

**Institutional Development, Police Practice and Gender Politics
in the Colombian National Police**

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This dissertation is submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

This thesis is the result of my own work and includes nothing which is the outcome of work done in collaboration except as declared in the preface and specified in the text. It is not substantially the same as any work that has already been submitted before for any degree or other qualification except as declared in the preface and specified in the text. It does not exceed the prescribed word limit for the relevant Degree Committee.

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Despite the increase in popularity of policing research, the Colombian National Police (CNP) has remained largely unstudied. The present study is a foundational analysis of the CNP. In order to explore that institution in all its complexity—from both a historical and a current, empirical perspective—several types of data and methods were used. Thus, the thesis integrates multiple disciplinary traditions (history, linguistics, sociology, criminology) and employs various methodologies (historiography, discourse analysis, document analysis, diachronic linguistics, amongst others). As well as an introduction, literature review and overviews of the thesis's conceptual framework and methodology, it contains five substantive chapters. Chapter 5 discusses the semantic development of the concept of *policía* in Colombia as it gradually consolidated itself in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries; Chapter 6 addresses the history of the Colombian Police from before the institution's legal consolidation in 1891 until 2020; Chapter 7 is an analysis of militarism in the CNP; Chapter 8 provides an assessment of the adoption of managerialism for the assessment and communication of institutional performance; and Chapter 9 explores perceptions of the role of women in the Colombian National Police. A final chapter draws out connecting threads and explores the ramifications of the study and possible ways forward for the Colombian police.

I submit this thesis in the midst of protests that started in April 2021.
3,405 cases of police violence were registered between the 28th of April and 27th of May,
including 43 homicides (another 27 cases are being verified)
and 22 instances of sexual violence (Tembloros, 2021).

*As a society, we have been so indoctrinated with the idea that we solve problems by policing
and caging people that many cannot imagine anything other than prisons and the police as
solutions to violence and harm
Kaba, 2020*

The process of completing this PhD happened parallel to (although perhaps it was in itself) the process of coming to terms with personal trauma. My PhD years have been tremendously tough to endure and I would have most certainly caved under the pressure had it not been for the powerful, smart, generous and kind women whose unfailing support I am so thankful for. Some thanks are in order.

To my supervisor, Caroline, who believed I could do this, even when I seriously doubted it myself, and encouraged me to go forward—at my pace, on my terms, and always validating my choices. I could not have found a smarter, more generous, supportive and altogether wonderful supervisor. Thank you so very much.

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

Very little is known about the Colombian National Police (CNP). The body of research that addresses this topic is quite modest, especially when compared with the rich tradition of police studies in places like the UK or the USA, while the official narrative, as we shall see, is both lacking in depth and misleading in some crucial respects. This lack of a robust corpus of literature on the CNP has limited the possibility of producing an accurate assessment of the institution or indeed of formulating any in-depth criticism. The aim of this thesis is to provide a foundational study of the CNP, which will serve as a basis for further study of this important institution. It will expand upon and significantly revise the few works that have been written on the CNP, thus making a valuable contribution to this corpus of literature.

This thesis builds on fieldwork that I conducted in 2016 with the police in Bogotá. Using semi-structured qualitative interviews, observations and police car ride-alongs, I sought to develop a detailed picture of police practice and officers' perceptions of their professional role. As I began to place the findings of my fieldwork in the context of existing literature, it became clear both that many details could not be understood without reference to the specific history of the police in Colombia and that the existing body of literature on that history was lacking in some important respects. Historical change plays an important role in the production of the present: key features of the CNP—particularly militarism, managerialism, and a prevalent culture of sexism and machismo—needed to be placed in historical context if they were to be properly understood. This was difficult for two reasons: existing scholarship on the history of the Colombian police is (with some important exceptions, but these have generally been more

focused studies) inadequate or misleading, for reasons detailed in Chapter 2; nor can scholarship on the police in other latitudes, particularly the Global North, be uncritically applied to Southern contexts (though it can provide useful parallels and context, and Northern trends do manifest in the South, albeit in particularised ways). For these reasons, this study expanded its remit to encompass historical, historical linguistic and legal enquiry, a process detailed in Chapter 4. The result is a multi-disciplinary study concerned with providing a preliminary exploration of the CNP, its history and its present-day functioning.

I begin the thesis proper with two historical chapters. Institutional history is vital if we are to understand the present. As I was saying, in the case of the CNP, however, there are no accurate accounts of its historical development and many existing works of scholarship rely on outdated interpretations or inaccurate readings of the historical primary sources. If we are to understand the CNP as a force in the history of Colombian state-making, a more accurate understanding of its history is necessary. Thus, in Chapter 5, I will trace the development of the term *policía* as it developed over the course of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. In doing so, I will correct a number of studies which anachronistically read early appearances of the term *policía* in legislative documents as references to a police force in the modern sense. In both Chapters 5 and 6, I will offer a corrective to the common idea, promoted both by the CNP and in many traditional works of scholarship, that the national police was born in the year 1891. This widespread notion is challengeable on two fronts. Firstly, as a number of scholars have recently noted (Aparicio Barrera, 2019; Llorente, 1999; Ruiz Vásquez, 2009) and as I shall argue in Chapter 6, the present-day configuration of the CNP dates back only as far as the mid-1960s. By marking 1891 in this manner, we depict the CNP as a long-standing fixture of the national landscape: a deep-rooted corps that has existed in its current form for over a century. This premise advances the institutionalist idea that the police force has endured and thrived because it is well equipped to do its job and survive in its functional and normative environment (Olsen, 2009:6), and endows the CNP with a robust historical tradition of continuity. In actual fact, the institution is much less stable, durable and well adapted than it is suggested to be.

Secondly, many historians of the CNP have begun their studies with the traditional foundation date of 1891, and have ignored the years leading up to that date (those few who have turned their attention to the pre-1891 period have been misled, as noted above, by an anachronistic understanding of the term *policía*). In fact, the development of the Colombian national police cannot be understood fully without taking into account pre-1891 developments, which I shall

detail in Chapter 5. As we shall see, long before the term *policía* was attached to the modern institution, the concept of police was already tightly connected to the establishment and protection of state-mandated order (Axtmann, 1991:46) and this is a theme that I shall argue has continued into the modern day. Chapter 6 will continue to explore the path towards institutionalisation of the police in Colombia, highlighting the way in which this process was shaped by political elites. Even after the institutional consolidation of the CNP in the mid-1960s, the subsequent institutional development has been deeply influenced by the socio-political milieu—mainly the internal armed conflict—more than it has been determined by centralised attempts at reform. It is here that we can see how a historiographical approach to the Colombian police helps to shed light on the current configuration—by tracing the historical development of the institution we can begin to identify those threads which go together to weave the modern CNP. The central role that police have played in the internal armed conflict, for instance, has cultivated a strong militaristic character, and aided in fostering a heightened culture of machismo linked to that same militarism. This has fed into a managerialist turn in the Colombian police in the 2000s that drew on worldwide trends but manifested locally in a particular way. These phenomena are explored in Chapters 7, 9 and 8 respectively. The historical analysis presented in Chapters 5 and 6, then, is the bedrock upon which my discussion of the present-day institution is founded.

What is the character that this history has engendered in the CNP? Recent reports have drawn widespread attention to the epidemic of police brutality in Colombia (Tembloros, 2020), an epidemic that I see, in great measure, as a consequence of the CNP's militarisation. This militarisation is evident not only in the police's armaments, tactics and organisational structure, but also in a predominant mentality in the institution that accepts violence and coercion as suitable methods of tackling police problems—this logic has directly fostered police brutality. In Chapter 7, I will draw on interviews and observations from my fieldwork, complemented with scholarly, journalistic and NGO data, to explore the militarised nature of the Colombian police and how it manifests itself. A key aspect of militarisation in police forces is the view that police problems are best solved with force, that offenders are to be thought of in the same way as a war-time enemy, and that 'pre-violence behaviour' (Herzog, 2001) and outright violence are acceptable when dealing with certain marginalised populations in society. In this ideology, civic and community-oriented forms of policing are only incidental.

Yet the self-image of the modern-day CNP is shaped by a very different trend, this one a

worldwide one: the increasing use of managerialist approaches and methods of measuring performance. There has been much work done by scholars worldwide on the adoption by police forces of managerialism. There has been no such study on the phenomenon in Colombia. Chapter 8 will attempt to supply an analysis of the way in which this global trend has materialised in the specific context of the CNP. Scholars have identified several problems with managerialism in police contexts: among them, the fact that a strong emphasis on the production of ‘good performance numbers’ encourages officers to focus on quantifiable tasks at the expense of other tasks that cannot be quantified, and that the pressure to fulfil quotas and targets engenders an institutional culture where the ends justify the means. In the case of Colombia, all of these problems are present, but we also see that there are serious problems with the implementation of the managerialist logic, as we shall see. Firstly, the numbers collected and collated by the CNP are sketchy and inconsistent—even if were to agree with the contention that such quota- and number-based data represents a good measure of institutional performance, the types of numbers that the CNP collects and the way in which it presents them do not even meet the necessary criteria to be useful according to this managerialist logic. Secondly, even if they were internally consistent, these quotas and targets are achieved through unfair policing and they motivate officers to engage in improper and even illegal practices.

Finally, the *macho*, militarised nature of the police has not only fostered the marginalisation of women within the institution, but has also thwarted those reforms aimed at implementing more ‘feminised’ forms of policing. Police forces have traditionally been male-exclusive institutions (Reiner, 2010:129), where masculine tasks (geared towards violence-based coercion) are carried out by physically strong men (Brown and Heidensohn, 2000). The introduction worldwide of forms of policing that require more mediation and collaboration with citizens, such as community policing, were thought to have de-emphasised the *macho* nature of police work, thus cultivating a civic police service of a more feminine or gender-neutral nature (Archbold and Moses Schulz, 2012:702). However, we shall see in Chapter 9 that the role played by the CNP in the country’s internal armed conflict has strengthened the institution’s character and practices, which remain grounded in the militaristic model (Ruiz Vásquez, 2009). The civic aspirations of the CNP are no match for the wartime role that they have been called to take on. Furthermore, there seems to be little institutional will to divest from the macho model of policing, judging by the position of women in the police force, their portrayal as officers and the traits that are associated with their way of working. Drawing on interviews conducted during fieldwork, I will analyse male views of female officers and female officers’

understanding of their role in the institution. As we shall see, the culture of misogyny permeates the way in which gender dynamics play out in the force: male officers view women as ‘other’ while female officers also engage in ‘defensive othering’ as a means of gaining status within a *macho* gender hierarchy.

A number of themes emerge from this multi-disciplinary analysis, among which the following represent, I believe, four key themes that challenge received narratives and traditional presentations of the CNP:

- 1) The Colombian National Police did not emerge in a vacuum in 1891, but is part of a centuries-long project of establishing and administering a nation according to an elite view of order. Thus, their role is not ‘neutral’ and ‘unpolitical’, but geared toward enforcing a colonial-inherited social structure of inequalities (Chapter 5 and 6)
- 2) To maintain this social order, police have disregarded their civic aspiration and cultivated instead a militaristic institutional character (Chapter 7)
- 3) Meanwhile, what is supposed to be their main task—to prevent and fight crime—is performatively (yet not actually) addressed through the meeting of managerialist quotas and targets (Chapter 8)
- 4) The place of women in the CNP and the treatment they receive by male and female officers suggests that the institutional culture and character remains invested in maintaining a militaristic corps in charge of protecting, through coercion, the current structure of social inequalities (Chapter 9)

Together, all of these arguments will support the thesis that the CNP is a force in charge of establishing and enforcing state-mandated order, which they achieve with the use of coercive, military-style practices, while claiming to provide security and protection against crime through the completion of managerialist tasks that have very little to do with crime prevention. I will conclude by arguing that the failures that we currently find in the police are not likely to be resolved by adding powers to the institution, increasing the number of officers, providing them with more tech gadgets, or changing police uniforms—the latter being the latest police proposal to improve the institution (La FM, 2021)—but with reforms that are geared towards the shrinking of the police force and their powers, and reducing overall contact between police and citizens.

CHAPTER 2

On the Colombian Police

Literature Review

Police studies have become a common sight in the field of criminology over the past few decades. Scholarship on this topic encompasses a wide array of foci and methods: ethnographies (van Hulst, 2017), surveys (Paoline et al, 2000), experiments (Sherman, 1995), qualitative interviews (Beletsky et al., 2005), systematic reviews (Mazerolle et al, 2013), to mention just a few, have been carried out in order to shed light on police culture (Crank, 2004), legitimacy (Sunshine and Tyler, 2003), effectiveness (Weisburd and Eck, 2004), work-related psychological problems (Garbarino et al., 2013), gender politics (Martin, 1999), and a long list of other topics. The literature available on the Colombian police is, however, not as rich and it covers significantly less terrain. In this section I will discuss the few seminal works that have influenced much of what has been written on the Colombian police. I will then give account of those studies of specific themes that are of importance to the present thesis: pieces on the history of the Colombian police; on the role of policing as influenced by the Colombian context; and on gender in the CNP. This is intended as a brief overview of the literature—these

works, as well as relevant international scholarship, will be more thoroughly analysed in later chapters.

Seminal works

The literature on the police in Colombia has covered a variety of topics, such as the militarisation of the force (Vargas Velásquez, 2006; Ferro Torres, 2013; Llorente, 2005); the role of the CNP in the post-conflict era (Cárdenas Sepúlveda and Petro Gonzalez, 2014; Carvajal Carvajal, 2004; Velásquez, 2015); corruption (Ruiz Vásquez, 2013); the question of whether police reforms have worked (Camacho Guizado, 2000; Casas Dupuy, 2005); the implementation of community policing across the country (Lopez Riaño, 2007; Ruiz and Romero, 2006) and the application of hot spots policing in Bogotá (Secretaría de Seguridad – Alcaldía de Bogotá, 2017; Ramirez, 2016); as well as a handful of studies that make suggestions for the future of the institution (Gómez Rojas and Baracaldo Méndez, 2007; Romero Pájaro, 2017; Grasa, 2017) and a few that develop analyses based on empirical, qualitative data collected from police officers (Molina Cristancho, 2017; Ruiz Vásquez, 2009; Soacha Sánchez, 2013). The problem with these works is that, since there is no robust corpus of literature on Colombian police history and practice, authors have been left to develop discrete, short pieces of literature that cannot be easily connected. The lack of a nucleus, a foundational corpus of knowledge on the CNP, means that the few articles that address police-related matters are analytically scattered and only weakly tethered to one another. This has limited the possibility of advancing a more tightly developed body of knowledge.

There are very few lengthy pieces of research on the CNP. One of the only such works, Castaño Castillo's 1947 book *La Policía: Su Origen y Su Destino* [The Police: Its Origin and Future], has featured prominently in much of the literature on the CNP (e.g. Becerra, 2010; Gilibert, 2002). This was probably the first study solely dedicated to an exploration of the Colombian Police, yet it has serious faults (which will be thoroughly discussed in Chapter 5) which have filtered down to studies of the police up to the present day. As a foundational piece, therefore, this work is largely inadequate. Aparicio Barrera's (2019) useful and insightful book on police ideology in the 1960s and 1970s corrects many of the historical misapprehensions advanced by Castaño Castillo (1947) and contributes valuable analyses on the institutional personality and culture of the CNP. However, it only covers a few decades of police history, which means there is still much ground to cover. Finally, we have two unpublished theses: Ruiz Vásquez's

(2009) in-depth PhD on police policy and practice, the first study to use extensive qualitative fieldwork to develop analyses about policing and to critically explore the discrepancies between policy and police work, and Soacha Sánchez's (2013) Masters thesis, which offers a glimpse into the lives and voices of police officers by discussing issues such as the relationship between low-ranking officers and their superiors, and the perceived unfairness of media portrayals of police work (also based on empirical, qualitative data). The analyses presented by these two authors are a welcome addition to the scholarship and they introduce important empirical perspectives on police practice, not found elsewhere, to the discussion of the CNP. However, they have two weaknesses: firstly, they are unpublished theses, which means that their influence on the literature that has been published since has been limited; and, secondly, they focus on fairly presentist issues, which prevents us from fully understanding how these analyses fit within the wider history of the police and its institutional development. All of this leaves us with: a) one seminal work on police history which is significantly flawed yet widely cited; b) a book that undertakes a rigorous re-evaluation of police history but which only covers a few decades; and c) two unpublished studies that introduce important discussions about police practice but have had limited influence. The picture painted by the existing corpus of research on this topic remains, therefore, quite fractured.

There are, however, a number of shorter scholarly texts that provide important insights into particular aspects of the CNP and that move us closer to a firmer foundation to build a corpus of knowledge about the police. The studies authored by Maria Victoria Llorente, which span a number of decades (1999, 2005, et al., 2008), represent perhaps the most rigorous and thorough analysis of the institutional makeup of the CNP. Drawing on a variety of sources (legislation, conversations with members of the force, journalistic accounts and historical documents), she has attempted to map out an in-depth understanding of the contours of the police corps as it operates in the Colombian territory. She not only accounts for the normative and practical institutional organisation of the police (a difficult task in itself), but also endeavours to understand how the socio-political context of the country has shaped this particular institutional configuration. Similarly, Eduardo Moncada (2016) has produced a case-study of the police in the city of Cali and the way in which the force operates at the intersection between local politics and businesses. Both of these authors present valuable analyses that explore the CNP as it operates within the social power-matrix. In doing so, they get us closer to understand how the police, as a state force, affects and is affected by socio-political forces in the name of keeping order.

The present thesis is intended as a long-length foundational piece of work on the Colombian police. It will develop analyses that link practice, institutional structure, socio-political context and historical trajectory. In this sense, it will correct and expand upon the studies that have been published thus far, and will bring together and deepen the arguments that have been advanced in these scattered, short pieces on the CNP.

