid economic change, homelessness, and in particular youth homelessness, persists as a major barrier to development in South Africa. The primary objective of this project is to investigate the key differences between state policing intentions and the application of community policing initiatives. As a historically marginalized group, street children, under my purview, serve as an important case study into larger systems of power that exist, even after the abolition of apartheid South Africa. Bringing in legal frameworks, socioeconomic implications of poverty/homelessness, and personal impacts of policing into the conversation offers a complexity that previous forms of scholarship might not have offered. My personal interest in poverty comes from my own background as a resident of Los Angeles, which holds Skid Row, a ‘service dependent ghetto’ dubbed the ‘homeless capital of the United States.’ Residing in between Main Street and Central Avenue, the homeless within Downtown East Los Angeles are caught in the center of a battle between large corporations, city council representatives, angered tenants, and investors, leaving little space for those who attempt to occupy and navigate public and private spaces by means of survival. In turn, there are about 50 cops to every 1-square mile area” (Jaffe). Stanford University Sociology professor Forrest Stuart, aptly recalls, “The police, in part just because of their numbers in Skid Row, were creating a situation I’d never seen before. Just as a guy was starting to get on his feet—for example, he had finally secured a bed at a shelter—some small infraction would cut him back” (Streshinsky 2016). Therefore, my engagement with a strong historical framework of law enforcement techniques in the United States further piqued my own interest in the functions of due process, community reactions to violence, and rhetoric concerning the expenses needed for public safety in South Africa.

As a former senior police officer, Professor Doraval Govender at the University of South Africa argues that “the divide between the public and the police could result in either an underestimation or an overestimation of their role, and hence of the public’s expectation of the police” (3). Therefore, engaging with misunderstandings on all sides of the debate is necessary to create a cohesive conclusion about the clear barriers faced by street youth. To fully analyze the patterns of policing applied in Durban, one of my main intentions of my project was to observe the ecosystem created as a result of continued social positioning of homeless youth, availability of state resources, and instances of true ‘visibility’ of those on the streets. Therefore, I chose from a variety of sources to learn about the lives of street children, including those who have had first-hand contact, such as social workers and community advocates. Moreover, I interviewed a police representative as well as a premier ethnographer who interacted with Durban street children for ten years to gain a nuanced perspective of the roles of the KZN’s policing tactics. Finally, I conducted one-on-one interviews and surveyed ten Cato Manor residents to better gauge the opinions of Durbanites as they come across street children on an-almost daily basis. A conglomeration of these different experiences and viewpoints give us a look into the lives of street youth.

Since my study investigates the lives of juveniles from numerous perspectives, I organized this paper by themes. First, I present my findings concerning the factors that may make children susceptible to police interactions/abuse and the perceptions of urban homeless youths. By acknowledging gender disparities as well as the reasons why children may end up on the streets, I contextualize the complex situations in which children might find themselves when facing law enforcement. Second, I bring a policing official into the conversation by referring to the patterns within SAPS policies and the possible discrepancies in the implementation of

community policing tactics. In the next section, I analyze the impact of systemic policing practices on the psycho-socio factors and criminality of youth living on the streets. Here, I speak on the ways in which police may reconstitute poverty, crime and social marginalization of juveniles. I then find patterns in the opinions concerning the police across the geography of Durban which consists of both cramped, heavily policed city centres as well as wealthier suburbs. Finally, I write about the state of social services in the nation, which affects the role of police officers as they patrol the streets on a day-to-day basis.

Studying transformation is about not only large-scale issues concerning macroeconomy and international relations but also micro interactions between the police and the policed. Throughout this study, I delve into greater issues pertaining to the differences between poverty *management* and poverty *reduction*. This project frames the ways in which everyday citizens, academics, and policymakers may conceptualize as well as tackle a problem that is lived and experienced, not just statistical.



## Literature Review

### *Apartheid era high policing*

Even after the adoption of South Africa's progressive constitution and ratification of the United Nations Declaration of Children's Rights, community policing of youth remains an issue in the post-apartheid regime. Indeed, Andrew Faull from the Institute of Safety and Governance and Criminology at the University of Cape Town finds that the South African Police Service (SAPS) "more than two decades into the new South Africa" continues to face a tumultuous relationship with the public." Faull refers the fact that "in 2013, 53% of South Africans thought 'all' or 'most' of the country's police were corrupt, and in 2015, only 57% were satisfied with the police in their area" (157). To fully examine the reasons for public distrust of policing bodies, Faull outlines several scandals between 2010 and 2015, including "police shooting dead 34 striking mine workers in Marikana outside Johannesburg in 2012 and police executing a wounded store robber, Khulekani Mpanz, in 2015" (158). In a nation of about 200,000 homeless individuals, South Africa continues to face a stream of challenges, as those at the fringes of society face countless difficulties including "violence, mistreatment by police, sexual abuse, and [problems] accessing proper healthcare, [...] food, sanitation and safety" (WPI). Moreover, the added intricacy of youth homelessness serves as a both contentious and complicated angle to an already widely debated disputes concerning police bureaucratic inefficiencies, lack of accountability, and cases of financial fraud (Faull 159). This, then, begs for an investigation into the municipal, social, and economic factors that lead to such dire conditions.

Twenty-five years into the new age of South African democracy, the nation continues to struggle with the inherent divide between the conceptualization of freedom and the vestiges of the apartheid era policies that exist to this day. ANC liberation fighter and journalist Raymond

Suttner recalls that “the police harassed people for not carrying passes, removed them from their homes when an area was designated a ‘white areas,’ under the Group Areas Act or in implementing the Bantustan policies.” Thus, the police were the first, and often the only, point of contact that any citizens had to the apartheid state before 1994. The consistent “generalised suspicion and identification of black people as likely perpetrators of crime” characterized the actions of South African police officers as they conceived their role as “repressive arms of the apartheid state had imbibed into their consciousness notions of repugnance toward black people” (Suttner). Indeed, Steinberg, in *African Affairs*, portrays the apartheid South African Police (SAP) as a form of ‘high policing’ in which “the national police leadership was invariably recruited from the Security Branch, never from the Detective Service or the Uniformed Branch. The personnel in these latter two branches were in general not well educated, were understood to have stunted career paths” (176). Therefore, the centralization of the police service meant that the majority of officers played *pro forma* roles in the strategic planning of the policing organization as a whole, merely trained in implementing directions according to police norms rather than situational decision-making skills.

Even before the 1994 transition, the slowly crumbling apartheid regime faced the emergence of “a much-maligned sort of policeman known in popular parlance as a *kitskonstabel* - an ‘instant constable,’ a euphemism for a thug hastily dressed up in a uniform” (Steinberg 180). Therefore, at the dawn of the democratic era, ‘low policing,’ a community focused approach centered on day-to-day interactions rather than grand acts of state subversion typified the state of the police service (Steinberg 178). Moreover, after the 1994 elections, “the new government did not trust the police organization with matters of state security and systematically suppressed its capacity to conduct high policing” (Steinberg 176). Therefore, the post-apartheid South African

Police Service (SAPS) faced a considerable challenge concerning the new forging of relationships with the legislative state and the public. However, researchers at the Johannesburg-based Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation, argue that there exists a fundamental tension that endures to this day in the police service, claiming that apartheid enforcement “did not require traditional policing skills... instead [rewarding] political loyalty and [allowing] large-scale abuses of powers” (Rauch 1). On the other hand, the “new government faced the mammoth task of transforming the police service into one which would be both acceptable to the majority of the population, and [effectively combatted] crime” (Rauch 2). This, therefore, explains the ubiquitous nature of uniformed police officers and the continued issues concerning law enforcement in a growing, still fledgling democracy. Although the apartheid state may not exist, the subcultures of violence and need to enforce strict, inequitable boundaries continue to reign, especially in regards to homeless populations, who are caught in the center as they attempt to occupy and navigate public and private spaces by means of survival. Therefore, homelessness, and particularly youth homelessness, focalizes the importance of space, time, and place.