History of the CNP

The majority of texts dealing with the historical development of the Colombian police, as Hering Torres (2018) points out, take the year 1891 as their point of departure, given that this was the year in which a National Police was legally created (*Decreto 1000 de 1891*). A number of authors, however, have written on the period before this legal consolidation (Acevedo Tarazona and Puentes Cala, 2014; Becerra, 2010; Blair Trujillo, 1993; Castaño Castillo, 1947; Gilibert, 2002; Pulido Barrantes, 2005, 2012; Martínez, 1998; and, in a briefer manner, Saldarriaga Vélez, 2012). This is a valuable subject of study, as we should remember that the corps did not emerge out of thin air in 1891 but that there were important antecedents to its legal creation. The problem with this literature, though, is that most of these analyses are not sufficiently grounded in careful reading of the primary historical evidence, and follow a pattern of anachronistic misreadings of eighteenth and nineteenth century terminology. Because of this, many of these studies include errors and inaccurate understandings of the institutional development of the Colombian Police. The work of Martínez (1998) is an important deviation from the texts mentioned above, in that he endeavours to reflect on the early days of the police in Colombia by looking at the role they had on the implementation of a European model of social order, with the aim of civilising a nation. This argument will be complemented and further developed throughout Chapter 5.

As mentioned, many texts follow the official narrative (Policía Nacional, 2021a), accepting the idea that 1891 saw the birth of the modern-day corps. A few authors have questioned this assertion, however, arguing that the institutional configuration of the national police corps as we know it can only be traced back to the 1960s (Llorente, 1999:403; Vargas Velázquez, 2006:188; Ruiz Vásquez, 2009:54). This discussion on the significance of 1891 has not been sufficiently developed, however, with some authors plainly assuming the importance of the date and others questioning its relevance only in passing and without enough depth to build a

robust argument. The only scholar who has thoroughly addressed the issue is Aparicio Barrera (2019),¹ who presents a compelling argument that disentangles the symbolic significance of 1891 as a foundation myth from the structural changes which took place in the 1960s and which effectively brought about the current configuration of the national police corps. Despite the fact that Aparicio Barrera's (2019) work represents a piece of skilful and illuminating analysis, its historical range spans only two decades (with an emphasis on 1960–1970). In order to complement and expand upon Aparicio Barrera's work, the present study will dedicate significant attention to the pre-institutional history of the CNP, going as far back as the beginning of the Spanish invasion and up to the present day. In doing so it will also tackle the various misconceptions that have distorted scholarship on the history of the police both before and after the much-celebrated 1891 date.

Police in context

The tendency in studies of the more recent history of the CNP is to focus on the institution's internal changes (Llorente, 1999; Ruiz Vásquez, 2009; Casas Dupuy, 2005), with only limited reference to how the socio-political context of the country has precipitated or influenced such changes. The exception to this approach is represented by those works that address the history of the police during *La Violencia*, a period of bipartisan political violence at the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth. During this time, the local police corps were known to actively participate in the conflict, which means that the authors who address this particular part of the history of policing in Colombia are often obliged to consider the socio-political landscape and how it shaped policing (Llorente, 1999:400; Becerra, 2011; Aparicio Barrera, 2019). However, as we shall see in the section on the conceptual framework of this thesis, our understanding is not well served by narrowing down the concept of political participation to the defence of one party or the other through active (e.g. vote rigging) or coercive (e.g. detaining members of the opposite party) means. By acknowledging the inherently political role of the police as defenders of state-mandated order (this notion will be further developed in the conceptual framework), we can understand the importance of *always* studying the police in its wider socio-political context.

¹ The historical chapter of the present thesis was already written when Aparicio Barrera's book was published, but it was a pleasant surprise to see that some of the key issues that I discuss in this thesis about the history of the CNP were being tackled independently, and that many of the problems I had identified in the official narrative were also recognised by Aparicio Barrera.

Those who study the phenomenon of the militarisation of the Colombian police do tend to pay much more attention to the link between socio-political context and the institutional character of the police force (Llorente, 2005; Cruz Rodríguez, 2016). Nevertheless, the length and scope of these studies have not allowed for a more systematic evaluation of how the phenomenon of militarisation emerged and how it affects police practice. The fact remains that there are no accounts that trace the development of the Colombian National Police in a way that integrates institutional development, socio-political context and police practice in an integrated manner, where the development itself is the focus of study, rather than an introductory issue or an embellishing backdrop to a different subject of research. An important exception is Moncada's 2016, who explores policing, politics and social order in the city of Cali in the 90s, however, the limited geographical scope of this study leaves an important gap to be filled. The present study will attempt to address this gap by studying the history of the CNP exploring its institutional development as it relates to the socio-political context of Colombia.

Gender in the force

Due to the particularly masculinised character of police forces (Heidensohn, 2008:642), it is not entirely surprising that policing studies have suffered a certain “‘amnesia’ of women”, where “men’s studies have been passed off as ‘general knowledge’” (Gelsthorpe and Morris, 1988:94, 98); women are consistently exceptionalised and segregated to specialist literature, and are not fully integrated into general studies about the police. This is unfortunate because it ignores the experience of a population of the police that occupies a very particular role within the force and, through this invisibilisation, it perpetuates those same power differentials that see female officers marginalised. In addition to amplifying the voice and views of this underrepresented group of officers, which is in itself an important goal, studying the place of women in the police can also say much about the force’s aspiration to become an egalitarian, civic service. The desire to de-militarise the police and move away from the traditional *macho* force that relies on violence and physical strength (Barberet and Carrington, 2018:825) has been put into practice by attempting to introduce forms of policing that are regarded as more feminised, such as community policing (Miller, 1999). However, if we study the role of women in the Colombian police and the way in which they are perceived by both men and female colleagues, as I will do in Chapter 9, we can question the idea that the police actually want to (consciously or unconsciously) become a less masculinised, civic force. In presenting this type

of exploration, the present research is a significant contribution to the literature on women in the CNP, a field of knowledge that is virtually unexplored.

As it has been traditionally presented, the history of women in the CNP is not very rich. The narrative has often been presented in superficial terms, as a simple timeline marked with concise descriptions of events related to women in the CNP: 1953, the CNP first allows women in the institution; 1980, the first group of female patrol officers graduate from the police academy and start working in the streets; 1993, the first woman becomes a police pilot; 2013, the first woman holds the post of subdirectora of the CNP; etc. (Molina Cristancho, 2017:51–52). The history of women in the police has been so minimised that the official report ‘A Historical Reconstruction of the Role of Police Women in the Armed Conflict in Colombia’ (Policía Nacional, 2016a), produced by the CNP, relies on the general (i.e. male) history of the institution to weave a narrative, with ‘women events’ peppered throughout. 65 women officers were interviewed for the study but the interview schedules reveal that the topics addressed were quite limited in their scope and the actual space dedicated to analysing the responses of these women is slight, with most of the report focusing on an abstracted general history of women in the institution. I requested access to the full transcripts but my request was denied on the grounds of confidentiality. The study purports to be a history of women officers—likely in an attempt to promote the perception that women are an indispensable and valued part of the force—yet their voices were not heard and the space dedicated to their views was negligible.

There are, then, very few accounts of women’s experiences in the police and there appear to be no academic studies on the topic, other than Molina Cristancho’s Master’s thesis (2017) on the role of women officers in the internal armed conflict for which she conducted focus groups with 3 male and 3 female officers. A recent attempt to address gender in the Colombian police is found in an article by Contreras Ruvalcaba and Roza Paz (2018), who question the extent to which the increased number of women in the institution has actually resulted in more egalitarian working conditions for both male and female officers. Even though this article presents an interesting combination of theoretical perspectives, the character of the data analysed—one interview with an air force commander and some observations of police work—means that there are important limitations to their analyses and findings. This thesis, therefore, is the first study to combine the analysis of historical sources with qualitative, empirical data from police officers.

Organisational Overview

Due to the scant literature available on the CNP, an introductory snapshot of the institution cannot easily include commentary on things such as its culture, the identity traits of its officers, or even how the institution has evolved over the course of its existence—some of these topics have simply not been explored (e.g. police culture) and some others, although not entirely lacking academic study, are in dire need of revision (e.g. the history of the institution). For these reasons, a general introduction to the Colombian National Police, is, at least at this stage, necessarily descriptive and fairly superficial. The following paragraphs will present a very brief outline of the institutional makeup of the Colombian National Police in order to introduce the reader to the most general organisational features that characterise it. The chapters that follow will delve deeper into some of these organisational features and will explore what those characteristics mean for the work of officers in practice; some other features will not be discussed any further and are mentioned here purely to fill out the institutional context.

Place in the state, purview and regulatory structure

The Colombian National Police is part of the executive branch of the state and, along with the *Fuerzas Militares* [Military Forces], they constitute the *Fuerza Pública* [Public Force] (Constitución Política de Colombia, 1991, Article 216). The *Fuerza Pública* is headed by the president, who can directly command it (*Constitución Política de Colombia*, 1991, Article 189.3) or exercise their command through the Ministry of Defence (*Decreto 1512 de 2000*, Article 3, 34). Following the President and the Minister of Defence, the commander of the CNP is the General Director of the National Police.

The constitution and a decree that explains the organisational structure of the Ministry of Defence, provide the following definitions of the CNP:

The National Police is a permanent, civil, armed corps in charge of the Nation, whose primary purpose is to maintain the necessary conditions for the exercise of public rights and liberties, and to ensure the peaceful coexistence of the inhabitants of Colombia (Constitución Política de Colombia, 1991, Article 218).

(...) Its mission is to contribute to public security and peace through the effective provision of a service based on prevention, investigation and control of crimes and infractions, generating a culture of solidarity in order to foster the necessary conditions for the inhabitants of Colombia to exercise their public rights and liberties (Decreto 1512 de 2000, Article 33).

As we can see from the aims outlined in the definitions above, ensuring the peaceful coexistence of people is one of the central aims of the *policía* in Colombia. Such an aim is often referred to as *convivencia ciudadana*, which we might translate as ‘citizen coexistence’ or ‘harmonious citizen coexistence’. Article 5 of the current police code (*Ley 1801 de 29 de Julio de 2016*) defines *convivencia* as “the pacific, respectful and harmonic interaction between people, goods and the environment within the legal framework”. Article 6 outlines the legal categories that are contained within the concept of *convivencia*, which are security, *tranquilidad* [peace/tranquility], environment and public health. These legal categories are defined as follows:

Security: to guarantee the protection of constitutional and legal rights and liberties of people within the national territory.

Peace/Tranquility: to get people to exercise their rights and liberties without abusing them, and while fully observing others’ rights.

Environment: to favour the protection of natural resources and ecological patrimony, and the enjoyment and sustainable relationship with the environment.

Public health: it is the responsibility of the state and the citizens to protect health as a fundamental, individual, collective and community right, achieved in order to foster well-being and quality of life.

These definitions delineate the purview of *policía* and the job of police officers covers tasks related to all four of these areas. It is important to keep these concepts in mind, as they represent the general aims that, in theory, ought to guide police practice in Colombia. It is also worth noting that policing comes with a significant amount of discretionary powers (Ruiz Vásquez, 2009:259), but that those powers are tied to the general goals outlined above, and should be used to maintain security, peace, environmental and public health well-being. Throughout the

thesis I will demonstrate that the general aims related to harmonious citizen coexistence are often not at the centre of police work and that officers wield their discretionary power in ways that do not advance the four goals mentioned above.

The CNP's mandate and activities are regulated by the *Código de Policía*, police code. The current police code was enacted through *Ley 1801 de 29 de Julio de 2016*. This code outlines the powers of the police corps and specifies the means they have to exercise such powers. In terms of oversight, the internal affairs division of the police, the *Inspección General* [inspectorate general], is in charge of internal disciplinary procedures (*Resolución 08276 del 27 de Diciembre de 2016*).

The fact that the police have their own code, a fairly centralised command, and an organic structure indicates that the institution has the ability to develop its own set of goals, plans and strategies to the deployment of their service (Aparicio Barrera et al, 2019:125). At the same time, the fact that police commanders are subject to the authority of regionally elected officials (and ultimately the president), means that they must pay heed to the needs of certain political officials in matters of citizen coexistence (Aparicio Barrera et al, 2019:125). This configuration results in overlapping areas of operation as well as multiple mandates which the CNP must coordinate and navigate in the performance of their duties.

Organisational description

The police institution is divided into three types of direcciones [directorates]: Operations (where we can find direcciones such as that of traffic and transportation; anti-narcotics; citizen security; and criminal investigation and Interpol), Administration (human resources; finance and administration; and admissions) and Education (national directorate of police academies). Furthermore, the institution has several units and special operations groups (GOES),² such as anti-riot ([antidisturbios] ESMAD),³ tourism, judicial police, canine, infancy and adolescence, anti-kidnapping and anti-extortion, and anti-explosives.

So-called 'uniformed members' of the police—police officers as opposed to, for instance,

² *Grupos de Operaciones Especiales*

³ *Escuadrón Móvil Antidisturbios*.

professional and technical advisers—are subdivided into a hierarchical scale: 22 grades⁴ and four ranks. Police officers can be either *oficiales* [officials], *suboficiales* [sub-officials], *ejecutivo* [executive] or *agentes*⁵ [officers]. The grading system of the CNP is somewhat impractical, due to the fact that military and civilian ranks coexist in a transitional system that will remain in place at least until 2025, when some of the 22 grades will be phased out (Ruiz Vásquez, 2009:130).⁶

Territorial jurisdiction

The Colombian National Police (CNP) is organised into eight distinct regions, spread out over the national territory. Each region contains several police ‘units’, which are split into smaller groups and geographic subsections called ‘internal dependencies’. Bogotá is part of Police Region 1, and the police unit that operates in the city is the MEBOG (Metropolitan Police of Bogotá—a number of the larger cities have their own metropolitan police forces). The MEBOG is further divided into 19 territorial jurisdictions (mostly corresponding to the city’s territorial sub-divisions, called localities), each with their own police station. In order to cover their geographic jurisdiction, police stations have smaller, satellite stations known as CAIs (*Comando de Atención Inmediata* or Immediate Attention Command Centre). Each CAI has its own personnel and territorial jurisdiction, comprising a series of streets known as quadrants.

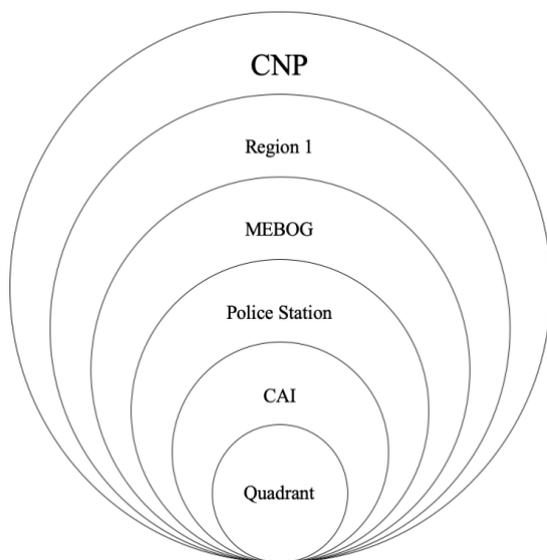


Figure 1: Territorial jurisdiction Bogotá police

⁴ See Appendix 5 for a full list of grades and ranks.

⁵ The ‘agent’ rank is part of the military ranking system that is being phased out (Decreto 1791 de 2000).

⁶ For a detailed discussion, see Ruiz Vásquez, 2009:126–36.

At the level of the police station, commanders have the power to assign their officers to a particular CAI and to a quadrant, and can also move them from one CAI to another within the same police station jurisdiction (i.e. within the same locality). Furthermore, officers are often rotated from one station to the other, or even from town to town. According to a commander interviewed, this is in order to avoid officers getting ‘too cosy’ in one place, which can lead to corruption and improper behaviour. For this reason, patrolling officers are not allowed to remain in one place for more than four years.

At the time of the fieldwork, Bogotá had 19 police stations, 153 CAIs and 1055 police quadrants (this, according to a representative of the police’s Oficina de Planeación [Planning Office] in a lecture I attended during fieldwork), and 239,000 police officers per 100,000 citizens (Alcaldía de Bogotá, 2017:5).

The daily lives of officers on the beat

It is important to keep in mind that, as stated at the beginning of this section, the Colombian police have not been thoroughly studied, which means that there are very few accounts of the lives of officers on the beat. The most notable documentation of life on the beat is authored by Ruiz Vásquez (2009), who conducted some observations and ride-alongs with the Bogotá police for his PhD thesis. The bulk of my qualitative data and his, although valuable in an otherwise unexplored field, is nevertheless limited⁷ and can only scratch the surface of the varied happenings that take place in the daily lives of officers on the streets.

The day at the police station is split into three shifts, each shift headed by a commanding officer who looks after the personnel working the shift. Officers who are on street patrol duty—referred to as *vigilancia*—are assigned a partner and each pair of officers is given a quadrant to patrol. There are also rules in place regarding partners, which I was not able to corroborate in any official document but that seem to be operational in practice, from what I was told by respondents: two men can be partners, and a man and a woman can be partners—however, two women cannot be partners (Chapter 9 will discuss this issue further). Furthermore, officers that are new to the streets cannot be paired together—each new officer has to be partnered with an experienced colleague who can teach them how the job unfolds in practice.

⁷ Ruiz Vásquez’s fieldwork was conducted over a period of one month (2009:258) and mine over three and a half.

A note on the term *policía*

Words in Spanish are gendered. The definite article *la* is usually used to refer to female nouns (e.g. *la mesa* [the table], *la silla* [the chair]) and *el* to refer to male nouns (e.g. *el plato* [the plate], *el cuchillo* [the knife]). The plural form is *las* (e.g. *las mesas* [the tables], *las sillas* [the chairs]), and *los* (e.g. *los platos* [the plates], *los cuchillos* [the knives]). Notwithstanding the fact that the word *policía* is a feminine noun, we can find it accompanied by both feminine and masculine articles when it refers to officers, as opposed to the institution. The following chart illustrates the ways in which the word *policía* can be used and what it means. Unlike the word ‘police’ in English, *policía* is not used as a verb. Furthermore, there is no single word in Spanish that can accurately translate ‘policing’ understood as “the execution of a police officer’s duties, or the fact of being a police officer” (Oxford English Dictionary). In order to convey such things it is necessary to use the specific words that refer to the different tasks of policing, such as patrolling [*patrullar* (verb) or *patrullaje* (noun)].