*New democratic policing?*

To gain legitimacy post-1994, the new regime attempted to pose an overhaul of policies that would eventually change the perception and implementation of enforcement bodies, altering the name of the police from ‘South African Police’ to ‘South African Police Service.’ This, of course, came with a new tactic meant to both reduce crime and instill a sense of safety within the citizens of the new South Africa. Govender, a Criminology and Security Science professor from the University of South Africa, refers to the core foundations of SAPS operations, which posits that “the police have a duty to prevent, combat and investigate crime, to protect and secure the inhabitants of South Africa and their property, and to uphold the law” (5). However, Faull draws

attention to the SAPS Chart, a performance measurement tool modeled after the New York CompStat system, framing the context for many policing procedures. Through SAPS, “performance targets [are measured] under the broad categories of crime prevention, crime reaction, crime investigation, human resources management and data integrity, but no metric for ‘customer satisfaction’ was ever developed by SAPS data analysts (Faull 162). Due to dependence on performance metrics as a means of recording crime reduction, SAPS spotlighted quantitative results, “with little or no regard for community relations or police legitimacy” (Faull 157). This disproportionately affected those most vulnerable in society, specifically the homeless. Under the pretext of crime prevention, cops reprimand those living on cardboard boxes to fulfill community clear-up initiatives or detain individuals loitering on private property. Homelessness becomes a matter of criminal justice, and officers step in as the only true interaction between street dwellers and the state. Faull highlights that police should “re-think their mandate from ‘crime fighters’ to ‘community-oriented problem solvers,” since vulnerable populations need social workers, not more policing interactions that enhance the effects of poverty (166).

Drawing upon his own experiences as a former police officer, Govender argues that rhetoric surrounding crime deterrence is a result of a lack of institutional development and systematic processes to decolonize police practices, even after the establishment of the post-apartheid democratic order. Moreover, 2006 restructuring of SAPS led to the closing down of “specialized units such as the narcotics, vehicle theft and child and family violence units and the area’s commissioner’s office.” This, then, was “tantamount to taking away policing from the people, and resulted in increasingly demotivated personnel at different levels of the organization and an increase in violent crime levels” (Govender 10). Therefore, Govender puts the onus on

the policymakers and officials to change the models of policing that officers will eventually implement on the streets of South Africa. Because of the disconnect between the people and SAPS, there are “misperception[s] of policing and the nature and role of the police” (Govender 2). Furthermore, the author suggests that “community participation in local crime prevention thus became important as means both to identify the crime problems and hotspots, and to assist in solving the crime partnerships between police, the municipality and the community that they serve” (Govender 12). However, the reliance on community forums results in an exclusion of voices from particularly marginalized groups affected most by policing strategies, including street-living juveniles. Without access to political or economic power, the homeless exist at the periphery of public discourse.

*When homelessness and policing collide*

Homelessness exists as a major problem in not only Durban, KwaZulu-Natal but also South Africa as a whole. Given the current state of the economy and dearth of NGO resources, those who live on the streets are directly exposed to current community enforcement tactics, since the homeless are often forced to inhabit and survive in public spaces. Indeed, KZN by-laws regarding begging, vagrancy, and camping within city limits further exacerbated by SAPS’ “arrest first” policies put people living on the streets in a precarious condition. Policing, even for small infractions, is a normal part of Durban street life, even after countless efforts during the 1990’s transitions that aimed to ensure that community policing was more responsive to and cooperative with local communities (Faull 165). Furthermore, Durban’s own Safer Cities Initiative, a program modeled after New York City’s target-driven CompStat systems disproportionately affects those residing in the streets (Faull 166). The initiative was a direct result of “broken windows” policing, which posits that “cracking down on minor crimes helps to

prevent major ones” (The Economist). The Human Sciences Research Council found that the Durban homeless “indicated that the police often use violence and harassment tactics when they engage with them” in the forms of “personal property confiscation, inappropriate arrests, and violently [dislocation] outside the environments where they often access services” (26). This erratic and abusive style of policing disproportionately affects low-income communities residing within Durban, in effect equivocating homelessness with illegality. Sociology professor Forrest Stuart at Stanford University aptly states, “Once you go below a certain socioeconomic status, these seemingly trivial, mundane, momentary interactions with the police restructure everything.” In fact, the implementation of “broken windows” policies is not corrective, according to Stuart, but rather constrictive for the individual who is subject to law enforcement (Streshinsky). The pattern of police harassment and victimization reverberates throughout municipal ordinances, especially those concerning informal trading, a viable source of supplemental income for the homeless. Beyond car-guarding and hustling, many street dwellers, principally women, depend on cardboard recycling as well as selling goods for survival (HSRC 21). However, the eThekweni Municipality’s removal and impoundment laws cite that “an authorize official may remove and impound goods in terms of the Criminal Procedure Act, 1977 any goods of an informal trader... in connection with... trading in a place or area, where informal trading is prohibited or restricted... [or] trading without a valid informal trading permit issued by the Municipality, as per section 11” (16). My following study will delve into the complexities of by-laws as well in the “Findings” section.

While police officials acknowledge that “some members may overstep the mark, they argue that violence from the police is over-estimated” (HSRC 26). The core functions of police are not only to protect citizens from crime but also to implement the laws set forth by city,

provincial, and national legislative bodies. Therefore, crime is, at the end of the day, whatever the rule of law considers a “crime,” regardless of contextualization. Moreover, police officials’ key roles in responding to municipal, local business, and residential demands disproportionately affects those who have neither economic nor political power. Police authorities note the “tension between their duty to support waste removal efforts, i.e. helping remove cardboard used to sleep on, and the protection of street living individuals’ private property” (HSRC 27).

*Youth homelessness: more than what it seems*

The consideration of youth inserts another degree of complexity to matters of homelessness within Durban. The South African Law Reform Commission found that arrests of children “must be made with due regard to the dignity and well-being of such child and only if it clear that a child cannot be arrested without the use of force,” according to Chapter 2 of the South African Children’s Act (25). Moreover, the treatment of minors in the criminal justice is contingent on the notion that children have “parent[s] or appropriate adult[s]” to take partial custodial responsibility for juveniles “charged with [minor offences] listed in Schedule 1 of the Bill” (SALRC 25). Here, there exists a key disconnect between the law and reality, since street children often live without families, experience greater rates of drug addiction, and are highly susceptible to assault (HSRC 20). The lived conditions of youth feeds into a psychology of marginalization, which is further affected by interactions with police. Since children do not have anywhere else to go other than the streets or in temporary shelters, they remain homeless for extended periods of time. Additionally, “a lack of basic amenities such as clean drinking water, self-care/cleaning facilities and good quality shelters” are not always available to the homeless, leaving many hopeless (HSRC 24). Information about the absence of essential commodities helps to contextualize the circumstances in which street children must live when they are

confronted by police officers. HSRC also finds that “due to negative experiences with police removals, street living individuals have lost confidence that the police will serve and protect them as citizens” (26). The study authors also assert that, “treatment without dignity was associated with symptoms of depression and feelings of anger and worthlessness” (27).

Khan and Singh from the University of KwaZulu-Natal investigate the subcultures of violence and criminality within Durban youth populations by uncovering the underlying nature for social pressures leading to juvenile run-ins with the law. They outline sociologist Vladimir Kutygin’s understanding of youth socialization, which posits that “[youth] social status has a concrete historical and class [basis] and depends on the social system, culture, socialization processes and mechanisms intrinsic to a given society as a whole, and also on the concrete class and stratum to which this category of the populace belongs” (106). Thus, Khan and Singh’s introduction to demography, ethnology, and social theory allows us to parse the individual behaviors of Durban street youth. Moreover, those under the age of 18 years are singled out as exceedingly transgressive for committing “petty crimes or offences considered minor” compared to their adult counterparts. As a result, “prejudices arising from racial discrimination, ethnic factors and the social and economic status of the child may have a predisposing effect in labelling youth to be in conflict with the law even when no crime has been committed or harsh response from law enforcement” (107). Khan and Singh go on to refer to sociologist Robert Merton’s work, which draws attention to “the quest for material advancement in society, [an] essential human desire,” including physical symbols of status and impressive career accomplishments (108). Due to the lack of agency and resources offered to countless youth in Durban, illegitimate means, including crime and violence, become the “norm” for children who aspire after societal notions of material “success” (Khan 109). Therefore, street crime for



children may be a common theme not only due to the personal material desires of youth but also South African society's constrictive notions of success.

Beyond the transgressive behaviors of youth themselves, Hills from the University of KwaZulu Natal argues that "police harassment and abuse against street children is nothing new." She reveals that "in 1986, during the apartheid era, the Detainees' Support Committee reported the widespread detention and imprisonment of children" (34). The Child Justice Act 75 of 2008, which "intended to apply to children [in] conflict with the law" reveals that the law does not take into account learned adolescent subcultures of violence and crime that exist and are eventually taken into adulthoods (Hills 51). Since family estrangement is one of the key reasons for youth homelessness, it is important to address the environments in which children might find themselves before living on the streets. Moreover, there is a lack of contextualization, especially in regards to the "nature and quality of relationships shared between an adolescent and their parent," which can have "a major influence on the decisions they make as individuals" (Hill 58). Marimuthu, who researches youth criminality in the historic Indian township Chatsworth, also addresses theories which "suggest that the bleak economic situation in the family has created a generation of adolescents who experience doubts, hopelessness, and uncertainty on an everyday basis" (64) This, in turn, creates other problems, like difficulties with mental health, substance abuse, and cyclical reproductions of poverty.

Though a handful of authors delve into the psychology and marginalization of youth, new research concerning the particularities of police brutality directed towards juveniles living on the streets should exist to highlight the urgency and profundity of the issue. Moreover, though Hills touches upon community policing as a complex issue that disproportionately affects youth communities, that is not the core focus of her work. Therefore, analyzing the lives of street youth

at the intersection of criminology, poverty, and historical prescient is necessary to push for substantive transformations that will address one of the major challenges in the post-apartheid era. Further research is required when addressing the mammoth of youth homelessness within the city of Durban, and I will delve into the complexity of issues with law enforcement tactics throughout the city.

## **Methodology**

To gain a more comprehensive view of the topic at hand, I attempted to utilize a cross section of different geographies and peoples that would complement each other when creating a cohesive narrative about the lives of street youth in the city. Since interviewing homeless juveniles would pose a great ethical challenge, I incorporated a variety of professional perspectives that I knit together in my findings. In particular, I performed qualitative research through in-depth interviews with social workers, community advocates, a police officer, and an urban ethnographer who have all come in contact with street youth within the past ten years. I also spoke to eight Cato Manor residents personally, and distributed a survey to ten different people to also learn about the ways in which street children are perceived to working class citizens that have access the public sphere both inside and out of Durban Central. Here are some descriptions of my study subjects:

*Khulani Shelter Representative* directs a shelter in Durban North that cares for the wellbeing of street children ages 0-25.

*Tennyson House Outreach Manager* works at a religious organization “Youth for Christ” that aims to house, educate, and provide social services for street girls ages 10-16.

*Denis Hurley Center Director Raymond Perrier* runs a program in Durban that not only feeds and offers training programs to the homeless community but also aims to “give a voice to the voiceless” through working with UKZN law students using litigation against police abuse.

*Cato Manor Residents* live in a historic township within Durban. The average age of the participants was 22.6. I surveyed 10 residents and personally interviewed 8.

*A South African Police Service Representative* has worked in South African policing institutions for over 20 years and formerly served as Durban’s deputy commissioner.

*Emily “Molly” Margaretten* is an urban ethnographer and professor of anthropology at Ripon College in the US. She studied the lives of young homeless communities in Durban for ten years, focusing on a specific commune called “Point Place.”

Two of my interviews were conducted through phone or Skype. Since the SAPS representative had a busy schedule, I recorded our phone call over the phone. Moreover, Professor Margaretten was in California at the time of the interview, so we used Skype as a means of communication, given the time difference. Therefore, these interviews were a bit shorter than the rest due to time restraints, and they were perhaps not as comprehensive, since I was not able to ask many follow-up questions. However, I was able to understand both of these subjects’ fundamental understandings about the functions of policing directed towards youth.

### **Limitations of the study**

This study holds considerable drawbacks, especially in regards to the focus on second-hand narratives rather than testimonies from the youth affected by policing tactics in Durban. Due to ethical issues when speaking to a highly vulnerable class of juveniles, I intentionally opted for those who directly interacted with youths, namely social workers and like

professionals. In an ideal situation, I would have been able to interact with and write about homeless youth directly, but I also understood that I did not want to repeat former processes of colonized anthropological research as a US citizen spending a tenure in Africa. I did not want to intervene in the lives of children, who already experience their own stresses, to write about racial and cultural differences as an outsider.

Moreover, I believe that I could have garnered a wider group of study subjects, specifically in reference to Cato Manor survey. However, this project was and is not meant to be a comprehensive view of the subject at hand. Rather, I provided a personal perspective as a visitor in Durban and would like to, in turn, incite more interesting research in the field.

I would also like to note that the time constraint of the project (4 weeks) posed a great challenge in regards to data collection. Since I interviewed limited number of community advocates who have their own strong political, economic, and social stances about the issues at hand, this may have leant an angle of bias to my study sample. I, too, hold varied biases as a North-centric thinker and a young student activist in my own community. Nevertheless, I hope to shed light on an important issue by backing it with evidence of those living and existing in Durban.

## **Findings**

### *The visibility of children in Durban streets*

According to the HSRC's survey data, only about 2% of the overall homeless population are children. Although the consensus among community advocates and the social work community confirm that minors make up a smaller part of the populace living on the streets, the HSRC also found that "NGO partners on the study indicate that adolescents often report older ages particularly if they do not want to be referred to a care facility or receive any assistance whilst on the streets" (HSRC 9). Therefore, while the 2% cited in the study may exist as an underestimate, the report sets the stage to demonstrate the complexity of youth homelessness within the city of Durban.

Even though children compose a minority of the homeless population, they are very visible to not only visitors but also local Durbanites. Cato Manor residents provided multiple testimonies about their experiences with seeing homeless youth all over the city. Indeed, all but one of the ten Cato Manor residents survey respondents stated that they saw street children 'most days.' Moreover, when asked about the prevalence of homeless children compared to their adult counterparts, 5 stated that they perceived that there were more youth as opposed to 3 interviewees who noticed more adults. However, one participant found an equal divide between the age groups, citing "I see the same amount, about 50/50. There are grannies... uncles on the streets. You may never know their story." Raymond Perrier, the director of the Denis Hurley Center, offers a plausible reason as to why children may be the focal point of conversations about homelessness. He claims,

"There aren't nearly as many street children as people think there are... We notice street children much more than we notice adults. If you're just driving around, and you ask somebody, 'Did you see homeless people?' they start talking about street children. You know, for every

child they've passed, they've passed six adults, but they remember the child. There's a false perception there."

The ways in which younger street children are perceived matters since it is inextricably connected with the ways in which people, and more specifically, law enforcement treat them. From my purview after speaking to a variety of perspectives, age affects the behavior direct towards and the management of homeless youth for two main reasons. For one, there is a certain 'care' and attention drawn to children because of their perceptibility, as Perrier mentioned earlier. One Cato Manor resident asserts, "I would ask them, 'Where are you from?' They tend to have a story of where they come from." This act may not be directed at a slightly older, young male, whose demographics make up most of the homeless populace in the city, since he is seen as capable of finding a job to sustain himself.

In fact, when asked about the reasons for homelessness, the ten respondents surveyed cited

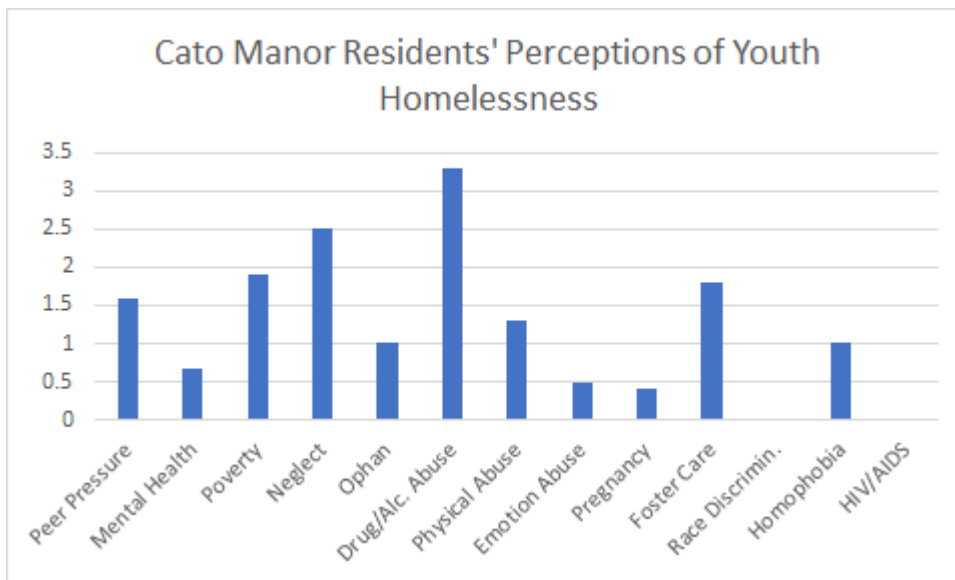


Table 1.1

drug/alcohol abuse, parental neglect, and discontent with foster care as main reasons for the children's demise. For all surveyed, the reasons

they cited for homelessness were a mix of uncontrollable circumstance, like poverty, as well as those that instill a sense of agency within youth, like peer pressure. Therefore, there are a variety of reasons why children might find themselves in the streets, and the means through which law