<i>La policía</i>	singular	the police corps	
<i>La policía</i>	singular	the female police officer.	
<i>El policía</i>	singular	the male police officer.	
<i>Los policías</i>	plural	the male police officers	
		the male and female officers	

Figure 2 - Word *policía*

CHAPTER 3

Conceptual

Framework

In this chapter, I will discuss three concepts that stand at the core of this thesis. First, I will explain the concept of the Global South and its counterpart, Global North, and to what extent this study can be framed as Southern. Second, I will provide an approximation to the concept of order as it emerges from North-South dynamics, and is enacted in the Colombian law. Finally, I will outline the conceptual boundaries of ‘police’ as a subject of study and will clarify the place of this thesis within (and outside) the field of criminology. This conceptual framework sets the basic foundation on which this study is built, but it does not explore various concepts that will be used such as ‘gender’, ‘militarisation’ and ‘managerialism’, amongst others, due to the fact that they do not necessarily feature throughout the whole thesis. All of these concepts—and several others—will be explained in the relevant chapters.

A Study on Police From the South

Throughout the thesis I will make reference to the (Global) North and the (Global) South. The North/South conceptualisation refers to the “long-lasting pattern of inequality in power, wealth and cultural influence that grew historically out of European and North American imperialism”

(Connell, 2007:212) and that keeps some nations in a position of dominance and others in subjugation—some in the metropole and some in the periphery. It is worth clarifying, though, that the South/North conceptualisation does not refer to geographic spaces exclusively—it is also a way of understanding power differentials as they operate in a global model of inequalities: there is North within the South (privileged populations within Southern countries) and South within the North (“in the form of excluded, silenced and marginalised populations” Santos, 2016:19). The key strength of this approach to the understanding of power in a local to global scale, is that it highlights the fact that the social structures of inequality that are prevalent throughout the world were built on colonial power relations that, to this day, dictate the predominant ways of knowing and living (Maldonado-Torres, 2007).

When it comes to the study of police in the Global South we have several issues to contend with. Firstly, Southern police bodies often implement Northern trends on the assumption that they are universally applicable (Watson and Kerrigan, 2018:612). This, in turn, draws the eye of academia to the exploration of Northern topics in Southern contexts (see, for example, the abundance of studies about community policing all over the world—Kenya: Mburul and Helbich, 2017; Sierra Leone: Albrecht, 2015; Nigeria: Ordu and Nnam, 2017; Hong Kong: Chan, 2017; South Korea: Kang et al., 2014; Argentina: Colvin, 2018; Brazil: Riccio et al., 2013; Australia: Fleming and O’Reilly, 2007), often at the expense of deeper, more fundamental studies of what it means to be police in a particular place (with important exceptions e.g. Bosnia and Herzegovina: Blaustein, 2015; Brazil: Denyer Willis, 2015; the Caribbean: Bowling, 2010; South Africa: Faull, 2017; Vietnam: Jardine, 2020). At the same time, the lack of grounded exploration of policing in particular Southern contexts makes it difficult to counter the assumption that the Northern paradigm is universally applicable. All these issues feed into one another and ultimately serve to uphold a Northern-centric production of knowledge that contributes to the invisibilisation of Southern peoples, issues and experiences, as well as the wasting of public funds in reforms that either accomplish little or do not work as expected.

The exploration presented in this thesis thus responds to the call for the production of grounded knowledge as a means to challenge Eurocentric understandings of Southern contexts. Quijano (2000) suggests that this is an important strategy to tackle what he calls the Latin American state of “permanent dissociation” (Quijano, 2000), a concept that refers to the urge to “understand and enact [the Latin American] experience (...) from a Eurocentric perspective”,

even though it “is and always has been unable to catch, even to grasp [Latin American] originality and specificity” (2000:215). By providing a study that was born from the concerns and experiences of police officers in the field, this thesis expands our knowledge of policing in the South and takes up intellectual space that could have otherwise been occupied by a contextless transposition of Eurocentric perspectives.

An important point to keep in mind, though, is that Latin America is not free from Northern influence. To address this point, Quijano (2000) speaks of the ‘distorting mirror of Eurocentric knowledge’, which refers to the fact that “we have so many important European intersubjective traits in so many basic respects” (2000:222) that, if we approach the Latin American context through the mirror of Eurocentric knowledge, the image presented, while not entirely untrue, will inevitably be a distortion. The present study aims at tackling the problem of the Eurocentric mirror by placing the CNP and its particularities at the very centre of the discussions, while also recognising the role that Northern traits and trends have had in shaping and influencing the makeup of the force. The ultimate aim of using Southern theory for the study of the CNP is to highlight the wider power dynamics that have seen the implementation of a particular social order in Colombia, and to analyse the way in which the historical construction and modern-day practice of police are geared toward the protection of this colonial-inherited system. I will further develop the concept of order in the section below.

Conceptual Layers of Order

Order, as shaped by coloniality

The current state of globalisation, suggests Quijano (2000), is “the culmination of a process that began with the constitution of America and colonial/modern Eurocentered capitalism as a new global power” (Quijano, 2000:215). The relationship between the so-called New World and Europe was based on stark (military) power differentials, thus allowing for the consolidation of a global social hierarchy that saw the former subjugated to the latter. The New World was deemed uncivilised and savage while Europe was the civilising force that would bring development to these newly invaded territories (Quijano, 2000:221). This global order was enacted through local practices such as urbanisation. Founding European-style cities in the newly invaded territories was an important project, given that, amongst other benefits, it

allowed the invaders to concentrate and control the native peoples (Gutiérrez Rocha, 2014), imposing a new matrix of social order built on “hierarchical structures of race, gender, heteropatriarchy, and class” (Walsh, 2018:17). The city was a space designed to enclose people (literally and figuratively), allocate them a place in the socio-political hierarchy, and thus perpetuate the coloniser-colonised power relation (Robledo Gómez and Rodríguez Santana, 2008:27). The urban order which police aim to enforce was and remains one based on inequalities.

The social order that was established at that time remains alive to this day: global relations between so called developed and developing countries operate under the premise that the former are more civilised than the latter, and much has been written by scholars and practitioners about these differences using terminology such as “poor/rich, backward/advanced, underdeveloped/developed, undeveloped/developed, North/South, late-comers/pioneers, Third World/First World, and developing/industrialized” (Nielsen, 2013:1089). These global dynamics of inequality are also reproduced at the local level through practices that enforce a social order that keeps racialised, economically deprived, and female (or gender non-conforming) people marginalised (Gutiérrez Rocha, 2014; Lugones, 2007; Mosquera Rosero-Labbé and León Díaz, 2013). The endurance of these colonial-inherited structures is referred to as coloniality: the “long-standing patterns of power that emerged as a result of colonialism, but that define culture, labor, intersubjective relations, and knowledge production well beyond the strict limits of colonial administrations. Thus, coloniality survives colonialism” (Maldonado-Torres, 2007:243). When we talk about social order, then, it is important to keep in mind that the role of the police is not to uphold a set of objective and fair rules which have been agreed upon by The People as part of the proverbial social contract. The police’s role as protectors of social order is to uphold a “legal system that, despite its promises of equal treatment, systematically reproduces inequality” (Silbey, 2005:323).

Legal and institutional conceptualisations of public order in Colombia

The notion of social order as discussed above materialises in the Colombian legal context in the following way. Conceptualised at three levels, public order refers to: 1) citizen security, 2) political stability of the constitutional democracy, and 3) sovereignty of the nation-state (Libreros, 2001:205–6). Each of these levels of public order is governed by a specific normative body and each is meant to regulate different aspects that contribute to the overall

peace of the nation (see Figure 3). The police have an active role in the keeping of public order as defined in levels 1 and 2: citizen security and internal political stability, respectively (the third level does not, at least in theory, concern the police).

Level	Concern	Normative body
1 Citizen security	Life, tranquility and patrimony of citizens.	Police Code
2. Internal political stability	Political stability of the constitutional democracy.	Law of Public Order
3. National threat	State sovereignty.	Decree of Internal Emergency

Figure 3: Public order (based on the work of Libreros, 2001:202–3)

Despite the fact that both citizen security and internal political stability are officially regarded as matters of public order, for officers the term public security is almost exclusively associated to matters of internal political stability. Public order in the context of the CNP, thus, usually refers to police work carried out in specific geographical areas designated as ‘public order areas’ (i.e. areas where state-sanctioned order is largely absent or seriously threatened) and for cases that may threaten social order on a large scale (e.g. a protest that turns violent). These threats to state-mandated order are perceived as serious enough to compromise the political stability of the nation, and the police are used to (*re-*)*establish* control of places where state-sanctioned order is largely absent (for example, in areas of weak state presence such as guerrilla-, paramilitary- or gang-controlled territories). Issues of public order as related to citizen security are referred to by the CNP as matters of citizen coexistence or citizen security measures (Ruiz Vásquez, 2009:97). The work that police officers do in this area is based on the assumption that “they are society’s best defense against crime” (Bayley, 1994:3), and thus capable of protecting people from law-breakers that refuse to operate within the parameters of state-mandated social order. Throughout the thesis we will challenge this assumption and question whether the social order that police uphold truly serves to protect the “life, tranquility and patrimony of citizens” (Libreros, 2001:205).

The Conceptual Boundaries of ‘Police’, Past and Present

Finally, it is worth making some clarifications about the concept ‘police’ and its study. When it comes to the definition of conceptual boundaries in the study of police, Neocleous’ (2000; 2006; 2014) work is of central importance to this thesis. Neocleous separates himself from both criminologists and Foucauldian social scientists because, he argues, both of these groups have shown a lack of attention to conceptual refinement: criminologists have mostly focused on studying police forces, taking for granted the term and “eschew[ing] any attempt to make sense of the concept [of police] itself” (Neocleous, 2000:ix); Foucauldians, on the other hand, have cast the net so wide that ‘police’ becomes “one more synonym for ‘power’, ‘discipline’ and ‘governmentality’” (Neocleous, 2000:ix), to the extent that police institutions are neglected as a focus of attention. Neocleous, instead, explores the police corps—that is, the institution—and its role in the maintenance of state-mandated order (like criminologists would) but does not abide by the presentist boundaries set by this definition. Instead, he makes a point of studying the pre-institutional history of police, not as part of the all-encompassing concept of ‘power’ (like a Foucauldian scholar might), but as a project that was—and remains—concerned with the administration of the nation, and the way in which it developed throughout time. Following Neocleous, I will approach the CNP as a subject of study that encompasses both the institutional body as it currently operates and the pre-institutional project from which it emerged. In other words, I will study both the process of institutionalisation (as it emerged from the historical process of establishing order) as well as institutional development (as it unfolded once the institution was consolidated).

It is worth briefly expanding on the reasons why the exploration of the pre-institutional conceptualisation of police is not an effort in foucauldian genealogy (Foucault, 1987). A genealogy would likely explore policing as it is conducted through a wide web of interconnected institutions, practices and policies which are aimed at the governance, indoctrination and disciplining of the people in order to protect the status quo.⁸ In this sense the police corps, the institution, is only one part of that machinery: all that is police is policing, but not all that is policing is police, and policing would be the natural focus of such an analysis. The focus of this thesis, on the other hand, is police, not policing in its various expressions. For this reason, Neocleous’ approach to the delineation of conceptual boundaries for the study of

⁸ See, e.g. Marchetti’s (2015:211) explanation of what a genealogy entails.

police, as described above, more clearly reflects the approach chosen for the development of this thesis.

CHAPTER 4

Methodology

A Multi-Disciplinary Approach: Complementing Data From the Present with Historical Analyses

The present research can be characterised as a case study, in that it presents an in-depth exploration of a complex subject of study—the police in Colombia—and the way in which it interacts with its contextual environment (Yin, 2013:321). To arrive at a deep understanding of the subject at hand, I collected empirical, qualitative data from police officers in Bogotá in an attempt to understand daily police practice and officers’ perceptions of their professional role. However, it soon became apparent that it was not possible to analyse this primary data in its institutional context because there was not enough information on the history of that institutional context to develop robust arguments. For this reason, this study transcended its original fieldwork emphasis, by following up on the analytical questions raised by the empirical data. The result is a case study that places the analysis of police practice in Bogotá in a wider context of historical processes of institutionalisation and organisational development.

The production of this type of research was made possible do to the fact that criminology is, at its core, a multi-disciplinary field of study. Drawing from a variety of research traditions is “one of the hallmarks of criminology as a field of knowledge production” (Doyle et al., 2011:293). Its disciplinary boundaries are kept remarkably porous by the constant practice of borrowing from other corners of academia in order to enrich criminological perspectives,

which results in an “eclectic, multidisciplinary enterprise” (Garland, 1997:19). It is common to see sociological, psychological, anthropological and even neurological perspectives in criminological analyses; however, historical approaches to criminology remain relatively unpopular. A number of decades ago, Pratt (1996) noted that, when discussing criminological topics, scholars often overlook the fact that these issues are the product of their historical trajectory and “even where this is acknowledged, it can be nothing more than background information, prior to the real body of debate and discussion” (Pratt, 1996:61). More recently, Lawrence (2019) has provided an update on the status of historical criminology, noting that it is still under-researched, particularly when it comes to what he calls ‘long time-frame historical criminology’ (Lawrence, 2019). The importance of this kind of criminology—which requires the study of evidence from at least a few centuries—rests on its capacity to “provide an enhanced understanding of the utility of the past in explaining the present” (2019:500). Two of the key benefits of this approach, according to Lawrence, are, first, that it allows us to identify historical persistence/continuity in a way that cannot truly be achieved by “identifying parallels or similarities between slices of historical time” (2019:500); and, second, it promotes a clearer understanding of historical change and its role in the production of the present. Historical criminology, thus, has valuable and largely untapped potential which can significantly enrich our understanding of criminological issues.

In the case of the subject of the present thesis, the implementation of such an approach is both overdue and vital. To date, most the (small number of) works that have discussed the long time-frame history of the Colombian police force have adopted the narrative offered by one seminal study from the 1940s (Castaño Castillo, 1947). This study has significant faults, amongst them the fact that it presents analyses based on an inattentive reading of the primary evidence, as we shall see in Chapter 5. Taking this into account, it is imperative that this inherited narrative is carefully revised, corrected and expanded, so that future reflections on the history of the police can build on a more rigorous foundation. In addition to this, as we shall see throughout Chapters 5 and 6, the current corpus of literature on the history of the Colombian Police is not rich enough to allow us to trace the long-term development of the institution. This issue, in turn, makes it very difficult (if not impossible) to identify historical continuity and change in the CNP and the drivers of institutional development—information that could be vital, for example, to design policy aimed at reforming the police (with non-reformist reforms—which I shall explain later—to tackle e.g. excessive militarisation), or to understand the origins of particular institutional traits (e.g. deeply-ingrained misogyny). The following sections will give

account of the historical and empirical, qualitative methods that underpin this ‘long time-frame historical research’ of the police in Colombia.

Empirical, Qualitative Data

Selecting the context

Bogotá is, by far,⁹ the largest city in Colombia. As such, a study of policing in Bogotá has the potential to tell us a lot about policing in urban contexts in this country. When choosing a locality of the city in which to carry out the research, demographics were an important consideration. I chose the Andes¹⁰ locality, which has a high concentration¹¹ of population living in socio-economic strata¹² 3 and 4, because these strata combined¹³ represent 43.8% of the population of Bogotá (Secretaría Distrital de Planeación, 2015a:29, my own calculations).¹⁴ In this sense, the study was carried out in a police station with a jurisdiction covering a representative sector of the population. There is one detail about the Colombian National Police worth noting here: officers are often rotated from one place to another. This means that, despite the fact that the data collected corresponds to a single police station in Bogotá, the experiences and practice are not all attached to the Andes station. This was of great value to the study, given that officers were able to offer accounts of what it is like to work in war-torn rural areas, high-crime neighbourhoods, cities with strong mafia and criminal organisation presence, etc.

⁹ Bogotá has 7.1 million inhabitants; the cities that follow are Medellín with 2.3 million (DANE, 2018b) and Cali with 1.8 million (DANE, 2018c).

¹⁰ The name of the locality has been changed to better protect the identity of interviewees.

¹¹ I will not disclose the exact percentage of people living in S3 and S4 in the Andes locality because this data would make the locality (and, therefore, the police station) identifiable. ‘High concentration’ should be taken to mean over 60%.

¹² In order to allocate subsidies to the lower income population, all immovable property and its surrounding area is assigned a stratum, from one to six (Secretaría Distrital de Planeación de Bogotá, 2015b). This system was implemented because tracking household income is too burdensome and requires constant adjustment, whereas classifying immovable property is a more stable and easier way of deciding how to allocate subsidies (Secretaría Distrital de Planeación de Bogotá, 2015). The classification is as follows: Lower-low (Stratum 1), Low (Stratum 2), Upper-low (Stratum 3), Middle (Stratum 4), Middle-high (Stratum 5), and High (Stratum 6) (*Ley 142 de 11 de Julio de 1994*, 1994 Article 102). People that live in higher stratum property pay higher prices for services like water and electricity, while the services for people living in lower strata are subsidised. This stratification has moved beyond the purpose of allocating subsidies, and it has become a strong indicator of people’s socioeconomic characteristics and “although strata are not a direct reflection of social class, they provide useful information beyond income measures” (Bushnell and Hudson, 2010:102).

¹³ The percentage of people living in socioeconomic strata 3 and 4 are 36.0% and 7.8% respectively.

¹⁴ Another possible strategy would have been to choose a locality with a high concentration of S2 residents, given that they account for 41.3% of the citizens of Bogotá (Secretaría Distrital de Planeación, 2015a:29, my own calculations). There were some localities with a high concentration of S2 population, yet these localities also had very high rates of violence, especially homicides and assaults, which presented undue risks for me as a researcher.

Finally, the fact that I was born and raised in Bogotá, meant that I was well-positioned to navigate the city and understand contextual issues that would have been more difficult for outsiders to grasp, which was a benefit of selecting this context for the study.

Collected data

Fieldwork for the present study was conducted over a three-month period from January through March of 2016. According to official data, the police force was comprised at this time of 157,962 officers¹⁵ (Policía Nacional, 2018a), 8.7% of them women (Policía Nacional, 2018a, own calculations). The fieldwork sought to explore the work of street officers (specialised task forces and other police specialisms were not the focus of the fieldwork) at the Andes police station. I collected qualitative data—through semi-structured interviews, observations and informal interactions—from a non-probabilistic, convenience sample of roughly¹⁶ 10% of the officers (22 interviews and 6 salient¹⁷ interactions) in this police station. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 22 police officers from the Andes Station, three women and 19 men¹⁸, before or after their work shifts. The years of experience of the interviewees ranged from 22 to 1, with an average of 10.5 (see Appendix 1, Participants Chart). All but one¹⁹ of the interviewees were at the time assigned to street patrolling or had been in the past. The interview participants were chosen through convenience sampling.

The CNP categorises its personnel according to seven different groupings (see Appendix 5): officials, sub-officials, executive level, agents, auxiliary personnel, students, and non-uniformed personnel. As the present study focuses on uniformed²⁰ personnel, only the first four ranks are relevant to my analysis. At the time of the study, sub-officials comprised 0.19% of

¹⁵ There is a discrepancy in the historical statistical series of the police's personnel presented by in 2018 (Policía Nacional, 2018a). In the 'Summary 2009-2017' section, it is stated that the total number of professional, uniformed members of the police is 152,474. In the 'Men and Women 2010-2017' section the number of professional, uniformed women is 13,750 and 144,212 men, which adds up to a total of 157,962 (Policía Nacional, 2018a). There is no obvious explanation for the discrepancy in the series themselves or in the methodological document (Policía Nacional, 2018b). I carried out my calculations assuming that the total number of professional, uniformed personnel is the sum of the two 'sexes' (Policía Nacional, 2018b:17 indicates the only possibilities for the variable 'sex' are feminine and masculine), i.e. 157,962.

¹⁶ The exact percentage will not be disclosed, as this would make the police station identifiable.

¹⁷ Where 'salient' means conversations that went beyond pleasantries, or observations that covered complete interactions of police and citizens or between officers.

¹⁸ All of the interviews were recorded and are available for inspection upon request.

¹⁹ One of the interviewees had not worked specifically in street patrol but had been a commander's driver since he left the academy.

²⁰ Non-uniformed personnel are those people who, although part of the institution, are not officers, such as professional and technical advisers.

the total professional, uniformed personnel, executive level officers 94.0%, officials 4.7%, and agents 1.0%. In an attempt to gather information corresponding to the most common type of police officer, 20 out of the 22 interviewees belong to the executive level (13 patrulleros, 6 intendentes, 1 subintendente). Additionally, one sub-official (sargento) and one official (mayor)²¹ were also interviewed. At the time of the study, the percentage of women in the Andes police was close²² to the nation-wide trend: 8.7% (Policía Nacional, 2018a, my calculations). At the Andes station, I interviewed three female officers;²³ carried out observations of another three female officers; and interacted informally on several occasions with one female sergeant. Overall, I was able to collect data from a non-probabilistic convenience sample of roughly²⁴ 30% of the women assigned to the station at the time of the study.

The fieldwork was intended as an exploratory exercise. The interview schedules were semi-structured and dealt broadly with the work life of police officers and were grouped in eight broad themes: warm-up questions; job motivation; situation management; justification/relevance of their job; tasks and responsibilities; personal characteristics of officers; general feelings about the institution; how to improve the institution (for full schedule see Appendix 2). I also carried out approximately 32 hours of ride-alongs and 20 hours of observation at the police station, as well as observation of one training seminar for officers newly transferred to Bogotá.²⁵ Ride-alongs were only carried out with commanders²⁶ (all of them mayores) belonging to the ‘officials’ category as this was a responsibility that commanders were not willing to pass on to other officers. However, throughout the shift there were constant interactions between the commander and the rest of the officers working on the streets, which gave me ample opportunity to observe beat officers at work. Observations were usually carried out before and after interviews or ride-alongs. During these times I had the opportunity to both observe interactions between officers and to interact informally with them. Notes were written on site in a notebook and were transcribed after each shift.

²¹ Not to be confused with the English word ‘mayor’, which refers to an elected member of government. *Mayor* is akin to the military rank ‘Major’.

²² The exact percentage will not be disclosed, as this would make the police station identifiable. Under 10% of the officers in the station were women.

²³ Two of these interviews were shorter than the average. Nevertheless, the participants relayed rich personal information and insightful critical opinions, which makes their responses informative and invaluable.

²⁴ The exact percentage will not be disclosed, as this would make the police station identifiable

²⁵ In this seminar there were 5 women and approximately 52 men.

²⁶ Commander is a general term used to describe officers of a higher rank who have personnel at their command—in this case, it is used to refer to the shift commanders, each in charge of one of the three daily shifts.

Data analysis

In order to manage my research data I used Scrivener, a writing software designed to handle lengthy pieces of work. The process of analysis began with a reading of all transcripts and field notes, accompanied by a round of open coding (Corbin and Strauss, 2015). Whenever the constant comparison of instances (quotes) rendered some substantive or theoretical ideas, I wrote memos further discussing the characteristics of each code and suggesting how these could be developed into more complex concepts and categories. As categories grew in depth and complexity, key themes began to emerge. It became apparent that the coding had resulted in both data reduction (Corbin and Strauss, 2015:75; Glaser and Strauss, 1967) and, more importantly, data complication (Coffey and Atkinson, 1996:29). For example, the fieldwork data I had collected about female police officers suggested a deep disparity in the treatment of men and women in the institution, yet this data did not itself help to clarify how such a power configuration emerged and consolidated in the police force, and the findings were therefore difficult to place within the context of the institution's historical development. For this reason—in tandem with the fact that there have been very few studies of the role of women in the Colombian police—it became clear that a historical investigation of this topic would be necessary. This example illustrates how the analytical strategy I used to process my fieldwork data managed “not to simplify the data, but to open them up in order to interrogate them further, (...) [in a process that required] going beyond the data, thinking creatively with the data, asking the data questions, and generating theories and frameworks” (Coffey and Atkinson, 1996:30). The resulting study therefore integrates a variety of methods and data that goes beyond the interviews, observations and ride-alongs that were carried out during fieldwork.

The subject of this study concerns a Spanish-speaking context. All of the empirical data collected in the field was recorded and transcribed in Spanish, and I translated into English the necessary excerpts and quotes that are included in this thesis. Similarly, I have translated all of the passages from Spanish-language documents (books, articles, reports) that are quoted throughout the thesis. All police ranks will be kept in their original Spanish for clarity. The word ‘mayor’ when italicised refers to the police rank not to the City Mayor, which will not be italicised. When I refer to the Andes locality, or simply ‘the locality’, I mean the territorial jurisdiction that is covered by the Andes Police Station. All place names from the fieldwork have been given a pseudonym, so as to preserve the anonymity of the respondents.

Fieldwork as embodied work

As Gilbert (2000:9) and several other scholars have argued, the nature of qualitative research is such that researchers are predisposed to engaging at both an intellectual and an emotional level with the process of data collection. The everyday reality of fieldwork requires us to interact with respondents and bond with them in a way that makes it difficult—if not impossible—not to engage personally and emotionally with the research. In this sense, the work we do is embodied: it is produced by a person who carries their own personal history and worldview; a body equipped with its own emotions, past experience, trauma and a life outside of the field. Dickson-Swift et al. (2009) suggest that “if we acknowledge that qualitative research is an embodied experience that requires some level of emotion work then we need to think about how we actually do emotion work and what that might mean” (Dickson-Swift et al., 2009:62). Taking these considerations into account, Diphoorn invites us to “understand the dialectic between emotions and method” (2012:222), an exercise that can help clarify how our experience as active participants in the research process models our fieldwork and analyses.

The relationship between researcher and research participant is shaped, like every other interaction, by issues of dominance: power is in constant negotiation in every interaction (Riley et al. 2003). The substance of power can often be found in identity components such as race and ethnicity, class and age—these aspects mediate relationships and the way we interact with one another. My positionalities as a researcher with light skin who comes from a privileged socio-economic background certainly afford me an advantageous place in the scale of social power. However, these aspects of my identity were often offset in the field by the (mostly male) participants’ professional identity, whose power as enforcers of law and order—and their guns—place them above lay citizens. In this context, a question anticipated by Gelsthorpe (1990:92) and posed by Huggins and Glebeek becomes relevant: “is [the] strategy [of reducing power differentials] practicable, productive or safe in women’s research on men?” (Huggins and Glebeek, 2003:364). In my case, I would argue, it was not.

Diphoorn notes that “although gender influences any research, it weighs heavier when researching police institutions due to inherent masculinities exerted through a male-dominated environment” (2012:206), an observation that I found to be applicable to my experience. My being a young woman often placed me in a position of subordination in my relationship with

officers and gave rise to problematic interactions. With prolonged periods of contact, officers became more comfortable with my presence and unwanted romantic attention ensued. This type of behaviour has been registered by other scholars such as Glebeek (Huggins and Glebeek, 2003:371) who was also on the receiving end of romantic proposals while researching the police in Guatemala. Like Glebeek, I too had to ask somewhat personal questions to the officers as part of my research, and this was often misconstrued as extra-professional interest in participants. I attempted to ‘manage the self’ (Shaffir et al., 1980, as referenced by Dickson-Swift et al., 2009:69) by trying to control and moderate the display of feelings (physical or emotional) that I felt would curb my professional persona as a researcher (Dickson-Swift et al., 2009:68). I thus battled the urge to stand up for myself because I suspected that this would seriously affect my rapport with officers and, as a consequence, my research.

Efforts to manage my reactions and behaviours in the field did not improve the situation and I continued to feel uncomfortable and unsafe, particularly in ride-alongs. Ride-alongs consisted of lengthy shifts during which time I would ride in the back of a police car with two armed officers in the front. The back of the car was known as the ‘cage’. Designed for holding suspects, it was quite literally a cage: four metal grid fences covered the windows on either side, on the back, and the partition that separated the front seats from the back. The inside of the cage was completely bare. There were no door handles, no buttons to operate the windows, nothing to divert from its purpose: to fully contain and incapacitate the person inside. I found myself locked in the cage, for several hours at a time, fully dependent on two armed men to free me from containment. As a survivor of gender-based violence it was particularly difficult to bond with armed men who had a significant amount of physical control over me. These conditions were the source of much distress and resulted in post-traumatic stress disorder that manifested during the period of my fieldwork. Ride-alongs therefore involved an unsustainable amount of emotion work, which eventually led me to abandoning them altogether as a method of data collection and focusing on interviews.

My subordinate position was not immovable. As noted by Finlay, “the system is not fixed, nor is the position of the researcher, given the diverse, even conflicting, positions which emerge through interaction” (Finlay, 1998 as referenced by Finlay, 2002:222). In contrast to the relatively disempowered position I experienced in ride-alongs, interviews provided me with a higher degree of agency, mainly because I could choose the place of the interaction and had

the power to steer the conversation toward my preferred subjects. Officers' professional position of authority was thus more equitably balanced with my power as an interviewer.²⁷ Different interactions, situations and interpersonal relations produce varying power dynamics and so I favoured the method that placed me on an equal footing with police officers.

The academic concept of reflexivity is meant to be “a confessional account of methodology” aimed at “examining one’s own personal, possibly unconscious, reactions” (Finlay, 2002:224). The goal is to seek what Chramaz (2017) calls ‘methodological self-consciousness’, which allows us to clarify how our embodied experience affects the research. The personal difficulties I experienced during fieldwork prompted me to change my initial data collection strategy and eventually led to the expansion of my methodological choices to include the analysis of a wide variety of secondary sources to complement the fieldwork data. Despite the setbacks encountered, the suspension of some of the methods that were detrimental for my wellbeing led me to explore other research avenues, and ultimately resulted in the production of valuable foundational knowledge about the process of institutionalisation and history of the Colombian police. The interpersonal relations and power dynamics that unfolded in the field therefore played a significant role in shaping this study and, I believe, ended up enriching it with important analytical dimensions that were not included in the original research plan.

Historical Data

For this thesis I use a variety of primary historical texts: legislation; dictionaries; the *Revista de Policía* (Police Magazine which contains issues from as early as 1912);²⁸ and other writings from the seventeenth-, eighteenth, and nineteenth-century. In order to trace the development of the term *policía*, I analyse its use as suggested in seventeenth-century dictionaries and other types of texts of the time. This practice is known as definition by typical exemplar, and it consists of defining a word by “situat[ing] it in a system of wider relations through which the

²⁷ It is important to note that, after the fieldwork period, I organised the data, produced analyses and created narratives. In this sense, the balance of power had a dramatic shift given that I had full control over officers' accounts and the way they were deployed.

²⁸ There are certain periods for which the Police Magazine is not available electronically (for example, for the 1977 and the years shortly after, which coincides with the first group of women being admitted to the police academy). For this reason, I have had to rely on the events as narrated in two secondary writings, one by the CNP (*Policía Nacional*, 2014), and a text by García Fernández (2017a). It is evident that the authors of both texts had access to the primary sources, which is why I have no reason to believe there are inaccuracies in the key facts in them. However, I have avoided deriving any in-depth analyses from these secondary sources, given that they present an edited, partial narrative which is in no way an adequate equivalent to the primary sources.

specificity of the definiendum can be seen” (Riemer, 2012:65). The study of the development of the word *policía* which I present in Chapter 5 falls within the category of historical (or ‘diachronic’) linguistics, which is the study of language change over time (Campbell, 1998:4).

I also conduct a lexical analysis (the study of “change in the meaning of individual words” (Campbell, 1998:256) of the 33 volumes of the compendium *Codificación Nacional de Todas las Leyes de Colombia Desde el Año de 1821, 1924–1953* which contain all of the Colombian laws from 1821 (two years after independence) until 1883 (eight years before the legal foundation of the national police), in order to trace the legal history of the term *policía*. This exercise stands at the intersection between legal history and semantics. Using digitised, searchable editions of these volumes, I was able to conduct a word-search to find all instances of ‘*policía*’. This allowed for a comprehensive review of the instances in which *policía* was mentioned, a task that has not been undertaken before. All instances of the term were compiled in a spreadsheet, along with any necessary specifications to understand their meaning in the context of the law.²⁹ The process of analysis was the same used for the qualitative data, as described above.

Caveats

When Santos writes about Epistemologies of the South and Sociology of Absences (2012, 2014, 2016) he suggests that it is important to fill in the epistemological gaps that have been left by the neglect of non-hegemonic knowledge (Santos, 2016:21). It is my hope that this thesis will contribute to this effort by shedding some light on the neglected topic of policing in Colombia, and by doing so in a way that foregrounds the particularities of the complex social, institutional and historical context in which it takes place. However, it is important to highlight some key gaps that are left unaddressed in this study.

While this study dedicates some space to gender questions, the discussion has been shaped by the institutional definition of gender as a binary of ‘male’ and ‘female’. On the one hand, there is value—at least at this initial, exploratory stage—in adopting the institutional definition of

²⁹ It is worth noting that there are a few problems with this digital compilation: it is missing at least one decree (*Decreto de 22 de Diciembre de 1827 Sobre Policía General*) and, furthermore, the word search does not recognise words that have been split in two lines, which means that my list of all the instances of the word ‘*policía*’ is possibly missing some instances.

gender (or ‘sex’ as they call it in their database), in order to map out power relations between officers as stemming from their institutional classification as male or female. On the other hand, this approach erases the identity of people who may not identify with the established binary, and it misrepresents them by boxing them within these categories. Furthermore, the present study does not engage with the fact that there is a multitude of femininities and masculinities (Connell, 1987), an exploration that has the potential to render much more nuance even within the confines of ‘male’ and ‘female’ notions. In this sense, I hope that this exploratory study of the role of women in the police is followed by more detailed studies about gender in the CNP including an exploration of multiple femininities and masculinities; adopting a wider definition of gender; and amplifying the voices that have been left out of this study: those of LGBTQ+ officers.

The present study also addresses the issue of class and race, especially as it influences officers’ practice. I present some analyses of the way in which people who find themselves in a position of economic disadvantage and vulnerability are further disenfranchised by various forms of policing. The voices that are missing from this thesis, however, are those of the people who are affected by this discrimination. A study that explores how the police’s actions are perceived and experienced by these citizens would be invaluable and such a study is necessary if we wish to understand the type of social order that police enforce as well as the nature of police power.

Police officers in Colombia are transferred every few years to different stations within their region, or to other parts of the country. This means that the divide between policing in urban areas and rural areas is not as absolute as it might otherwise be. Nevertheless, it is important to foreground the fact that the empirical information collected for this study is from Bogotá. Even though several of the police officers interviewed had worked in rural contexts, it would be irresponsible to assume that the picture painted by this study is representative of policing in rural Colombia. It is important to bear in mind that the Global South is not an absolute demarcation of a geographical space—as noted before, there is North within the South and South within the North (Santos, 2016:19). In Colombia—which, for the purpose of this study is regarded as a Southern context—there are areas which are ‘more Southern’ than others: rural Colombia is more marginalised and more silenced than, for instance, Bogotá. Some attention has been dedicated to officers’ accounts about policing in rural areas as they experienced it in the past. However, it is important to produce more current studies on how policing is taking place now-a-days in rural contexts.

As evidenced by the aspects brought up in this section, there are several gaps that still need to be addressed and voices that should be amplified in order to develop a richer picture of the police in Colombia. The more these absences are brought into the picture, the better we will be able to understand Southern experiences and phenomena. The more grounded these understandings, the higher the chances that this knowledge can serve as “the epistemological basis of [much needed] emancipatory practices” (Santos, 2007:32).