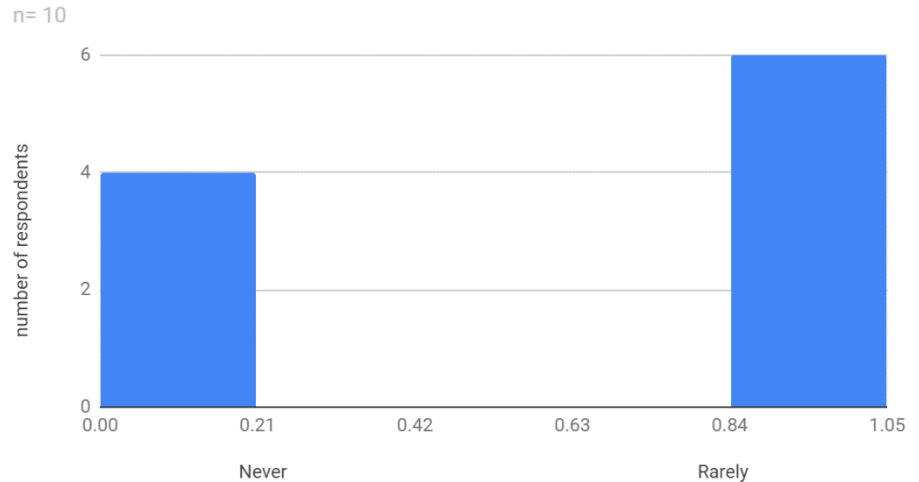
enforcement should address them ought to depend on the circumstances in which children must live.

Table 1.2 (note the scale)

Conversely, I felt a mood of distrust directed towards youngsters on the streets, due to the notions that they are more

rebellious than their adult counterparts and more

How often do you give street children money?



How often do you give street children food?

0= Never, 1= Rarely, 2= Once a Month, 3= Once a week, 4= Most Days

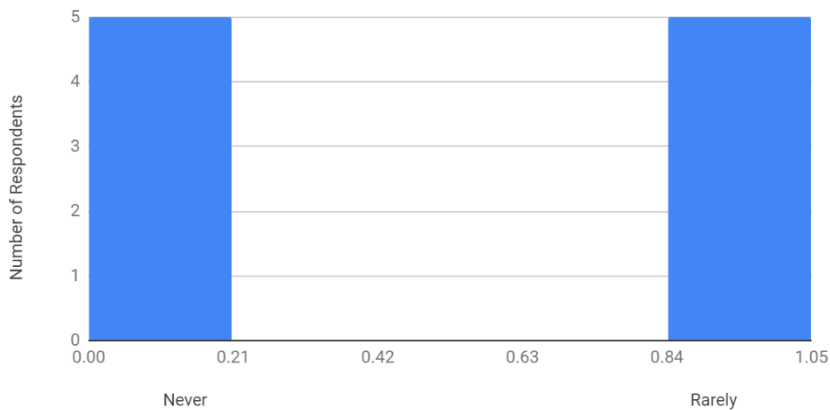


Table 1.3 (Note scale)

conniving given their desperate conditions. Indeed, the first impressions that I received from one-on-one interviews was the idea that homeless youth are

constantly “mugging, snatching wigs... They try to make money by singing for taxis and carrying people’s parcels.” Moreover, the consensus among all interviewees regarded the fact that minors smoke ‘whoonga,’ or ‘nyaope,’ a drug that originated in Durban townships consisting of rat poison, soap powders, and antiretrovirals (Xolo 2018). Therefore, the participants regarded children with a level of deep suspicion, saying that children end up stealing

from their own families as well as strangers to support their own drug habits. In fact, the survey results convey this sense of cynicism. Furthermore, one of the reasons why many may not want to give children money or support them is the notion that parents sometimes send their children to beg for money from strangers. Perrier also speaks on the topic by asserting that,

“The other reason why it looks worse than it is that there are kids who aren’t street children, but they’re sent out to beg... by their parents... The child begging is a lot more profitable than an adult begging. So, just because they are on the streets doesn’t mean they’re street children.”

Therefore, the director of the Denis Hurley Center draws an important distinction that inevitably affects the processes of community policing: the difference between ‘being homeless’ and ‘looking homeless.’ This is a key feature that I will explore further in my study, since the perception of homelessness by outsiders and second-hand viewers may be incredibly deceptive. Street children in Durban may not fit into the identities thrust upon by outsiders, especially policing officials that are in charge of keeping the streets ‘safe.’ From both tables 1.2 and 1.3, we can see that Cato Manor residents either “never” or “rarely” give money or food to street children, despite their visibility. This may indicate the level of suspicion they must feel about the intentions and actions of youth.

It is important to remember that street children, at the end of the day, are still *children* who are sensitive to changes in their atmospheres. To fully analyze the lives of those affected by police, it is necessary to consider the complexity of their backgrounds and heterogenous histories that must be regarded with sensitivity. In fact, Margaretten finds,

“I realized as I was doing my research later on, most of their family members had died by the time I finished my research or when I had come for subsequent visits. So they were already pretty sick. If it wasn't from HIV, AIDS related complications and there's other kinds of issues.... or something like that. So, there's not a lot of support at the parental level. A lot of did have grandparents who are still sort of around the picture, but, you know.... It's sort of difficult supporting everybody, and I think that sort of goes into emotional support as well, that, for whatever reason, they'd have three or four siblings or



cousins at home too. Some of them are better off than others. They're sort of thinking again, 'like what's the point of draining these resources, or I'm not wanted here'..." Therefore, hopelessness cuts across as a common theme in all the interviews I conducted

with Cato Manor residents, social workers, and advocates of change. When asked about the reasons why children might end up on the streets or leave home, Margaretten replies,

"It could be connected to issues about schooling or boyfriends and girlfriends and so forth, but ultimately a lot of... long term rifts in the family that couldn't get settled.... So it's, a lot of different factors. I don't know if I could pinpoint one exactly. I think you always want to go to maybe, a material basis, you know, that people are struggling for jobs; they're struggling with their health and that then exasperates these other sorts of vulnerabilities too."

Therefore, for many juveniles, leaving their households allows a sense of agency. The means through which they do this may not fit material ideals of success that Khan and Singh refer to in their analysis of minors within Durban. Moreover, Margaretten also reminds us that homelessness does not define the life of the one living on the streets and is merely one section of a child's whole story.

#### *Safety for whom?*

Harkening back to Faull's investigation into SAPS, the 'Safer Cities' project, implemented by KwaZulu-Natal in 2000, serves as a driving force meant to deter crime in the area. The municipality's policy makers intended to mobilize its resources to intervene in conditions that may breed crime by claiming, that

"A youth programme has been established in the KwaMashu area in the KwaMashu area of Durban, in partnership with various NGO and community groups. This focuses primarily on diverting young people from crime through sports, art, cultural and literary activities and includes the development of recreational facilities and the organisation of sporting, cultural and life-skills activities. In addition, it aims to facilitate relationships between young people, the SAPS, the community police forums and other agencies of the criminal justice system" (Palmary 41).

In an effort to establish diversion initiatives within KZN, the municipality offers alternatives to crime. In an ideal situation, minors should be able to participate in these programs

to limit their risk behaviors and learn about the magnitude of their actions. From various interviews and a review of subsequent literature, the youth programs may not address the social reasons why minors, including street children, with inadequate access to education and high levels of substance abuse commit crimes. Fractured relationships between youth, community members, and the police officers continue to reign, even 19 years after the implementation of the Safer Cities Project, which highlights cops' roles as preventers of crime above all else. When asked about the ways in which community police officers address homeless youth, the former deputy commissioner of Durban explains,

“We work together with the municipality for the Safer City Project. Now, the Safer City Project gives provisions for dealing with homeless people, although this is not a line function of the police, but the police still perceive that as a social responsibility.. There are various groups involved in this. There is [something] called a Crime Prevention Desk [which is] established at the national, provincial, as well as station level. These are the desks that come up with various programs and exercises to deal with the issue of homelessness and street children.”

Although the former commissioner refers to the Crime Prevention desk as a main hub that creates initiatives aimed toward the homeless, further research reveals that street youth are often a tool used in the name of ‘crime prevention,’ rather a focal point for state intervention meant to improve standards of livings. The Institute of Security Studies, a think tank dedicated to crime prevention, suggested,

“The collaboration with informal traders in the cities reflects a major mindshift within city government. Informal traders are no longer seen as unemployed people who commit crime and break by-laws. They have been identified as critical partners in the fight against crime and a valuable part of city life. This approach also allows street traders to be seen as a crime prevention resource. It should therefore also be considered whether other people who spend a large amount of time on the streets (such as the homeless, street children or sex workers) could not also be integrated into similar crime prevention initiatives” (Palmary 2002).