CHAPTER 5

Civilising a Nation

The Historical Conceptualisation of *‘Policía’*

Introduction

Before it became associated with an institutional body, the word ‘police’—along with equivalent words in other languages: French *police*, Spanish *policía*, etc.—signified something rather different. In the early modern period, these terms referred not to a body but to a cluster of more abstract notions: among them the concept of civilisation and socio-cultural advancement, and the duties associated with governance, such as the maintenance of social order and the provision of public amenities. Over the course of the eighteenth, nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the term *policía* underwent a process of semantic development, not only in Colombia but also in the rest of the Spanish-speaking world, in Europe and in Anglo America, before it settled on its current meaning. Modern police corps, such as the CNP, have thus inherited their role in maintaining socio-political order from a conceptual tradition that had originally encompassed a much broader lexical terrain—and although the contemporary institution has shed many of these early associations and ideas, the history of the Colombian police force has been shaped profoundly by the earlier meaning of *policía*.

In this chapter, I will draw attention to the semantic development of the concept of *policía*. This, in turn, will allow me to trace the origin of the CNP as it gradually consolidated itself in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. With this in mind, the aim of the present chapter is **to identify the different ways in which the concept of *policía* was deployed throughout time to establish and maintain social order**, and to **draw on this semantically-sensitive understanding to identify the proto-police bodies and occupations that preceded the Colombian police corps**. In doing so, it will tackle two misconceptions that have clouded the historiography of the Colombian police to date, the first in relation to widespread misreading of the meaning of the term *policía* in nineteenth-century legal sources, the second in relation to the traditional foundation date of the Colombian police force. It will also show that the pre-institutional history of the police was “[not] a defective prologue to the modern police” (Rawlings, 2008:47), but an important process of conceptualisation and refinement that tells us much about the spirit that informed the creation of the modern police corps. These analyses will complement the work of Martínez (1996) who has been one of the few (perhaps the only) scholars that have so far addressed this early stage of the police in Colombia as a project grounded on the civilisation advanced by the state and the imposition of a Northern, European model of social order.

Finally, the wider aim of this chapter, as it relates to the rest of the thesis, is to explore the close connection between police and the organisation of society by demonstrating that, even before *policía* was conceptually associated to the modern-day institution, it already fulfilled an important role in the organisation, unification and conservation of state power. I will continue in Chapter 6 to draw on the semantic and conceptual analyses that I will develop throughout this chapter in order to shed light on change and continuity in police and policing practice in Colombia.

Overview of the Scholarship

International context

Criminologists who have explored the ‘origins’ and ‘pre-institutional history’ of the police in Northern contexts, have not generally wrestled with the terminological and conceptual dimension of police/*policía*. Instead, they have been apt to take as a starting point the modern

role played by the police and to search for positions and bodies that fulfilled similar roles in previous centuries. Several authors, for instance, devote some time to discussing constables, watchmen, deputies and justices of peace (Beattie, 2001; Emsley, 1991; Rawlings 2008; Monkkonen, 1992) as the tasks carried out by these figures were similar to those entrusted to the modern-day police officer, and so they are regarded as a type of predecessor to the police officer. In tracing “the origins of the police system”, the foundational work of Critchley (1919) goes as far back as the Anglo-Saxons, claiming that “the nearest equivalent to the modern policeman is the Saxon tythingman” (1919:1). In a similar vein, Auten (1981) considers those ‘police organisations’ that were in charge of “order maintenance and the protection of the property”, which he identifies going as far back as 27 BC in Augustan Rome as well as in ancient China and Egypt. Taking a slightly different approach, Zedner (2006) does not endeavour to identify older versions of modern-day officers, but instead seeks to find the roots of modern ‘policing’. Despite this key difference in focus, Zedner too takes fairly modern forms of policing and then proceeds to identify “by the ruse of historical juxtaposition (...) their eighteenth-century antecedents” (2006:83).

Identifying the roots of the modern police in those bodies or individuals that have fulfilled similar roles in the past is, of course, an important endeavour: it allows us to connect the past and the present of police and policing practice. However, I would argue that scholars have not lent sufficient attention to the linguistic development of the term *police/policía* and the role that it has played in the process of institutional consolidation of the modern police corps. For example, important works on the history of policing such as Reiner (2010:5), Zedner (2006:82-83) and Rawlings (2008:5) all dedicate a paragraph to acknowledging that the word ‘police’ had a different, much wider meaning before the eighteenth century, but they do not discuss in detail the conceptual and linguistic development that led us to the current definition of police.

Historians, on the other hand, have dedicated more attention to this issue. By focusing on the theme of social order, they have been able to delineate a more cohesive history of the concept of ‘police’. Axtmann (1992), for instance, grounds his exploration of police history in a thorough understanding of the early modern conceptual landscape: he explains how the term ‘police’, before the 1700s, referred to the ‘responsibility for promoting public well-being’ (*cura promouendi salutes publicam*) but, its meaning gradually narrowed in scope until it referred to ‘the concern for averting ills to come’ (*cura auerrendi mala futura*) (Axtmann, 1992:48), a conceptualisation much closer to our current understanding of police and policing. This line of

inquiry does not study ‘police’ only to understand the roots of modern police corps, but instead studies it within the broader context of societal order and state development: before it referred to the institution in charge of security, ‘police’ referred to the responsibility to establish and maintain a healthy, happy nation. Pasquino (1991) highlights the relationship between police and social order in the following way:

The ‘science of police’ is only the culmination of a whole vast literature, today largely neglected, which traverses the whole of the modern period, accompanying and supporting the construction of the social order (...). This literature, or rather body of knowledge, of police, known in the eighteenth century as both ‘the science of happiness’ and ‘the science of government’, (...) constitutes society as the object of a knowledge and at the same time as the target of political intervention (Pasquino, 1991:108).

This conceptual world provides the context for the early development of police-as-an-institution. It is therefore worth bringing the work of these early modern historians to bear on criminological analysis of the police. Rather than picking out individual historical roles and bodies that bear a resemblance to modern-day policing practice, we can weave a much more coherent narrative by tracking the evolving conceptualisation of ‘police’. The latter approach not only allows us to study the process of institutional consolidation of police bodies, it also highlights the fact that the concept of police/*policía* has long been an important pillar in the organisation of society.

The value of integrating these approaches has been highlighted in recent years by a relatively small corpus of literature (see Lawrence, 2019). Perhaps the most important contribution is the work by Neocleous (2000; 2006; 2014) who has studied the role of the police in state-making and as a tool designed for order maintenance. He departs from a pre-institutional concept of ‘the police’, using a wider conceptualisation that allows him to trace the history of ‘police’, not as an institution but as an expression of state-mandated order. Dubblet and Valverde’s edited volume on police science (2006) is another key text in this strand of research. The authors bring together scholars from various disciplines and research traditions to provide studies on ‘police’ and the way in which its existence and historical development has aided the establishment of particular state structures. The volume explores the different meanings that ‘police’ has had throughout time and in different contexts, drawing unexpected connections between the

concept and varied ‘governing activities’. The analytical approach displayed in Dubbler and Valverde’s (2006) volume, as well as in Neocleous’ work (2000; 2006; 2014) conceptually places ‘police’ in a context that transcends the modern institutional boundaries of the term, and thus allows us to more fully understand the relationship between ‘police’ and social order before and beyond the institutional consolidation of police bodies.

However, the overwhelming majority (if not all) of this literature has come from Northern (European or Anglo-American) contexts. For this reason, an exploration of this type in a Southern context, Colombia, will provide further valuable insights. With these considerations in mind, I propose to address the conceptual evolution of the term *policía* in Colombia with a particular focus on how its various meanings relate to the establishment and maintenance of social order. I will thus address the question that has kept criminologists busy for many decades—“what are the origins of the police?”—taking as a point of departure a historical and linguistic exploration of its conceptual development. This analysis will provide a clearer historical foundation on which to ground the study of the process of institutional consolidation of the modern-day CNP. Such an endeavour is not only necessary but vital: the historical origins of the Colombian police have been very little studied and there are significant gaps and misconceptions in the published scholarship, as I shall discuss below.

Existing literature on the history of the Colombian police: gaps and issues

The history of the Colombian police, particularly of those years before the legal foundation of the institution in 1891, has not been thoroughly or carefully addressed. The first and most referred-to study on this subject is a book by Álvaro Castaño Castillo first published in 1947. In that work, Castaño Castillo developed a historical narrative grounded on a partial and, as we shall see, often imprecise reading of post-independence legislation. Nevertheless, because no in-depth studies of the pre-1891 police have been developed since, it has endured as a foundational work and has informed most of the literature on the history of the Colombian police to date (e.g. Becerra, 2010; Gilibert, 2002). Much of this more recent work on the history of the police has been authored by police officers or former police officers and has been content to echo institutional narratives of police history and to repeat the imprecise readings of Castaño Castillo (with a few exceptions: e.g. Martínez, 1998; Nieto, 1976). In this chapter and the next, I will address two misconceptions that have clouded the historiography of the Colombian police to date, the first in relation to the traditional foundation date of the force, the second in

relation to widespread misreading of the meaning of the term *policía* in nineteenth-century legal sources.

The first misconception relates to the prominent place given to 1891 as the ‘foundation’ date of the modern Colombian National Police (Policía Nacional, 2016a:17). This year has loomed large in the historiography of the institution, but, as has been noted by historians such as Hering Torres (2018:38), the Colombian National Police was not created lock, stock and barrel out of thin air in 1891: some important aspects of police in Colombia began before that year, and many important steps towards institutionalisation were not taken until many decades afterwards. As I shall argue in Chapter 6, the year 1891 represents one stage in a much longer process—the 1891 legal creation of the National Police was but one step in the process of institutional consolidation that had begun in the 1840s and which would not be entirely completed until the mid-1960s.

Secondly, the term *policía* and related terms such as jefe de *policía* have been read in an anachronistic manner by a number of scholars of the Colombian police. As I shall demonstrate, *policía* as used in early- to mid-nineteenth-century texts rarely referred to a police body, much less an institutionalised force; it was instead a term related to the general administration of a nation and the maintenance of civilisation. This nuance has not been recognised by the majority of those who have sought to tackle this subject, however. The almost all of the few scholars who have addressed the history of *policía* in Colombia in the pre-1891 period (Castaño Castillo, 1947; Becerra, 2010; Gilibert, 2002; Pulido Barrantes, 2005, 2012; Saldarriaga Vélez, 2012; and Blair Trujillo, 1993) have developed their analyses on the assumption that references to the term *policía* in early Colombian legal texts implies the existence of a body or institution. This assumption has led to misguided assertions about the development of police bodies in Colombia and the pre-history of the national police force.

The assumption that early-nineteenth-century references to *policía* imply the existence of police bodies of some kind has been a feature of modern historiography since Castaño Castillo’s influential study. He introduced his discussion of the origins of the CNP with the following statement:

Very few institutions were granted their own ruling statute. The policía [understood as an institution] was not amongst those few and, because of this,

the first efforts toward creating a police force are, as it were, hidden in some articles in the law of the 8 of October 1821, and of the 11 of March 1825 (Castaño Castillo, 1947:62).

Castaño Castillo, in other words, assumed that the term *policía* referred to an institution as far back as the 1820s. This misconception led him to conclude that the police force was not the subject of its own ruling statute in the early 1800s not because no such body existed but because very few institutions were given their own piece of legislation. This assumption allowed him to see the creation of a police force “hidden” in certain articles of legislation.

Although some have recognized since Castaño Castillo that *policía* is a thorny and complicated term (e.g. Martínez, 1996), most authors have nevertheless been happy to follow his basic suppositions, and the distinction between *policía* as referring to a body or institution and *policía* in the more abstract sense has not been generally acknowledged by scholars.³⁰ Rather the opposite, in fact: Pulido Barrantes (2012) has claimed that it is difficult to pinpoint the precise meaning of the concept of ‘*policía*’ as understood from 1719 to 1845 because “neither the government nor the society had a clear understanding of the real scope and meaning of the concept of police; which they easily mixed up with judicial, administrative or commercial activities” (Pulido Barrantes, 2012:60, added emphasis). Contrary to what he claims, I will demonstrate that the conceptual confusion regarding the definition of *policía* pre-1891 comes not from a lack of understanding on the part of the government or society of that time, but from modern authors’ anachronistic readings of historical material.

Of all the studies available on *policía* in Colombia in the pre-1891 period, the only ones that acknowledge a clear distinction between *policía* as a body or institution and *policía* as the general administration of a nation are: Acevedo Tarazona and Puentes Cala (2014) (which largely reproduces Puentes Cala (2013); Martínez (1996); Nieto (1976); and Hering Torres (2019). Acevedo Tarazona and Puentes Cala (2014) make the following clarification in a

³⁰ It is worth noting here that Elsa Blair Trujillo (1993) has argued that there were four models of police over the course of the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century; she identifies the first as a model “inherited from the Colonial period, [which] was closer to the Greek idea of having a body that could serve the ‘*armonía civilizadora de los ciudadanos*’ [civilizing harmony of citizens]” (Blair Trujillo, 1993:29, as quoted by Vargas Velásquez, 2006:184). What Blair Trujillo identifies as the ‘first model’ of police shows that she was aware of a wider meaning of the term *policía*, but she also makes numerous references to *policía* as a body, which suggests that she has overlooked its implications. Blair Trujillo’s four model theory was also reproduced in detail by Saldarriaga Velez (2012), who neglected to acknowledge his source for this theory.

footnote:

The term policia will be used to refer to the services lent by the administration to achieve a common good (matters of policia: ornament, security, salubrity, amongst others); as well as the compliance of laws and ordinances in order to secure better governance and coexistence (life in policia or doctrina policial). As opposed to Policia, a term related to the institution or armed civil body that, under the discretion of political authorities, strives to enforce legal provisions and to maintain public order and tranquility (Acevedo Tarazona and Puentes Cala, 2014:4).

Hering Torres (2019) is also aware of the rich, wide meaning that the word *policia* had at the time (2019:24), and thus avoids the anachronistic, narrow conceptualisation of the police found in other studies. However, these two works are not primarily concerned with the historical conceptualisation of *policia*. Martínez (1998), and Nieto (1976) also made reference to the fact that *policia* was not always a concept, let alone an institution, similar to the one we have nowadays. In fact, Martínez (1998) presents an interesting argument about *policia* as civilising order as implemented in colonial times. Nevertheless, much ground remains to be covered in this subject. Revising, correcting, and expanding upon this scant body of literature, the present chapter will present an account of the slow process of semantic change of the term *policia* and how this process relates to the gradual consolidation in the mid- to late-nineteenth century of a police institution.

Policia: Order and Civilisation

The European order

By virtue of North-South power dynamics as discussed earlier, the development and transformation of the term *policia* in Colombia was directly influenced by the changing meaning of the term—and associated terms—in Europe. In the early modern period, the concept represented by terms such as police and *policia* (derived ultimately from the Greek polis, ‘city’) were closely related to burgeoning European ideas about the progress of society. This is most clearly demonstrated in the literature of the common language of Europe at the

time: French. In its most simple definition, the French word *police* meant ‘the order or regulation that can be observed in a state, a republic, or a city’ (Le Dictionnaire de l’Académie française, 1694) but it also encompassed overtones of advancement (as opposed to barbarism) and refinement, just as civilisation does now (Napoli, 2003). In a 1966 essay, linguist Émile Benveniste explained how “the effort to induce the individual to observe spontaneously the rules of decency and to transform the customs of society in the direction of greater urbanity” (Benveniste, 1971:291) came to be denoted by the term civilisation, first used in 1757 by the Marquis de Mirabeau. As Benveniste noted, however, this was only a re-categorisation of a process that “had been up until Mirabeau’s time called ‘*police*’ in French, that is, an act tending to make a man and society more ‘*policé*’ [civilised]” (Benveniste, 1971:291). Despite the advent of the new word civilisation, the term *police* continued to carry these connotations long after Mirabeau’s time. Related words, too, had clear links to ideas of progress, refinement and urbanity. The French adjectives *poli* [polite] and *policé* [orderly; neatly arranged] were used interchangeably in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Europe (Benveniste, 1971:291; Starobinski, 1993:12; Elias, 1994:34; Melleuish, 1988:8)—despite their different etymological origins (one Latin, one Greek), the words were strongly associated in common parlance, and related words came to occupy similar semantic grounds. Richelet’s 1680 Dictionnaire, for instance, provided six definitions for the verb *polir* [to polish], three literal—‘to clean’, ‘to polish’, ‘to sharpen’—and three figurative—‘to civilise’, ‘to make one’s speech more correct/polished’, and ‘to make oneself more perfect’ (Starobinski, 1993:12). To be ‘civilised’ therefore was more than to partake in civilisation—it was closely associated with being ‘polished’, ‘polite’ and ‘clean’.

In Spanish, too, the term *policía* was linked to concepts of civilisation and decency (García Monerris y García Monerris, 2008; Álvarez de Miranda, 1992). A Spanish dictionary entry of 1604 (Palet, 1604) states that the word *policía* is equivalent to the French *netteté* and *poliffement*, words which, according to a French-English dictionary of 1611 (Cotgrave, 1611), mean “neatnesse, cleanness; integritie, perfect honestie” and “a polishing, burnishing, brightening, smoothing, sleeking” respectively. A dictionary from 1607 (Ovdin, 1607) contains similar definitions to those found in the French dictionaries discussed above, but also adds two more: ‘civilité’—‘humanitie’, ‘courtesie’, ‘modestie’, ‘quietness of disposition’, ‘fashion’ (Cotgrave, 1611)—and ‘*gouvernement de ville*’—the rule, government, command of a town or city (Cotgrave, 1611). These dictionary entries show that *policía* and civilisation were closely

associated in the Spanish³¹ context as they were in other parts of Europe but, more importantly, they alert us to the connection between the values promoted by *policía* (cleanliness, modesty, quietness of disposition) and governance. The term *policía* was concerned with all aspects pertaining to the ‘civilisation’ of a polity, from the administration of cities and towns to the regulation individual values and behaviours. The moral and general civilisational aspects of *policía* would begin to fade into the background as the decades progressed and *policía* became associated specifically with governance and administration (García Monerris y García Monerris, 2008, 413–22), the ‘science of governing men’³² (*la ciencia de gobernar los hombres*) as one thinker put it—something that at first seems closer to the modern idea of police. But *policía* still referred to the responsibility of the state, not an individual institution, and, under the influence still of liberal ideas about civilisation and advancement, its aegis was much wider than we might expect. One Spanish thinker of the time, Valentín de Foronda, discussed the matter of *policía* in his letters; García Monerris and García Monerris (2008:414) report that among the subjects he addressed were public salubrity/health, the upkeep of streets and cafes, the safety of goods and people, regulations regarding agriculture, commerce and industry, as well as education.

In the socio-political and intellectual context of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Europe, then, the concept of *police* was tied to the maintenance of a refined, gentlemanly order in society through dictation of the norms of proper behaviour. These norms reflected the values of the European upper class, and concepts such as *police* and, later, *civilisation* allowed this elite “to characterise the specific kind of behaviour through which this upper class felt itself different from all simpler and more primitive people” (Elias, 1994:34). In this way, the concept of *police* was a means to condition individual behaviour in order to buttress an existing social hierarchy that favoured elites and elite modes of behaviour. *Policía* was not only a powerful concept for the regulation of cultural expression; it also influenced the political organisation of the state. We find compelling evidence for this influence in the writings of the Viennese economist Johann Heinrich Gottlob von Justi (1717–1771). As demonstrated in Axtmann (1992), Hering Torres (2018) and Nokkala (2019), Justi saw *police* first and foremost as a concept designed to maintain state order. According to Axtmann, for Justi “‘state-objective’

³¹ Sánchez León (2005) produced an article about the semantics of ‘*policía*’, yet his analyses are somewhat imprecise and could have benefitted from the line of reasoning that Neocleous and others had already been developing.

³² ‘Police Science’ was “basically a new science of government administration” that emerged in Germany. For more details see Brodeur, 2010:18-19; for developments in France 47-49.

and ‘police-objective’ were identical” (Axtmann, 1991:46) and, per Hering Torres and Nokkala, Justi sustained that the aim of *police* was to guide the lives of individuals in order to consolidate and strengthen the power of the state (Hering Torres 2018:24; Nokkala, 2019:95). In order for a society to conform to *police*, then, understood in this sense, certain rules and behaviours need to be enforced. Such civilising measures had the dual effect of making society ‘better’ by promoting *police*, while also reinforcing the state’s power to enforce and maintain this order.

Colonial civilisation: introduction of *policía* in the ‘New World’

Before we discuss the specific permutations of *policía* in Colombia, it is necessary to address the colonial logic that shaped its conceptual development. One of the main paradigms undergirding the colonial order in Latin America was a linear understanding, inherited from European tradition, of progress and civilisation, according to which certain societies were further ‘advanced’ and others ‘lagging behind’. This idea “gave way to an evolutionist historical perspective, so that all non-Europeans could be placed vis-à-vis Europeans in a continuous historical chain from ‘primitive’ to ‘civilised’, from ‘irrational’ to ‘rational’, from ‘traditional’ to ‘modern’, from ‘magic-mythic’ to ‘scientific’” (Quijano, 2000:221). Within the Hispanic colonial world, Spain—and more generally Europe—was presented as the pinnacle of this hierarchy, the epitome of order and civilisation. In opposition was disordered *barbarie* [barbarism] (Alzate Echeverri, 2007:72), generally associated with the colonial territories and the indigenous peoples that inhabited them. The colonial rationale suggested that these ‘less advanced’ societies “could be, in time, at best Europeanized or ‘modernized’” (Quijano, 2000:221). This colonial logic thus provided a welcoming space for the introduction of ‘civilising’ measures and concepts imported to Spanish America directly from Europe—among them *policía*.

The city was the starting point for the establishment of civilisation, of *policía*. The colonised space was construed as empty and devoid of culture (Robledo Gómez and Rodríguez Santana, 2008:18) and was thus a suitably blank canvas on which the Spanish could introduce their European standards of culture. The territorial demarcation of Spanish-designed towns and cities was a pillar of the new colonial order—they were specifically designed to take over and exploit the so-called New World (Stolker, 2017:94). Originally, they were constructed as forts for the newly arrived *conquistadores*, who had to protect with arms their claim to the land

against both other *conquistadores* and indigenous communities (Romero, 1999). Once control over territories was secured to some extent, the development of towns and cities gave colonisers power over formerly dispersed native communities, control over natural resources, and strengthened their economic position by connecting commerce routes (Romero, 1999). An important characteristic of colonial towns and cities is that they were designed to organise through exclusion. Even though it was claimed that they were established to facilitate “the salvation, good order, and civilisation of aboriginal [peoples] (...) [their design was based on] racial segregation, forced discipline, and punishment” (Gutiérrez, 2014:73). The full enjoyment of life in the colonial town was reserved for the Spanish elites; the undesirable, uncivilised indigenous peoples were concentrated in peripheral enclosures, thus guaranteeing their simultaneous inclusion in the colonial order and exclusion from those echelons in which they would have been able to enjoy the fruits of that order. The practice of enclosing colonised peoples responded to a notion of *policía* that sought to foster a conqueror-conquered relationship where the latter were attached to the former through an imposed spacial and socio-cultural order (Robledo Gómez and Rodríguez Santana, 2008:27). Spanish, indigenous and black populations co-existed in the colonial city, yet each group was allocated a discrete niche, both in the physical space of the city and in its social hierarchy. This vision of social order thus brought these populations together and, at the same time, sedimented the perceived difference between them. The establishment of *policía* through the creation of towns and cities thus promoted an order based on exclusion and stigmatisation of the non-Spanish population, and served as a vehicle for the “economic exploitation and political and religious subjugation” (Gutiérrez, 2014:74) of the colonised and the enslaved.

To summarise, so far I have argued that the colonial-inherited notion of *policía* had two characteristics that are particularly relevant to our discussion: the politico-economic elites of colonial Colombia dictated the desirable spacial and socio-cultural order; and they enforced it through the stigmatisation and exclusion of undesirable people and practices. Let us now consider specific examples that will illuminate these two aspects of *policía* in nineteenth-century Colombia. Alzate Echeverri (2007) quotes a text written in 1803 by the *oidor visitador* [visiting judge] to the province of Antioquia, who complains about the lack of *policía* in the province:

I noticed little cleanliness and tidiness of streets, even in the larger settlements. The lack of policía was noticeable, [as evidenced by] the absolute absence of buildings that

pointed to the civilisation of the inhabitants; because there was no council, no hospitals, no butchers, nor anything that displayed a trace of culture. (...) Not initiating these constructions mean[s] continuing in disarray and barbarism (Alzate Echeverri, 2007:159).

The judge disparaged Antioquia's lack of *policía*, the disarray and barbarism evidenced by the lack of cleanliness and tidiness found in its streets, as well as the absence of public buildings. As it had been since the beginning of the colonial period, the establishment and maintenance of 'proper' urban centres with adequate thoroughfares, public buildings and a governmental presence, was an important marker of civilisation; concurrently, it made it easier for the politico-economic elites to concentrate and to control the population and provided the necessary infrastructure to facilitate trade and industrialisation (Garrido, 1991:81–82). A province that did not meet these standards of *policía* also failed to fulfil a productive role in the state—its barbaric disarray did not harmonise with the civilised order promoted by the state.

In addition to having a well-equipped urban centre with public buildings and clean streets, the ideal town or city had to rid itself of undesirable people and practices. The following excerpt from an 1831 decree issued by the prefect Rufino Cuervo is an illustrative example:

Considering: that due to the desarreglo [disarray/ disorganisation/ discomposure] of the policía de orden [policía of order], this capital has turned into an asylum for all those who are not tolerated in other places (...)

Article 1: In each block (...) there will be a watchman to maintain order, cleanliness and public tranquility.

(...)

Article 4: The obligations of the watchmen (...) are: 1st to guard against idleness, holgazanería [slothfulness/laziness], scandalous immorality, and the circulation of news, papers and letters that corrupt or lead the people's opinion astray. 2nd to collect the vagrants who are able to work, the foreign youths who are fleeing and without purpose, the local youths who are begging due to parental neglect or because they are orphans, and those who are wandering the streets after hours (...). 3rd to bring those who leave their place frequently before the head of police (...). 5th to guard against houses for gambling or prostitution (...). 7th to put together a population census (...). 8th to look after the cleaning of the streets (Mejía Pavony, 2000:323).

As shown in this excerpt, there were several kinds of people and activities that were thought to lack *policía*, to be in conflict with the social order desired by the ruling elites, and to have no place in civilised society. In listing these undesirable people and behaviours, this decree provides an insight into what state-endorsed *policía* looked like (or was imagined to look like) in the first half of the nineteenth century. Well-observed *policía de orden*, as this document suggests, sought to maintain control of citizens and their activities by: concentrating and counting subjects (population census); making sure that they were contributing to the economy (penalising slothfulness, idleness, purposeless wandering and joblessness); preventing the proliferation of unacceptable values (guarding against prostitution, gambling and scandalous immorality); getting rid of unseemly sights (dirty streets and begging orphans); and thwarting any challenge to the political order (preventing “the circulation of news, papers and letters that corrupt or lead the people’s opinion astray”). As we shall see later in this thesis, these are all goals that remain at the core of policing in Colombia.

As illustrated in the quotations above,³³ the notion of *policía* constituted the conceptual and rhetorical structure that lay behind several practical measures undertaken by the ruling elites, which sought to maintain their desired order. Whether through the cleaning of streets or the apprehension of vagrants, the maintenance of *policía* was a means of consolidating state power by harnessing individual behaviour in order to achieve a much-sought-after standard of civilisation. We can conclude, therefore, that even before the term *policía* became associated with an institution, its aims were very clearly directed at guarding the ruling elite’s social order. The term *policía*, however, was still much too abstract to suggest a simple line of descent from it to the present-day police institution. I will now proceed to trace the process by which the concept of *policía* changed from the meaning we have outlined thus far (civilisation, or the governance of civilisation) to a narrower definition covering *almost exclusively* the regulation

³³ It should be noted that the two quotations above correspond to years before and after independence, respectively. I do not pause to consider the impact of independence on the notion of *policía*, mainly because it has been argued that the transition from colonial to post-independence government did not fundamentally alter the colonial organisation of social hierarchies and concentration of power (Quijano, 2000:234). The post-independence order was built on the colonial social structures that were already established, and it was shaped by and for the dominant ethnic/political/economic elites (Stavenhagen, 1965:71). Independence from Spain, therefore, did not give way to the establishment of a new centralised, inclusive, democratic state order (Buitrago Valero, 2014:91) but, instead, it led to “the substitution of the domination of Spaniards by that of the ‘creoles’” (Gonzalez Casanova, 1965:27). This phenomenon has been referred to as ‘internal colonialism’ (Gonzalez Casanova, 1965; Rivera Cusicanqui, 2010; Stavenhagen, 1965). In this sense, there was a certain continuity in the order that *policía* sought to protect; it remained an important tool of the elites to organise the desirable physical and moral order of civilised societies.

of public life especially in matters of security.

Policía: From Civilisation to the Regulation of Public Life

Let us turn now to a consideration of how the rather abstract concept of *policía* was deployed in practice, in nineteenth-century Colombian legislation and ordinances. To the governors and legislators of this era, promoting civilisation and *policía* required the implementation of specific measures targeted at all levels of society and covering several aspects of life in the nation. From cleaning the streets to preventing the circulation of politically threatening publications, much came under the purview of *policía*. It can be tempting to pass over those aspects that we no longer recognise as police-work such as the erection of public buildings, the tiling of sidewalks and the enforcement of quality control for foodstuffs. However, in order to establish the origins of the modern-day police, it is important to engage with the process that saw the narrowing-down of the term *policía*—from a term that meant the establishment and maintenance of the proper order of civilisation, to one that implied the regulation of public life in a more narrow way, specifically in matters of security. The modern-day police institution did not emerge in a vacuum: rather, it was a continuation of a wider process of state development that sought to implement strategies for maintaining control over its population. As a result of this process of state development, a narrower use of *policía* began to come into use—no longer associated solely with the general concept of ‘civilisation’, it begins to be used in more specific cases of regulation of public life. This sense of *policía* had existed concurrently with the broader meaning at the beginning of the 1800s, but over the course of the century it began to take over as the main association of the term and would come to influence the eventual evolution of the word into the lexical form familiar today.

We have noted that, during the eighteenth and early nineteenth century, the term *policía* was related to ideas about civilisation and order. It is important to note, however, that *policía* encompassed not only matters of high government but also mundane, everyday tasks that contributed to the maintenance of order in society. The term was commonly used to refer to the general administration of an organisation. For example, the “Decree on the Ruling of Urban Prisons” from the fifth of January, 1837, contains a section (Title V) dedicated to “*régimen y policía interior*” [governance and internal *policía*]. The section is concerned with a variety of issues related to the everyday administration of prisons such as number of working hours and

allocation of breaks; allocated days for laundry, religious education/mass, etc.; and permitted types of reward and punishment. In this case, then, the term *policía* was used to refer to the administrative order of a particular body.³⁴

Apart from referring to institutional administration, however, *policía* could also refer to the governance of the nation at large. This general goal of governance was often broken down into different *types* of *policía*. Thus, *policía rural* referred to the governance of rural areas, while *policía de salubridad* referred to the maintenance of public health. Some other sub-categories of *policía* to be found in nineteenth-century laws include: urban *policía*, *policía* of cleanliness, *policía* of urban beautification, *policía* of abundance, *policía* of customs and *policía* of comfort. These categories, however, were ill-defined, often overlapped and tended to vary over time. I will outline some examples.

Chapter VII of the *Ley de 11 de Marzo de 1825* established that the municipalities were in charge of everything relating to *policía de salubridad*, which was disaggregated into the following sub-categories:

1. *'the cleanliness of streets, markets, public squares, and that of hospitals, prisons and charity houses'*;
2. *'the quality of all foodstuffs'*;
3. *'the swift establishment of cemeteries'*;
4. *'the drying out or diverting of stagnant or unsanitary waters'*;
5. *'removing anything from the cantón that might affect the wellbeing of the public or of animals' (Article 87).*

According to the same law, municipalities were also in charge of *policía de comodidad* (roughly translated, *policía* of amenities), which was disaggregated into the following:

1. *'traffic in the markets'*
2. *'the fixing of weights and balances so that no use is made of distorted*

³⁴ Two more examples can help illustrate this use of the term: according to a law of 1834, the president 'is in charge of the government and the *policía* of the court' (*Ley de 10 de Mayo de 1834*, Article 15); while a decree of 1842 describes how the university librarian 'will be directly subordinate to the university rector, and will be especially in charge of the *policía* of the [library]' (*Decreto de Diciembre 1 de 1842*, Article 350).

measures or measures that have been tampered with

3. *the maintenance of 'the public fountains, which should be well preserved and with good water, so that people and animals can use them';*

4. *the maintenance of 'the sidewalks, which should be tiled, and the streets, which should be cobbled and well-lit';*

5. *the maintenance of 'walks and public places, which should be beautified if the town's circumstances allow it' (Article 88).*

Policía could be categorised according to the type of tasks that associated to it (e.g. *policía de comodidad* or *policía de salubridad*); or into geographical categories, mainly *policía rural* and *policía urbana*. In maintaining *policía rural* municipalities had to undertake a census, make sure that public buildings and structures were in good shape, and establish which public works—roads, aqueducts, etc.—were suitable for development of the area (*Ley de 11 de Marzo de 1825*, Article 89; *Ley de 11 de Abril de 1825*, Article 17). *Policía urbana*, meanwhile, included many of same responsibilities, plus several more: repairing or constructing new public buildings, keeping a census, looking after the beautification of towns, and keeping streets clean (*Ley de 11 de Abril de 1825*, Article 15).

The categorisation of different types of *policía* that we find in the laws should not be regarded as a methodical, well-established system based on some clear-cut consensus regarding the division of *policía*, but as a series of somewhat uncoordinated attempts to organise the tasks pertaining to the administration of a country into discrete units for the purposes of law-making. For this reason, it would not be productive to follow the divisions suggested by these legal documents. It is more helpful to think of *policía* as pertaining to two areas of public life, firstly, the maintenance and improvement of public goods; secondly, the regulation of social life. In the former category, we find tasks related to infrastructure such as cleaning, repairing or erecting new public buildings (schools, prisons, charity houses, butchers, etc. [e.g. *Decreto de 5 de Abril de 1825*, Article 13]), and cleaning, repairing, improving and constructing new public ways (roads, paths, sidewalks, docks, etc. [e.g. *Decreto de 24 de Agosto de 1827*, preamble; *Ley de 11 de Marzo de 1825*, Article 88]); but also providing for, fostering and maintaining good standards of sanitation and public well-being (diverting dirty waters, building cemeteries, checking quality of foodstuffs, etc. [e.g. *Ley de 11 de Marzo de 1825*, Article 87]). In the latter category, we find tasks such as making sure there are no skewed scales in the market (e.g. *Ley de 11 de Marzo de 1825*, Article 88); guarding against prostitution or gambling

houses (e.g. *Decreto de 22 de Diciembre de 1827*, Article 20); barring the circulation of ‘undesirable’ images and publications (e.g. *Decreto de 22 de Diciembre de 1827*, Article 22); persecuting law-breakers (e.g. *Decreto de Noviembre 12 de 1930*); and getting street urchins and vagrants off the streets (e.g. *Ley de 18 de Mayo de 1841*, Article 18).

It is relevant to point out that a few tasks—such as taking the census (e.g. *Ley de 11 de Abril de 1825*, Article 15); fostering the local economy (e.g. *Decreto de 5 de Abril de 1825*, Article 13; *Ley de 19 de Mayo de 1834*, Article 156, number 16); looking after schools and fostering agriculture, industry and commerce (*Ley de 11 de Marzo de 1825*, Article 90–91)—do not comfortably fit in either of these realms. These tasks may have been disassociated from the word *policía* from the 1830s, however, since they do not seem to make an appearance in the legislation, in relation to the term, after that point.