Accordingly, law enforcement officials implement this line of thinking in their own policing on the streets of cities like Durban. In fact, the SAPS official that I spoke to affirms the

notion that “the whole function of the police is to fight crime. There are social issues that come upon us, and you can’t ignore [crime].” Thus, the conception of what counts as a ‘crime’ also arises as a point of interest, since the SAPS representative conceives that social issues are fundamentally separate from ones related to criminal justice. The director of the Denis Hurley Center, Perrier, offers an alternative view of the functions of the police, who (under his purview) abuse their authority in the name of fighting crime:

“So, the mayor is launching a big program to talk about safety and security for residents in the city. If you want to make the city safe and secure, it must be safe and secure for everyone... “

Therefore, the ideal of a ‘safe city’ finds its way into the rhetoric of not only policing officials but also policy makers who are tasked with creating legislation that aids all those residing in KZN, not just those with access to stable housing and employment. Perrier goes on to reveal that the discourse surrounding crime prevention extends further than SAPS policy by referring to legislation that put the homeless at a disadvantage:

“The main issue with by-laws [is] that they are written and applied in ways which are particularly prejudicial towards the homeless.... So, the classic by-law that everyone refers to is the one about showering. There are showers in the beachfront that are there for anyone to use, except the police will stop a homeless person saying that they are breaching by-laws. Very often, they’re not real by-laws; they’re just fantasy by-laws. The classic way that the police arrest you is that you’re breaking by-laws, and who knows what’s in the by-laws?”

Here, Perrier a core tenant regarding rhetoric of ‘safe cities’: the negative implications of community policing are concentrated, but the liability within a large bureaucratic system is considerably diffuse. Indeed, the SAPS representative confirms that he is beholden to superiors and policymakers that often guide the directions of police officers:

“There is a joint network. There is the department of social workers, department of health, and various councils, [including]... the metro police. There are all these organizations that sit together once a month to discuss these issues relating to children... They have what they called a priority committee around children. This is where the discussions take place as what interventions need to be done, where the problem areas [are], and where these kids are coming from, like the townships, and whether their

parents can be identified... They are all acting together... Some people think that the police acting on their own.. [but] there are organized interventions. “

Therefore, while the police may not take responsibility for all their actions due to their appointment to ‘fight crime,’ there are institutional issues that immensely shape the lives of street dwellers. One of the most impactful effects of ‘safer city’ rhetoric results in displacement of homeless communities when the police move them outside the city. Perrier explains,

“The city tries appear to solve the problem. If we've got homeless people on the streets before a big conference and [the city does not] know how do we get rid of them... (You can't just arrest them.) [the police] just put them in a truck... because the cost of arrest and prison is too high. If you look [at cases], it's far enough away that it takes about three days to walk back to the city. By that time, the conference is over. I also wouldn't use the term displacement. I'd call it abduction. The police have no right to put somebody in a truck and drive them out of the city against their will...The city has no right to instruct these services.”

Furthermore, the Tennyson House outreach worker goes on to say, “According to what [the street children] say, they hate the police. Yes, they hate the police because [the police] are the ones to forcefully remove them and dump them... outside of the city.” The representative's testimony tells us that, rather than addressing poverty and its associated predicaments, the municipal police displaces those who have specific needs, like childcare, to manage homelessness.

In response to concerns about displacement, the SAPS official argues that the reason why police may move the homeless, and particularly children, may be a result of lack of around the clock social services. He states,

“You see, the police have a responsibility... to reunite children with their parents. So, you know, sometimes it happens at these services are not based on a 24 hour basis, but police are operating on a 24 hour basis.. The role of the police officer becomes very critical now... at reuniting children.”

Under the purview of this officer, the reason for moving people is fundamentally different, and he does not fully address the case used against police officers who partake in what Perrier calls ‘abduction.’ Therefore, the rhetoric about policy makers ‘cleaning up the city’ to make it safer

for well-off citizens manifests itself as a visual project meant to look as though politicians and the police are taking active measures to eliminate social woes. Moreover, it also surrounds the notion that homelessness is a matter of criminal justice in itself.

### *Gendered life experiences of street youth*

Considering the gender dynamics of underprivileged youth builds upon the idea that homelessness is a fluid subject that should be treated with a nuanced perspective. In the streets, women find themselves facing a variety of challenges that may not affect their male counterparts to the same degree. From my interviews with those who regularly came in contact with young women, dependence on men, and the subsequent violence or exploitation was a common theme.

The Tennyson House representative explains,

“There’s all the boys, and they convince them to stay on the street. And then promising to love and care and protect them on the street. As time goes on, they find themselves stuck to the situation, which is hard to talk about to anybody because of the threats. Others end up falling pregnant and then give birth directly on the street.”

Moreover, Professor Margaretten also recalls,

“I think for the women, you know, having a boyfriend is really important for their survival unless, they can depend on each other, essentially. Because it's unlikely that they're going to get the same kinds of menial kinds of work [as men] that can sustain them, whatever it is, even just sort of provide support for a hospital, for instance... you know, whatever it is. [Even] to pay overnight and sleep somewhere, there's a lot of dependency on, you know, romantic partnerships and I think that changes the dynamics because ultimately there usually is a male who can dictate where they're spending the night... And that's her basic needs in addition to food and clothing, et cetera.”

Both the Tennyson House outreach worker and Margaretten points to an essential truth about the limitations of agency that have undue effects on the lives of teenage women. This, therefore, fits with the extra challenges when facing policing officials. Indeed, the consideration of gender is essential to change the systems of law enforcement from ‘crime-fighting’ to the Faull’s

aforementioned conception of ‘community-oriented problem solving’ (166). Indeed, often the issue with homelessness has just as much to do with the social stigmas as the unstable housing available to youth and the material basis of struggle. The social, political, and economic issue of homelessness is not a monolith, especially when women continue the cycle of poverty through teenage pregnancies. The Tennyson house representative, who often witnesses the lives of and works with women from the ages of 2-25 reveals,

“If [a girl is] pregnant and have a child... We cannot cater for them. According to the [Children’s] act of 2008, we are not allowed to forcefully remove the baby from the mother while the mother doesn’t want [it] because this act does believe that a children need to be with their parents. It’s a big challenge. And we can’t even try to put them in child care center because we are guided by the Department of Social Development.... There are specific rules that we need to follow.”

Perrier also refers back to the divergence between ‘being homeless’ and ‘looking homeless’ by acknowledging that

“The reason why [the majority of the homeless population is] mostly male is that the women who come to Durban will sadly find work, but they’ll find street work, like sex work. So, the fact that they’re not sleeping rough on the street doesn’t mean that their lives are safe. They just don’t ‘present’ as homeless.”

Therefore, women may not always be affected by the same policies as men, such as penalizing public urination or retribution for squatting on benches. Sex work and trafficking, in particular, makes underage women and young adults more susceptible to violence, due to the fact that they will often avoid the police to escape arrest or illegal abuse. This, in turn, lessens their bargaining power, and thus, agency in regards to their futures since they are hidden from the public eye (ASIJIKI 2016). Without fear of police as instigators of violence, perhaps the outcome for women could be altered. By the nature of their gender, girls are more vulnerable to policing contact in certain ways due to the roles that they have to take on as mothers, sex workers, and so

on. However, the Denis Hurley Center director also reminds us that the social issues involving lack of material commodities cut across all genders:

“Our sense is a lot of the younger homeless people that come to Durban are fairly immature when they come. They are not equipped with coping strategies... They’re a much more vulnerable to somebody who offers to help, all they have to do is sell some drugs. It’s not all quite Oliver Twist (there’s a bit of that). I mean you can that these young [people] would get here expecting the streets are paved with gold. They expect that they can just walk off the bus into a job... [However], they are detached from their support.”

Here, Perrier reiterates the notion that homelessness is not a matter of criminal justice but a multi-layered concern regarding a dearth of economic power, social status, interpersonal relationships and human agency. Therefore, the SAPS Chart and its performance goals are not satisfactory measures to take in the varied lived experiences of the homeless.

#### *The psychological impacts of police interactions*

Through interviews with several individuals who have had personal contact with street children, a lack of self-esteem came up as a common subject. In particular, the Tennyson House representative revealed that one of the core functions of the social workers at the institution is to refer girls from the ages of 10-16 years old to health care professionals, revealing the outreach workers through the religious program “assist [the girls] with hospital visits.” However, she finds that “If [the street youth] go alone, it’s difficult to get help. It’s not that public clinics or hospitals isolate them. It’s just [because] of their low self-esteem... We make sure that we accompany those children to the clinic[s] so that they can get what their rights say.” Indeed, per the South African Constitution, all children are entitled to universal and basic healthcare. However, the lack of knowledge regarding their own rights feeds into an overwhelming sense of worthlessness. The Tennyson House representative gives an insight into the conditions they will find themselves even before interacting with the police.