The development of *policía* in legislation throughout the nineteenth century, then, has to be understood in light of the distinction between the two realms of *policía*. What once implied an all-encompassing idea of civilisation and the governance of the nation slowly became more associated with the realm of regulation of public life, and eventually became attached to the *institution* in charge of that function. At the same time, responsibility for improvement and maintenance of public goods came under the purview of several different administrative offices and lost almost all connection to the term *policía*. By the end of the 1840s, many of the tasks falling into this category were being assigned to specific councils or *juntas*. Tasks concerning the regulation of public life, on the other hand, were becoming strongly associated with the *cuerpos de policía* [bodies of *policía*] which had been created through the *Ley de 18 de Mayo de 1841*. When assigning different tasks to the four national secretariats—war; finance; exterior relations and internal improvements; and governance—in the *Decreto de 3 de Mayo de 1845*, ‘*policía* of order and security’ fell within the purview of the governance secretariat (Article 2), whereas *policía* of cleanliness, ornament and public well-being was assigned to the secretariat of exterior relations and internal improvements (Article 3). At this time we find that the connection between the word *policía* and the joint tasks of maintaining security and order is further strengthened and this definition in fact comes to the foreground, eclipsing other definitions of *policía*.³⁵

³⁵ For example, in the breakdown of the budget for the years 1847–48, the department of interior labels the costs for these bodies as “*Policía* of security and order”, thus highlighting the fact that the concept was beginning to narrow from the general administration of a nation as related to the proper order of civilisation, to the maintenance

Having established that *policía* operated in two realms—one pertaining to the administration of the nation, the other to the regulation of public life—and that one of these realms gradually became more firmly associated with *policía*, it is now possible to discuss how the National Police emerged as the product of this development. The next section will explore the roots of the modern-day national police corps in the decades preceding its legal foundation in 1891.

Proto-Police Bodies Before 1891

Before the legal foundation of the national police, various responsibilities and roles existed that would eventually come under the purview of the police force. These proto-police tasks and roles are identifiable in nineteenth-century legislation and constitute the ground on which the National Police would eventually be institutionally consolidated. In order to explore these developments, I analyse the 33 volumes (*Codificación Nacional de Todas las Leyes de Colombia Desde el Año de 1821, 1924–1953*) that contain all of the Colombian laws from 1821 (two years after independence) until 1883 (shortly before the legal consolidation of the national police in 1891). It is this body of legal documentation that has led some historians to erroneously claim the existence of an early police corps as early as the 1820s. As I shall discuss in detail in this section, however, much of the evidence for these early corps is predicated on an inattentive and anachronistic reading of the nineteenth-century material.

The police force of the early-nineteenth century: a phantom of modern scholarship

As discussed above, modern scholarship on pre-1891 police has tended to follow the lead of Castaño Castillo, who understood that references to *policía* in laws of the early nineteenth century implied the existence already at that stage of a police body. Let us look in more detail at his claims. He argued that, “the first efforts toward creating a police force are, as it were, hidden in some articles in the law of the 8 of October 1821, and of the 11 of March 1825” (Castaño Castillo, 1947:62). The “law of 8 of October” that he mentions in this quotation does not match with any in the legal records—he was thinking of Article 47 and 48 of the *Ley de 2 Octubre de 1821* [Law of 2 of October 1821], which he quotes as:

of state-mandated order as pertaining to security in particular.

Article 47: the tasks of the cabildos [administrative councils] are:

1st: the Policía of salubrity, cleanliness and comfort.

2nd: to help the judges in anything pertaining the safety of the people and the neighbours' goods and the maintenance of public order.

(...)

Article 48: The mayors (...) are in charge of the Policía, order and tranquility in their cantones and parroquias [territorial divisions] (Castaño Castillo, 1947:62).

According to Castaño Castillo, these articles represent the attempted creation of a police body. Because of “the special circumstances of the time, the war taking place in Perú at that moment, and the general mood, hectic and perturbed”, however, this attempt at establishing a police body was frustrated (Castaño Castillo, 1947:62). Castaño Castillo’s analysis draws conclusions from a partial and distorted interpretation of the evidence; partial because he does not take into account the rest of the legal provision in the 1821 law, and distorted because he is not aware that the word *policía* did not refer to an institution. Had Castaño Castillo taken into account all the provisions of the Law of 2 of October 1821, he would have noticed that *all* of the political heads of the territorial divisions of Colombia were in fact in charge of *policía*. *Intendentes* (political rulers of large territorial jurisdictions called *departamentos*) had powers in matters of *policía* (Article 5); as did governors their provinces (Article 21, 22); ‘political judges’ in their *cantones* (Article 33); and, finally, *cabildos* (Article 47) and mayors (Article 48), the only two officials mentioned by Castaño Castillo. An analysis that takes into account the entirety of the provisions of this law, therefore, could not avoid the conclusion that the term *policía* refers not to a body—a ‘Police service’ under the purview of the cabildos, as claimed by Castaño Castillo—but to a wider conceptual task—that of administrating the nation and keeping order—and that *every* political and administrative leader in the country was expected to concern themselves with its maintenance.

More recent studies have followed Castaño Castillo’s lead. Becerra (2010), for instance, states that the Law 11 of March 1825 gave municipal mayors the power to “command the police body in towns and cities” (2010:146). However, Article 3—the one she is referencing—does not refer to a police body but to *policía* in the broader sense, stating that mayors will “safeguard the tranquility, good order, security of inhabitants and their goods, execution of the laws and orders from the Executive Power, and *everything related to the policía and prosperity of the*

department” (*Ley de 11 de Marzo de 1825*, Article 3, added emphasis). Other scholars have made similar mistakes in reading the law of the time. Pulido Barrantes (2005) states that Francisco de Paula Santander (vice-president for Nueva Granada—the name that the territory of Colombia had at the time) “issued a decree in November 1819 reorganising the police service in order to ‘strive for public security and the well-being of the country’, while also creating a secret police” (2005:15). He provides no exact reference for the law he is quoting, but it is likely that he is referring to two decrees: *Decreto 39 de 9 de Noviembre de 1819* on the Secret Police *Ad Honorem*; and *Decreto 49 de 17 de Diciembre de 1819 Acordado Sobre Policía*. Pulido Barrantes’ account is misleading—these two decrees do not suggest any such moment of reorganisation of the police. The first decree, that of 9 November, did indeed see the creation of a secret police *ad honorem*; the second, however, has no relation to public security or to a police body—*policía* in this text meant the wider task of administrating the nation and maintaining civilisation, as evidenced by its preamble:

Public wellbeing being one of the main objectives of the government and [being such public wellbeing] unsustainable without good policía that provides for the cleaning of streets, plazas, sewers, construction of roads and maintenance of bridges and sidewalks, I have come to decree the following (Decreto 49 de 17 de Diciembre de 1819, preamble).

This preamble is followed by five points, most of which concern the procurement of funds to finance these public wellbeing measures. This decree had little to do with “civilising the police service” as suggested by Pulido Barrantes (Pulido Barrantes, 2005:15).

As we shall see, local proto-police groups would eventually begin to appear in Colombia, beginning in the 1840s. As I have demonstrated, scholars’ attempts to discern earlier bodies are built on mistaken assumptions.

The *jefe de policía*: a predecessor to the Director of the Police?

One role referred to often in pre-1891 legislation that has caused much confusion for modern-day scholars is that of the *jefe de policía* [‘chief/head of *policía*’]. An assumption that *policía* always refers to a body or institution has led some authors (e.g. Gilibert, 2002:27; Becerra, 2011:255) to assume that the *jefes de policía* were something equivalent to what we would now

call *Director de la Policía*, i.e. Police Director—the person in charge of commanding the police corps (more details on these assumptions will be referred to in the next section). However, analysis of legislation from the 1800s indicates that these *jefes de policía* are better understood as ‘governors’ (in the expansive sense of being responsible of the general administration of a nation) of *policía* at least until the 1840s when the first *cuerpos de policía* [*policía* bodies] began to appear. An important clue that alerts us to this distinction between *jefe de policía* and a person who leads a *cuerpo de policía*, is found in Article 64 of the *Decreto de 22 de Diciembre de 1827* which advises that “the *jefes de policía*, (...) will ask for help (...) from the armed forces and militias (...) and the *jefes del cuerpo* [*jefes* of the body] will provide help without any hesitation”. The *cuerpo* here is a clear reference to the armed forces, but there is no indication that the *jefe de policía* is the commander of any such body—rather, *jefes de policía* were those people who were in charge of *policía*—understood as the general administration of the nation—and who, lacking a corps themselves, might in certain situations be aided by the armed forces.

This role of *jefe de policía* was one entrusted to several administrative and political officers, who were in charge of overseeing all matters regarding *policía*—i.e. administration of the state—in their jurisdictional areas, for instance:

The governors will be the jefes superiores de policía [chiefs superior of policía] in all of the district of the province (...) (Decreto de 23 de Diciembre de 1828, Article 9).

Jefe de policía was not a post in its own right, then, but a role taken on by officials holding other titles, such as governors and mayors. And while it is likely that these *jefes de policía* had the last word in matters of *policía*, the task was also entrusted to other people/bodies that were not necessarily *jefes de policía*, for example:

The prefects will supervise policía in all the territory of their jurisdiction; they will enforce the regulations pertaining this matter and will dictate the necessary measures to have [the policía] perfected, ensuring the tranquility of the State, and giving complete safety to the people and properties of the Colombians; for which they can imprison or arrest the people who they deem convenient (Decreto de 23 de Diciembre de 1828, Article 3, emphasis added).

Municipal councils in the capitals of provinces are in charge of: (...) 7. Safeguarding the policía of salubrity, comfort and ornament in all of the cantón [administrative region] (...) (Ley de 11 de Mayo de 1830, Article 19, emphasis added).

[Mayors] look after the tranquility, good order, safety of people, goods and rights of citizens and inhabitants, enforcement of the constitution and laws (...) and everything that pertains to the policía and prosperity of the parroquial district (Ley de 19 de Mayo de 1834, Article 89, emphasis added).

The wide array of tasks associated with *policía* (pertaining to the general administration of a nation) meant that a variety of different administrative and political officers were charged with maintaining *policía* or taking up the role of *jefe de policía* in the first decades of the 1800s. It is possible, however, to identify some specific tasks and areas of responsibility (pertaining to the regulation of public life) that do resonate with the modern image of a national police force. The 1827 decree on *policía general* states:

*The jefes de policía must look after **public security** and the **life, honour and goods** of citizens (Decreto de 22 de Diciembre de 1827, Article 5, emphasis added).*

In order to “maintain public tranquility and security” (*Decreto de 22 de Diciembre de 1827*, Article 6), the *jefes de policía* were endowed with several powers. For instance, they were authorised to investigate crimes and present the results of their investigations to a judge or tribunal, to prevent or break up fights, mass gatherings and public disturbances, and to prevent and foil plots against the state (*Decreto de 22 de Diciembre de 1827*, Article 6). All of these powers are still—to some extent—granted to the police. Furthermore, in order to “look after the lives of citizens” (*Decreto de 22 de Diciembre de 1827*, Article 17), *jefes de policía* were authorised to:

*1. **pursue and apprehend** murderers, robbers, thieves, deserters and any other culprits who could harm the citizens. 2. **prevent** any insults against citizens or foreigners residing in Colombia. 3. put together an **investigation** of the crime*

and apprehend the above-mentioned culprits, in order to hand them to the corresponding judges for sentencing (...) (Decreto de 22 de Diciembre de 1827, Article 17, emphasis added).

Apprehending law-breakers, investigating crimes, and preventing pernicious interactions between citizens all remain under the purview of the national police. Bearing in mind the fact that there existed no police *institution*, it is still possible to identify certain tasks related to the *policía* of the 1820s and 30s that have remained associated with *policía* in its modern form. Nevertheless, the former required *jefes de policía* and other actors in charge of *policía* to carry out an array of tasks that demonstrate the much wider remit of *policía* in this period. Some examples from *Decreto de 22 de Diciembre de 1827* of tasks associated with *policía* that are no longer connected to police work include: carrying out censuses (Article 11); overseeing charity houses for the homeless, the poor and the sick (Article 10); building dykes and canals in order to prevent floods (Article 40); numbering houses, shops and streets (Article 50); maintaining streets and public ways (Article 49); and making sure dead bodies are buried deep enough (Article 52).

Although the *jefes de policía* were not ‘police chiefs’, there were some tasks and responsibilities associated with the role which we might recognise as characteristic of their modern-day counterparts. However, in the early decades of the nineteenth century, these were still part of a wider array of tasks falling in both realms of *policía*, perhaps too broad in scope to be fully recognised as proto-police. We will see that, as we move forwards in time, the meaning of *policía* as a body in charge of regulating public life, particularly in matters of security, becomes stronger; several tasks are shed and the ones that are kept are closer to what we would now recognise as police work.

By the end of the 1830s, there began to arise a phenomenon that we might justifiably regard as the beginning of a thread that eventually ends in the development of the current national police: the appearance of the first *cuerpos de policía* [police corps] tasked with maintaining security. The first example I have found in which we see the word *policía* deployed in relation to a *specific group* in charge of security is in the *Decreto de 30 de Mayo de 1838*. This decree authorised the establishment of a body of *resguardos de policía y seguridad* [guards of *policía* and security] in order to protect “the safety of the towns of the province of Casanare, due to the incursions of the savage indigenous tribes that surround them” (*Decreto de 30 de Mayo de*

1838, preamble). The content of this decree (particularly 1 and 8) not only alerts us to the creation of the first bodies of *policía*, but it also reminds us of the links of the term *policía* to the enforcement of the colonial social hierarchy. It is not surprising that one of the main reasons why police bodies were created was to guard the same socio-political order that was inherited from the colonial period: one that sought to subdue and control those at the bottom of the power hierarchy. The development of the term *policía*, even as it began to refer to specific groups, kept this essence of ‘civilisation’ and anti-‘barbarism’ at its core; it remained a mechanism to enforce class and race hierarchies, prevent any threats to the status quo, and ensure the safety of the ruling elite (Gutiérrez, 2014:75). The tasks entrusted to these police groups were:

1. To **defend the inhabitants** of the province from aggressions of savage tribes.
2. To **maintain order and security** between inhabitants of the province and support public officers in the exercise of their jobs.
3. To **persecute** escaped convicts, evildoers, and deserters.
4. To guard against tax fraud and persecute contrabandists.
5. To transport convicts, prisoners, deserters and recruits from one part of the province to another.
6. To escort war material, goods and correspondence when there is not enough security in the roads.
7. To **patrol** the paths and places where evildoers are suspected to take refuge, in order to facilitate a swift communication with travellers, and [ensure] their security and that of the province’s persons and goods.
8. To **repress** any rebellion, insubordination, disturbance or hostility and stop them timely, and to prepare for them if public authorities have known about them.
9. To **lend a strong hand** to the employees of the judicial and finance [de hacienda] branches any time they request or need it, in order for their legal provisions to be followed and their authority respected (Decreto de 13 Septiembre de 1838, Article 6, emphasis added).

This *resguardo de policía y seguridad* in Casanare appears to be the first of a series of proto-police groups, with tasks and responsibilities such as repressing rebellion and insubordination, persecuting law-breakers, defending people from perceived threats and maintaining the state-mandated social order. It is also the first time that a sum of money was set aside from the

national budget in relation to *policía* to pay the wages of the members of the *resguardos*. This is the first indication that such bodies were making their way into the state's institutional landscape.

The *cuerpos de policía*: the predecessors of modern police?

The *resguardos* that appeared at the end of the 1830s seem to be precursors to what the *Ley de 18 de Mayo de 1841* on 'general *policía*' calls '*cuerpos de policía*' [*policía* corps]. The Law of 1841 dictated that every province would have one such group with a maximum of 60 *comisarios* under the direct orders of inspectors who would be subordinated to *jefes de policía* (Article 12). These bodies would be armed by the state (Article 14) and have as their responsibilities:

First: to be ready to receive and execute the orders of the jefes de policía (...).

*Second: to **escort convicts** to their destination and **prisoners** from one place to the other.*

*Third: to **guard** the interests and other public effects that demand custody.*

*Fourth: to **persecute and apprehend** persons found committing crimes in flagrant (...).*

*Sixth: to **walk the streets**, squares, and public ways at night, and the paths, fields and depopulated areas both at night and during the day.*

*Seventh: to **apprehend all instruments** with which a crime has been committed or attempted, and all objects that can help prove its perpetration.*

*Eighth: to **prevent and persecute** robberies, fires, murders, fights, forbidden games, bustles and any violence or disturbance forbidden by the law, and if the criminals do not desist, to take them to the immediate jefe de policía.*

*Ninth: to circulate promptly **information and news** that they have received about crimes committed, signs of the criminals, lost or stolen goods, in order to facilitate the identification of criminals and their apprehension, and the recovery of the objects.*

*Tenth: to **give notice to the respective authorities** about vagrants and idlers in the district.*

*Eleventh: to lend a **strong hand to the authorities**, executing and aiding the execution of the provisions and orders dictated in conformity with the law and*

in the exercise of their functions (emphasis added).

Once again, we might note that the tasks assigned to these bodies lay in the realm of the regulation of public life, particularly in matters of security, and several of them have remained to this day under the purview of the national police—e.g. walking the streets (which is now referred to as patrolling) but also preventing and persecuting robbers, murderers etc., and guarding the interests and lives of people. Following the 1841 mandate, several *cuerpos de policía* were established in the course of the 1840s: for example, in the province of Popayán in 1843 (*Decreto de 23 de Junio de 1843*); in Ambalema (*Decreto de 25 de Febrero de 1845*) and Casanare in 1845 (*Decreto de 22 de Agosto de 1845*) and in Bogotá in 1846 (*Decreto de 16 de Septiembre de 1846*). The model of identifiable groups in charge of these particular tasks of *policía* is one that places emphasis on the definition of *policía* as a body in charge of regulating public life, particularly in matters of security; it points to the similarities between the responsibilities of those *cuerpos* and the current police corps. Patrolling, preventing robberies, apprehending criminals and guarding private goods are all activities that remain at the core of policing. These *cuerpos*, then, represent the beginning of what we would recognise as police in Colombia.