Beyond their often constrictive or unsupportive past homes, minors on Durban streets encounter skewed perceptions of authority figures due to their confrontations with police officials. In particular, Cato Manor residents either recollected memories of systematic policing activities or recounted stories that they had heard about street children. One participant claimed, “I see [the police] hitting [and] swearing. They do whatever they want to, because nobody can complain.” Moreover, another pointedly mentions that the police “are always searching for drugs. Whenever [the police] see [the children] they see a suspect.” This, in turn, aligns with Khan and Singh’s theory that “prejudices arising from ... the social and economic status of the child may have a predisposing effect in labelling youth to be in conflict with the law even when no crime has been committed or harsh response from law enforcement” (107). Without clear accountability due to the socio-political marginalization of the homeless, the police have the discretion to act as they please, citing the confines of the law.

When asked about the treatment of homeless adults in the city, all but one interviewed revealed that they had seen or heard of a homeless adult brutalized by the police. This was, of course, surprising due to the fact that young men from the ages of 18-34 make up the majority of the homeless population in the city (HSRC 12). In reality, many of the respondents argued that the older populations on the streets are often ignored for a variety of reasons, including the fact that many have children and are thus seen as harmless. Indeed, one participant stated that they had never seen an interaction between policing officials and an older street dweller since “you don’t see anything immediately incriminating.” Moreover, lack of empathy due to the ubiquitous destitution in Durban Central also came up as a common theme during my conversations with Cato Manor residents. A contributor claimed that “the police do not want to reach out and don’t sympathize,” since, perhaps, being a form of social services is not in their job descriptions.



Through the survey, I was able to find that all of the ten partakers agreed that homelessness exists as a major issue in the city, but few found that there were real solutions implemented by either the municipal, policing, or national governing bodies operating within KwaZulu-Natal.

Fear emerged as a major theme when I spoke to a variety of sources that interacted with homeless populations in Durban. One Cato Manor tenant recounts, “When the children see the police, they run. The police are always chasing them [and] pepper spraying them. Some of [the police] become violent.” Consequently, a lack of trust in authority also arises as a key topic of interest, which disproportionately affects the jobs of social workers and community advocates that would like reunite youth with their biological family members. The Tennyson House outreach director explains:

“[In order to reunite families], we rely on the child. Yes, when you first meet the child, the child doesn’t tell you the truth. Through the programs we facilitating such as life skills training and sports, they are able to build their trust and relationships. We have a hygiene program called ‘bathing and washing’... After that, we try to, for one, restore their self-image. Secondly, we try to help them understand that we are not strangers but we are here to help... They start to develop trust.”

Consequently, street life, which involves direct interactions with police bears weight on the self-esteem of children growing up in vulnerable situations. This, then, begs the question: who do the children trust when they are living on the streets, and how do those relationships come about?

One of the perhaps unforeseen consequences of community policing is the creation of young communities and relationships, since many children are often incarcerated together when they experience run-ins with the law. The Tennyson House outreach worker testifies, “I think it’s a frustration because... I can’t hide that, in order for [the children] to survive, they become criminals. Others end up being jailed... because of bag snatching or [stealing] rings. I can’t wear my ring in town. The children need to find a way to live.” The SAPS representative illuminates

the complexity of the law by noting the policies in place regarding all minors, regardless of contextualization:

“You see, a crime is obviously a crime... There are certain requirements in terms of the law that cater to children 0-7. A child is not responsible. The child cannot be charged, cannot be arrested, nothing can be done. But when they are between 7 and 14 years, it is a different matter. It depends on what their intentions were... There are certain exceptions where the children are not charged or cannot be charged because of the operation of the law... As long as the child is fully aware of what they have done and beyond the age of 14 years they can now be charged criminally and dealt with in terms of the law like everyone else. We deal with them [according to provisions] of the Child Justice Act.”

As a result of strict policing tactics and frequent incarceration, Professor Margaretten finds,

“I did come across sort of an interesting connection between policing and the sense of belonging on the street. A lot of these young people... didn't know each other initially. Maybe they knew some people, a little bit through school.... but they weren't necessarily friends. For instance, when I did my research.... down at Warwick Junction... [children] would be staying in a shelter and they actually would be picked up by the police as well and be sent to juvenile detention centers or prison (if they're a bit older) ... They'd be put back out on the street, or they'd be sent back home and come back on the streets. So, then they kind of knew each other a bit more closely from that... That cat and mouse game of trying to keep kids off the street and putting them in prison would create these kinds of friendships that were really more durable than what they could find at home.”

Minors may find themselves in and out of the incarceration system within Durban due to aforementioned lack of background information about the child as well as their tendencies to skirt from the truth. A Cato Manor resident affirms,

“The police aren't able to arrest children because there is no form of ID to find where they're from. [The police] can hold them in for a while, but there is no physical address to send children back. They can't be accountable, and [children] are seen as useless to people.”

Moreover, the eviction of homeless youth from underserviced buildings and struggling shelters serves as another site of exposure between minors and police officers. The removal of homeless from shelters is, of course, nothing new in Durban. In fact, *The Sunday Times*, in 2010, published a report on Durban Beach Shelter, which “[faced] closure after the landlord lodged papers in the High Court in Durban [that] week.” The report goes on to reveal that the shelter,

which housed “between 110 and 115 people, who [had to] pay R20 a day,” closed due to the assertion that the cramped conditions posed “a serious health hazard owing to poor ventilation and deplorable living conditions... [and] inadequate ablution facilities” (Naidoo 2010). It is clear that the shelter itself was unfit for human survival when put against standards set by department officials. However, the most compelling section of *The Sunday Times* report revealed that “the deputy head of housing of the municipality, Yunus Sacoor, said he had responded... saying that the municipality was not obliged to provide alternative accommodation but was merely assisting with it” (Naidoo 2010). In turn, many of those affected by the shutdown were left with unpredictable futures as they ventured to find new places to stay despite limited budgets.

This, therefore, translates into the distrust that children might feel when they encounter policing authorities who interfere with their senses of ‘home’ on the streets, despite the consistent battle of unstable housing options. In particular, I spoke to Professor Margaretten about her own experiences at Point Place, a five-story apartment building in the city center, which housed over a hundred teenagers and young adults “marginalized by poverty and chronic unemployment” (Stacey 2016). In this building full of street dwellers, many young men and women found their own community bound by trust and mutual support that they may not have found in their previous homes ridden by HIV/AIDS, poverty, and social customs. As an ethnographer participating in observational research, Margaretten immersed herself in the Point Place commune, despite the fact that the existence of children within the abandoned building did not fit with state-sanctioned guidelines for housing. During her time studying the interactions at the makeshift home, policing officials evicted hundreds of teenagers and young adults residing in the building, under the pretense that they had not legally inhabited the space. Margaretten recalls:

“There were indications that this was going to happen... but no nobody really believed it

because there were so many young people in the building and there wasn't alternative housing for them. So, nobody thought the police would just put people them out on the streets cause [sic] that would be kind of ridiculous. Essentially, that was a very busy part of town... so walking down the street sort of realizing that they had been evicted...it was very eerie the first time I saw it. I thought it was a building that was teeming with people constantly coming in and out, and there was, like, a nightclub on the fourth floor so there were always people around... [but] it was all so... quiet."

Although Margaretten understood the magnitude of displacement in the lives of youth, she also conceded that the police could not be the only ones culpable for the eviction. She says, "It became pretty obvious that this was a health issue for a lot of the municipal officials. So, it became a public safety issue from their perspective." Thus, there were layers of municipal ordinances, interdepartmental memos, and learned policing tactics that informed the reasons why so many homeless youths re-entered street life.

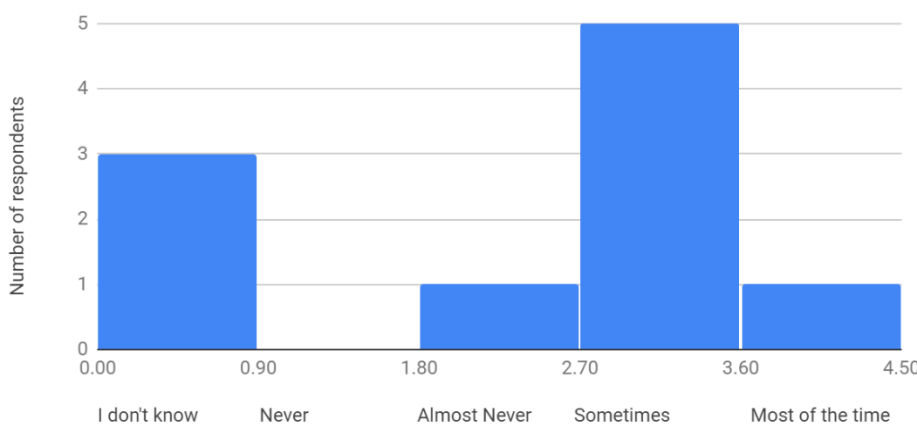
*Importance of time, space, and place*

Perhaps the most intriguing parts of my research regard differences of opinions concerning the functions and implementation of law enforcement strategies across the geographical spaces of Durban. Here are the main areas of study from which I gathered evidence:

*Table 1.4*

Do the Durban police treat people in your neighborhood with respect?

0= I don't know, 1= Never, 2= Almost never, 3= Sometimes, 4= Most of the time, 5= Always



i. *Cato*

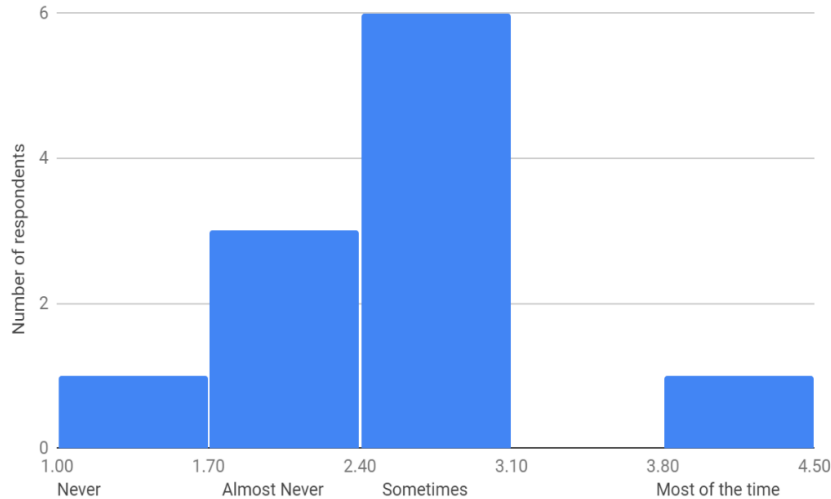
*Manor Opinions:*

The survey results of ten Cato Manor residents, who both reside in a suburban township and have

access to the city sphere, offer a fascinating case study into the meaning of the word “police.”

**Do the Durban police make you feel safe?**

0= I don't know, 1= Never, 2= Almost Never, 3= Sometimes, 4= Most of the time, 5= Always



*Table 1.5*

For instance, according to Table 1.4, half of the respondents stated that police treated people in their neighborhood with respect “sometimes.” The second most common result, with three supporters, was “I don’t

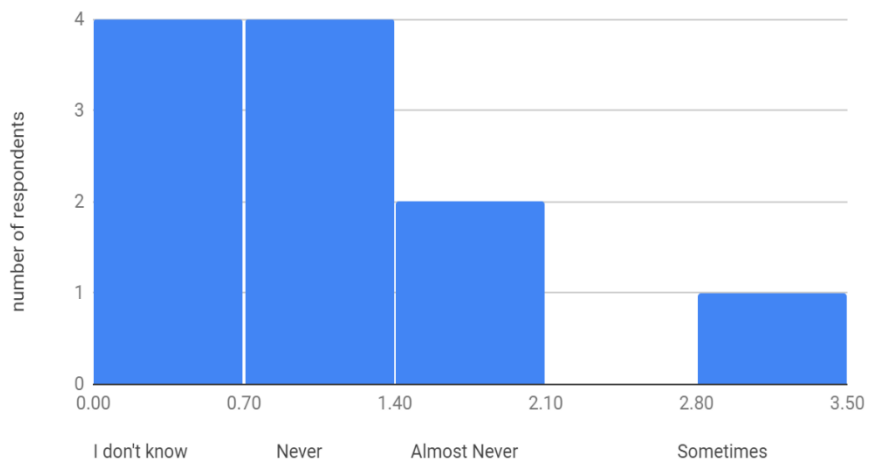
know.” Additionally, I asked about police officers’ capacities to make Cato Manor residents feel safe, and half responded with

*Table 1.6*

“sometimes,” exhibiting a wariness to either wholly affirm or denounce the actions of police in their neighborhood. Subsequently, I listed the question, “Do you think police keep street

**Do you think Durban police keep street children safe?**

0= I don't know, 1= Never, 2= Almost never, 3= Sometimes, 4= Most of the time, 5= Always



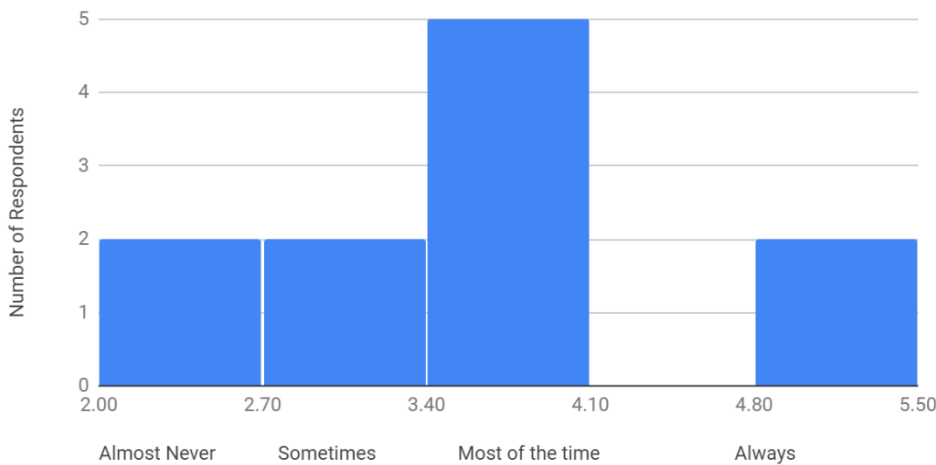
children safe?” A majority of the ten respondents offered fewer positive opinions, responding with the answers, “I don’t know,” “never,” and “almost never.” In fact, only one surveyed offering a differing viewpoint by marking, “sometimes.” When comparing the two questions, the

average results, when weighed on a Likert scale, demonstrate a 2.6 for Table 1.5 and an average of 1 for Table 1.6. The two survey outcomes exhibit a meandering faith in the police’s ability to care for both Cato Manor residents and street children.

*Table 1.7*

Do the police cops abuse their authority?

0= I don't know, 1= Never, 2= Almost Never, 3= Sometimes, 4= Most of the time, 5= Always



The final question that I addressed regarded the efficacy of law enforcement tactics under the purview of the historically Black township’s residents.

In response to the

question, “Do the police cops abuse their authority?” half of the participants responded with, “most of the time,” indicating that even though the people in the Cato Manor neighborhood are, for the most part, treated with some respect (as seen in Table 1.4), the police are perceived as abusers of their own power on Durban streets.

*ii. Durban Central Histories:* Building upon the testimonies of Cato Manor residents, both the Tennyson House outreach workers as well as the Denis Hurley Center work with homeless youth within the city center, a focal location for the homelessness in Durban. Although both reveal the institutional issues that may illuminate the reasons why police may act with impunity, they do not serve as justifications for police brutality. Perrier notes,

“Say, for example, if you’re task is to clear an area of homeless people, because they’re there, you can do that in a way which doesn’t involve beating people up [and] doesn’t involve stealing their belongings. So, part of what we’re always saying is that violence

should not be always unnecessary. We're saying that violence should be the last resort, not the first resort."

The Denis Hurley Director, at the center of the public realm within Durban Central, consistently witnesses the abuses of various police officers and publicly denounced the roles of the police in marginalizing the thousands of homeless people living in the city.

*iii. Durban North Narratives:* The director of the Khulani Children's Shelter offers fundamentally contradictory perspective about the role of policing officials in the lives of children. She holds, "The police are helpful... The relationship with the police station is good... They don't leave the kid and have to phone the social worker [when they see children in vulnerable situations]." In this instance, the director refers to the fact that local police officers at the Greenwood Park Police Station nearby effectively transport children from abusive families or dangerous conditions to social workers who have the capacity to provide the institutional support and care for children. Durban North offers a specific contrast to the busy life found in the city center, which may change the service delivery of local police. Moreover, Durban North, as a middle-class suburban area, holds a higher standard of living than much of the city, and is not as congested as the rest of the municipality (West 2014). Thus, there are both fewer street children, and crime is not centralized in the area, affecting service delivery (HRSC).

#### *The state of shelters and support*

Perhaps one of the compelling parts of my research is the consensus that street children's interactions with the police are *de-facto* results of a lack of infrastructure of social services. Although there are shelters that aim to do work benefiting homeless communities, funding complications arise as consistent issues. The SAPS representative acknowledges, "Organizations are at the mercy of the communities that support them financially. The government's finances

are very restricted.” Indeed, the Khulani Shelter in Durban, although active, continues to struggle with the lack of funding available for necessary expenses like school fees. The director notes,

“[We’ve been] short of funds for years. Yesterday, [municipal workers] came to switch the electricity off. I told them, ‘The kids, when they come back from school, need food and hot water. Please, I’ll try to get business people around [the neighborhood] to pay for it’ ... [The government] helps a little bit, but the electricity and the other stuff is a lot.” Even with the framework to aid children through offering social workers and domestic

workers, the Khulani Shelter director discloses that the organization’s existence is not enough to aid children who may find themselves in vulnerable situations. Although there are individuals and organizations aiming to mitigate the damages of social woes, they do not necessarily have the capacity to engage efficiently and effectively. Additionally, the director of the Denis Hurley Center also verbalizes that funding becomes a political issue when state resources are sparse and scattered among multiple departments:

“[There] are police officers paid for acting as if to defend us, to make us feel more safe, and I want people to feel uncomfortable of what is being done in their name. We’re not the only people doing that, but we probably do it more than anyone else [not only] because we get a lot of access to the public realm... But also, we have a big advantage of not getting funding from the municipality. We’re not afraid to make these points, to shine a light and hold the city accountable because they can’t threaten us by withdrawing funding, which I know they’ve done to other organizations. And the other organizations pass information on to us and say, ‘well we can’t say this publicly, we want you to say it. We encourage you to say it. Please make sure that these voices are being heard.’”

Since non-profit organizations are dependent on public funding, they may not have the capacity to exert their influence to the extent that they would wish, even in the current democratic regime. This, in turn, lessens the means through which NGOs may effectively change policies put forth by the state since their very existence may be under threat.

When asked about the role of social workers and the responsibility of the state to intervene in the lives of street children, Margaretten offers another perspective that further



complicates the narrative that shelters are the clear-cut reason why there are children on the streets who may experience abuse by law enforcement. She states,

“I think, you know, I have sympathy in particular for the community outreach workers and for the social workers. They know what their job is and are really constrained about how effective it can be... Everyone can agree that the best thing for these young people is to be reunited with their families... There are resources like petrol, [used] five times a day... or [social workers] can use public transport, and that can be pretty time consuming when they there is already a big case load. They are often times limited by their resources. Often times, it would take them months... to get the young person back home when, often times, [the minor] can get back home by themselves pretty easily... At home, there might be abusive things [happening] or [the family] is unable to pay for school fees... When a young person sees that hopeless situation, they try to find better alternatives.”

Here, Margaretten reminds us that juveniles, especially teenagers, often have their own justifications or explanations for settling on Durban streets as availability to material necessities dwindle. This undeniably feeds into a larger series of circumstances that make children susceptible to police contact, but, as Margaretten notes, the streets may be the only option open to youth who do not see viable, successful futures for themselves. In turn, the young persons may conceivably leave home to employ their own agency, but they often find themselves in situations dictated by law enforcement interactions.

## **Conclusions**

Even twenty-five years into its democracy, South Africa continues to face scars from the apartheid era regime, which brought about ‘low policing’ that disproportionately affects the lives of street youths. However, this study is not merely about the relationship between the police and the policed. Rather, the widespread, chronic unemployment, coupled with social discord in a continuously transforming nation cultivates an environment in which many street children feel unwanted or disregarded. Therefore, the complexities of crime, poverty, and family disagreement should not be considered in a vacuum; rather, this study reveals that social, political, and

economic issues are all inextricably tied to each other, and the reformation of street homelessness also has to come with the reformation of SAPS policing structures.

One of the most viable conclusions found through several interviews is that police officers, at the individual level, are merely parts of an intrinsically broken criminal justice system. Although cops that abuse their authority certainly do exist, they are also tasked with defending municipal, provincial, and national initiatives that they themselves did not create. Perrier's allusion to by-laws written into the legislation indicates that law enforcement officers are the ones in charge of implementation, not always conception of actions that negatively affect the homeless. Moreover, rhetoric surrounding 'safer cities' in the post-apartheid world as well as pressure from local tenants unduly influences the thought processes of Durban cops as they have become a form of 'social services' to street children.

Margaretten, Perrier, and the Tennyson House representative draw attention to a common topic: an 'inertia,' or a form of uniform motion, that may keep children, especially teenagers, on the streets rather than returning home. In fact, as I interviewed more individuals, I found an ecosystem in which children find adopted spaces, the state interrupts their senses of stability, and social workers face the mammoth task of both reuniting families and alleviating the trauma that disadvantaged youth may have experienced in the past. Therefore, there is a clear disconnect between the service delivery sectors in the government, and the psychology of youth directly impacts the ways in which they are treated. There is not clear solution to any of these issues, but the only constant found in the project is that law enforcement responses alone are inadequate at addressing systemic issues that may lead to 'crime' as defined by legislatures.

Furthermore, the degree of opinions about police changed in response to geography of the city. While those in Durban North may have held more positive views of the police's ability to

directly refer children to fitting resources, others in Durban Central found fundamentally different policies. This may be related to income levels in a given area, population congestion, and access to the public realm. All these topics may be issues that may be further explored in other research.

The dearth of social services and related funding issues are also points of interest, since there are considerable amounts of children living on the streets. All those interviewed in Durban overwhelmingly agreed that their shelters do the best they can, considering the limited resource available to them. Moreover, dependence on social workers is not nearly enough to solve the issues of youth homelessness, which is birthed out of substance abuses, familial estrangement, poverty, and more. Instead, the narrative of outsiders ought to change from ‘saving’ homeless youth to bringing them into conversations about what they think is best for their own situations.

To conclude, the issue of youth homelessness is a multi-pronged issue and there is no quick solution of ameliorate the damages of a broken social system and unravelling family units. However, the state of the issue at hand reminds us to approach others with a degree of sensitivity and empathy as well as dream radically of what the future may hold for displaced youths.

### **Recommendations for Further Study**

This study hits on many themes, including the state of social work in South Africa, as well as the complexities of gender in regards to homelessness. Therefore, I believe that a further examination of the clear relationships between juvenile-focused social workers and policing officials would be of interest. Additionally, an inquiry into by-laws and other hidden municipal ordinances would certainly put pressure on governing officials that attempt to limit the capacity of homeless living in the city. Finally, a study with clearance to speak directly to juveniles that exemplifies the importance of their lived experiences would also be helpful. I also only had the opportunity to speak to Cato Manor residents. Perhaps, a mix of different suburban neighborhoods throughout Durban would substantiate my own beliefs concerning the variety of opinions concerning police, which may be dependent on geography.

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## **Appendices**

### *I. Questions for Social Workers/Community Advocates*

1. How long have you been working with youth, and what are some of the ages that you typically come across?
2. What background do you think that street children that you come across typically hold?
3. What do you think are some of the fundamental social issues that lead to homelessness?
4. How does SAPS interact with your organization?
5. Do you think that stories of displacement, especially during large convention events play a big role and how?
6. How often do you hear about police abuse?
7. Does SAPS provide any benefits to your organizations that others might not know about?
8. How do you think patrolling affects the psychological health of children?

9. How do you think crime is handled differently between adults and children?

*II. Questions for Professor Margaretten*

1. I have spoken to several social workers and community advocates on the issues of youth homelessness, and I found that peer pressure and a desire to make their own rules serves as an impetus for children leaving their households. Why do you think that children would want to both create an ecosystem in which they could stay and also refuse to leave? What do you think about the ‘inertia’ that keeps children in the streets?
2. You briefly speak about apartheid laws that continue to this day, including the Group Areas Act and 1951 Prevention of Squatting Act that continue to affect the lives of children to this day. Can you explain how it may affect community policing tactics?
3. I’ve heard stories through the grapevine about police using violence to get children off private or public properties. Have you witnessed/heard about these instances of abuse?
  1. Police eviction at point place
  2. What does abuse usually look like?
4. What are the specific barriers faced by juveniles compared to older homeless youth on the streets?
5. What were your own motivations of learning about youth homelessness in the city?
6. Dearth of NGO resources- what do you think is the core issue, if there is any?