Changing meanings of policía – the development of policing to 1891

Between the late 1840s and the legal foundation in 1891, the term *policía* continued to evolve. Though earlier connotations of civilisation and national governance continued to cast a shadow, the term began to be used more and more for matters of security and, as a definite noun—*la policía*—to refer to a body responsible for this security.

A particularly interesting piece of legislation enacted in these decades is the *Decreto de 6 de Julio de 1868*. This decree outlined everything related to the administration of the recently acquired territories of San Martín, San Andrés and San Luis de Providencia; it laid out the key institutional and administrative structures that the territories were to implement, in accordance with the rest of the nation. A couple of important things become clear from this piece of legislation: *policía* was still a responsibility bestowed upon several high politico-administrative officers, who were referred to as *jefes de policía* (Article 41), and who commanded the *cuerpos de policía* (Article 41); the *Ley de 18 de Mayo de 1841* on general *policía* still remained the valid legal framework for establishing and maintaining *cuerpos de policía* (Article 46). This

indicates a sense of stability and continuity regarding *policía*, now more closely associated to the realm of regulating public life, especially in matters of security.

By the 1870s we find that the word *policía* is almost exclusively used in relation to security and the guarding of things. For example, we have *Ley de 22 de Abril de 1870 ‘sobre policía de fronteras’*, on border *policía*, which, by this time, probably comes closer to the translation ‘border policing’, regarding issues such as migration control, granting of asylum to foreigners, etc. In the same way, *Ley 84 de 10 de Junio de 1871 ‘sobre policía de los puertos marítimos y fluviales’*, on the *policía* of maritime and river ports, states that the *policía* of ports consists of the application of the rules established by the law for its operation to ensure the safety of the vessels and the maintenance of order (Article 1). It follows that, by the 1870s we have *policía* as attached to the *cueros de policía*, now operating in several territories, and the occasional use of the word in laws like the two mentioned above, to signify something that comes increasingly close to the current definition of policing.

In the last decade before the official foundation of the national police, the word gets more sparsely used in the legislation for matters that are not strictly related to *cueros de policía*, or border and maritime policing matters. A noteworthy development appears in *Ley 22 de 7 de Junio de 1883*, where we find an article that uses the word *policía* to refer to the person who is part of a body of police, a police officer: Article 2 requests an addition to the national budget “to increase the salary of *el policía* in charge of correspondence”. Similarly, *Ley 40 de 10 de Octubre de 1883*, requests a sum from the national budget to be allocated to “pay Justo Villa the salaries owed to him as a *policía* of the national territory of San Andrés and San Luis de Providencia]. This use of the word *policía* is more or less identical to the modern use, when we speak of ‘a police officer’.³⁶

³⁶ Despite the fact that the word *policía* is most commonly used to refer to the National Police corps, the vestiges of a wider meaning is still visible in the current constitution, where sometimes the word *policía* is used to refer to general administration/organisation (e.g. Article 135 Sub 7), and in the police code. In the current police code, there are three different aspects of *policía*: *poder* [power], *función* [capacity/role/duty] and *actividad* [endeavour/practice] *de policía* and they can be under the purview of several actors such as the president, Congress, councils, mayors and, in exceptional cases, the military (*Ley 1801 de 29 de Julio de 2016*). In contrast to the arrangements in place before the *Policía Nacional* was consolidated, nowadays there is more conceptual finesse and specificity regarding who the police authorities are (*Ley 1801 de 29 de Julio de 2016*, Article 198), and the extent of their powers (*Ley 1801 de 29 de Julio de 2016*, Article 11–23).

Conclusion

The aims of the present chapter as outlined in the introduction were to identify the different ways in which the concept of *policía* was deployed throughout time to establish and maintain social order, and to draw on this semantically sensitive understanding to identify the proto-police bodies and occupations that preceded the Colombian police corps. The result is an effort in historiography which answers the call for the production of long time-frame analysis on which to ground, “debate and analyse the development of contemporary policing” (Lawrence, 2019:504).

Throughout the chapter I explore an important transition that took place over the course of the six decades from 1820 to 1880: the word *policía*, which was once interchangeable with ‘civilisation’, gradually refined its meaning and scope, coming to refer first to the general administration of the nation; and then to incorporate tasks aimed at the regulation of public life. Finally, by the 1840s onwards, it began to take on an association that closely resembles the current meaning of *policía*: a body in charge of regulating public life, especially in matters of security. From this point onward, we can start to see the emergence of proto-police bodies and occupations, the development of which we will continue to follow in the next chapter.

The analyses presented in this chapter constitute a departure from the literature that has been written thus far on this subject matter. I demonstrated that several scholars have adopted a historical narrative that has not been developed with enough attention to the primary sources. By engaging in a semantically-sensitive and evidence-grounded approach to the reconstruction of history, I developed an alternative narrative which can help us to better understand how the concept of *policía*, even before it was attached to a body in charge of security, was an important tool to orchestrate the administration and organisation of the nation according to an elite view of social order. Such a narrative invites us to avoid the temptation of finding a police corps where no such institution existed, instead focusing on following the wider themes, such as order, that have always been pivotal to the concept of *policía* and which—much later—would prompt the consolidation of the modern-day Colombian police force.

CHAPTER 6

Guardians of Socio- Political Order

The Institutional Development of the Colombian National Police

Introduction

There is nothing wrong with members and ex-members of the CNP making and telling their history [in a particular way]. (...) What is dangerous is for intellectuals to accept these stories as valid.

– Juan Aparicio Barrera (2019:64–5).

Studying the history of police bodies is not a novel endeavour; the scholarship on this subject is rich—especially for Northern contexts such as the UK and US (e.g. Emsley, 2012; Monkkonen, 1982; Newburn, 2012; Willis, 2014), where the contextual insights offered by extensive historical analysis have allowed scholars to better understand modern-day police

practice and the institutional development of police forces (e.g. Zedner, 2006; Willis, 2014). The history of the Colombian National Police, however, has not been thoroughly explored and, for this reason, studies on the subject have not been sufficiently anchored on a precise understanding of historical institutional development. According to Aparicio Barrera (2016) one of the defining features of the way in which the history of this body has traditionally been presented is the conflation of symbolic, legal and policy developments with actual institutional change (e.g. assuming that the legal foundation of the National Police marks the consolidation of a centralised, institutional body; or that the attachment of the police to the military forces during the dictatorship signified the end of partisan policing). It is of central importance, therefore, that scholars recognise the difference between moments of institutional change and episodes that, although they may be symbolically significant, did not substantially affect the trajectory of the institution. For example, the year 1891 saw the legal foundation of the Colombian National Police. This year is of great significance to the modern-day organisation and several scholars and historians who implicitly accept the idea that the corps was born (Aparicio Barrera, 2019:54-65), or rather conjured up, on this very date. However, the oft-quoted year 1891 did not mark the creation of a brand new organisation; in fact, the newly founded National Police was, as we shall see, little more than a continuation of the police bodies that had proliferated since the 1840s.

The first aim of this chapter, therefore, is **to offer a historical account of the CNP's institutional development** that does not centre on events that have been traditionally regarded as crucial, but offers a more rounded picture of the socio-political contexts that have shaped the police's organisational configuration throughout the years. The second aim is to continue the exploration that was developed in the previous chapter, which **addresses the role of *policía* in the maintenance of particular forms of socio-political order**. The present chapter begins in the years leading up to the legal foundation of the National Police in 1891, arguing that the corps that was constituted in this year was not significantly different from the police groups that had proliferated in the second half of the nineteenth century up to that point. In this sense, this chapter is a continuation of the last, not only in chronological terms, but also by virtue of the fact that it blurs what has traditionally been regarded as a clear dividing line between two distinct developmental stages of the police in Colombia: the police before the legal foundation of the national corps in 1891, and the police after this event. In line with these aims, two themes will arise from the discussion in this chapter: the CNP's process of institutional consolidation and development; and the relationship between the police and the maintenance of the socio-

political order. Sections 1 and 2 will discuss how early police groups and, later, the National Police, were used to establish a social order dictated by political parties and to help those parties attain or remain in power. Sections 3 and 4 will address the shifting role of the police as they ceased to act as tools for inter-party disputes, and began to operate as a unified, militarised force tasked with upholding a national and international security agenda.

Bipartisan Wars and the Military Dictatorship

- A Decentralised, Politicised Police -

This section resumes the chronology from the last chapter, beginning with the years leading up to the legal foundation of the National Police in 1891. In this period, the nation was fraught with partisan rivalries between Liberals and Conservatives, and the political arena was dominated by elites that were engaged in a constant battle to take control of a weak, bankrupt national administration (Palacios, 2006:17). Regional police corps were consistently used as tools to wage bipartisan wars, a fact that deeply influenced the character of policing during this period.

Throughout this section I will often refer to the police of this period as ‘partisan’ or ‘politicised’, terminology which should not be confused with the ‘political’ character of modern-day police bodies. I draw here on the distinction made by Reiner (2010). The modern Colombian police is, like all other police forces, inherently political, in that it enforces a socio-political order that favours some at the expense of others: “in a society that is divided on class, ethnic, gender, and other dimensions of inequality, the impact of laws, even if they are formulated and enforced impartially and universalistically, will reproduce those divisions” (Reiner, 2010:33; c.f. Vitale, 2017:28). In the case of Colombia, furthermore, the Director of the National Police is appointed by the president and local government has the power to dictate police priorities; in this sense, political actors have direct influence over police practice. This political aspect of policing is distinct, however, from the partisan and politicised nature of nineteenth-century police groups, the focus of much of this section. Police forces that display partisan or politicised traits go beyond the implicit political nature of the institution and take on explicitly political action, mobilising officers for the benefit of particular parties and getting involved in political controversy (Reiner, 2010:104). Bearing this distinction in mind, let us now turn to the discussion of the police during the bipartisan wars and the military dictatorship.

The Regeneration and Gilibert's National Police (1878–1900)

The Liberal governments of Colombia between 1845 and 1876 had striven to shed colonial institutional configurations in order to more closely conform to the model of federal republic inspired by the French and North American models (Acevedo Tarazona and Puentes Cala, 2014:1). Extreme decentralisation, as enacted by these Liberal governments, had once been thought of as a potential means of quieting inter-party feuding, yet it had only served to exacerbate regional conflict; some forty armed rebellions took place during this time (Acevedo Tarazona and Puentes Cala, 2014:3).

The regional civil wars of the Liberal federal republic were followed by a period called the Regeneration [*Regeneración*] (1878–1900).

³⁷ The Regeneration aimed at breaking with the Liberal order, which was regarded by them as “disastrous, anarchic, unfair and secular” (Hering Torres, 2019:45). In order to establish a new socio-political order, the government needed a unified, professionalised enforcer, committed to the guarding of government-approved values. The creation of the National Police, organised by the French commissaire Marcelin Gilibert, was intended to diminish regional political actors' capacity to exercise control over the population by strengthening central power and supplanting local police groups (Ruiz Vásquez, 2009:55–6). For this reason, the year 1891 went down in the CNP's history as the year in which the institution was born, and Gilibert is regarded, to this day, as the founding father of the Colombian Police (Aparicio Barrera, 2019:68-69). In fact, however, Gilibert's National Police never did replace local police groups, as it was only ever active in Bogotá.

In line with the government's priorities, the newly founded National Police was used to enforce the moral values at the core of the Conservatives' political project. The rolling back of secularisation was a key objective of the party, as it sought to bring Catholicism back to the centre of social life, “abandoning those political conducts that were perceived as reprehensible due to their lack of respect for divine law, [and establishing] a life of moral and physical order” (Hering Torres, 2019:45). Geared from its foundation toward the protection of the Conservative

³⁷ The Regeneration was led by an alliance of the more moderate strands of each party, yet it quickly turned conservative: by 1885 most of the army troops were conservative and the (liberal) president endeavoured to dismantle the Liberal constitution of 1863.

establishment, the CNP was “quickly denounced as an essentially political organ of the government” (Martínez, 1996:138).

The goal of the National Police was twofold. Firstly, they were responsible for guarding the Conservative moral order: their everyday priorities included cracking down on prostitution, brawls, crimes and partisan street fights (Acevedo Tarazona and Puentes Cala, 2014:12). Secondly, they were to help the Conservative government stay in power: there was no shortage of reports denouncing the participation of the National Police in electoral fraud (Ruiz Vásquez, 2009:56;65) and the use of excessive means to combat Liberal “conspiracies, real or imagined” (Martínez, 1996:138; c.f. Sowell, 1989:274).

In terms of institutional development, Gilibert’s nationalisation efforts of 1891 should be regarded as the manifestation of an idea in its infancy, rather than the immediate and unambiguous consummation of that idea.³⁸ The fact that his National Police was only operational in Bogotá should give us pause in regarding the ‘National’ aspect³⁹ of this project as *fait accompli* (Ruiz Vásquez, 2009:58; Acevedo Tarazona and Puentes Cala, 2014:11). This, in turn, casts doubt on the claim that there was a significant centralising component to Gilibert’s project. Rather, it suggests that there was very little development with regard to institutionalisation of the police at this time.

Gilibert’s National Police was also coloured by politicisation. From the moment of its creation, it enforced substantially different values than those upheld by the previous Liberal governments, focused as it was on helping build a ‘new’ or, better yet, ‘regenerated’ moral social order. True, the lack of national authority did curtail its ability to widely promote this new order, but the National Police should be seen as a vital tool for the shaping of socio-

³⁸ Perhaps the lack of institutional advancement was in part related to the difficulties encountered during the first years of Gilibert’s national police. Recruiting officers was difficult (likely as a result of the poor rate of pay and the general unattractiveness of the job), a lack of clarity regarding the body’s legal standing (in contrast to the military, which enjoyed a *fuero militar* [differential justice system for the military] (Acevedo Tarazona and Puentes Cala, 2014:12), and the bad reputation that his new force quickly acquired (Martínez, 1996:136). Gilibert was forced to bring in recruits from all parts of the country, which served to foster further distrust between the local *bogotanos* and the out-of-town police (Sowell, 1989:280). The difficulty recruiting officers meant that there was no possibility of screening candidates. In just the first five months of operation, Gilibert dismissed one third of the force. The press portrayed the police as “inefficient, sluggish and frequently drunk” (Ruiz Vásquez, 2009:60). This disappointing landscape led Gilibert to quit his post in 1898 (Martínez, 1996:138).

³⁹ Perhaps the one aspect about this national police project that speaks to nationalisation is the fact that it was funded by the state; however, as discussed in Chapter 5, some police groups had already been drawing funds from the national treasury, so this is not a feature that makes Gilibert’s police unique.

political order in Bogotá in accordance with the values of the ruling Conservative faction. Similar to the regional, partisan police groups that had operated across the country since the 1840s, the National Police engaged in gross misconduct (e.g. electoral fraud and voter intimidation, as mentioned above) to advance the goals of the Conservative government. Despite the change of name, then, Gilibert's police remained a regional (as opposed to national) tool for the establishment and protection of a particular socio-political order.

In summary, then, while the year 1891 is not without significance—it does mark the *legal* consolidation of a distinct body—it should not be viewed as the genesis of either a national or a non-partisan police force. In practice, the police force established by Gilibert represents a continuation of many of the trends of those groups that had operated in the country since 1840. We must look beyond the traditional date of 1891 if we are to trace the development of the modern Colombian police body.

The Thousand Days' War and *La Violencia* (1899–1953)

By the end of the nineteenth century, the once-bipartisan coalition of the Regeneration had become fully Conservative. This prompted the Liberals, who were excluded from the executive and legislative branches, to rise up in arms in 1899. The conflict that followed, known as the Thousand Days' War, lasted from 1899 to 1902 and was characterised by confrontations between Conservative establishment forces (including the National Police) and Liberal guerrillas (Bergquist, 1986).

During this time the president ordered that the National Police (which, as noted before, was still not operational nation-wide) be attached to the Ministry of War, and its members were sent out to fight as part of the military (Aparicio Barrera, 2019:33). The regional police forces, still heavily influenced by mayors and local politicians, played an important role in the quashing of Liberal insurgents (Bergquist, 1986). Bergquist (1986) highlights the case of Aristides Fernández, the governor of Cundinamarca, who used all the resources at his disposal, including police, to combat the Liberal guerrillas:

Convinced that the rural guerrillas in Cundinamarca and Tolima were encouraged, supplied, and directed from Bogotá, Fernández established rewards for information regarding Liberal collaborators and ordered night-

time patrols of the city and surprise searches of houses. On November 11, 1900, the number of police at Fernández's disposal was increased by half, raising the total force to fifteen hundred men. Using the wide discretionary powers accorded him as military governor of Cundinamarca and the tools available to him as director of police, Fernández assigned forced contributions to some suspected sympathizers and jailed others outright. Fernández strong-arm methods spared no one (...) (Bergquist, 1986:167).

Both Liberals and Conservatives used local police groups to harass supporters of the other party (González González, 2014: Chapter 6). After the Conservative Hegemony ended in 1930 with the election of the Liberal Enrique Olaya Herrera (president from 1930 to 1934), his administration had police groups re-staffed in several regions in order to ‘Liberalise’ them (Ruiz Vásquez, 2009:65). The Liberal governments that followed sought to shape the police force to make it resemble the army, opening up the highest police ranks to military commanders (Aparicio Barrera, 2019:43). Once the Conservatives recovered the presidency in 1946, Mariano Ospina (president from 1946 to 1959) had the police de-Liberalised (Pécaut, 2012:485; Aparicio Barrera, 2019:45)⁴⁰ and he created a police section, the ‘political police’ [Popol] tasked with controlling regime opposers (Aparicio Barrera, 2019:45).

The politicisation of the police reached its peak during the years known as *La Violencia* [The Violence]. After some years of simmering conflict, *La Violencia* broke out with the *Bogotazo*, or *Nueve de Abril*, a revolt triggered by the killing of the (left-leaning) Liberal presidential candidate, Jorge Eliecer Gaitán, on the 9th of April 1948. The assassination of Gaitán prompted a two-day wave of anarchic rage during which buildings were burned, people killed and stores sacked, and after which some two and a half thousand people were dead (Melo, 2017:214). The Liberal members of the police took an active part in the violence, providing civilians with arms, while many of the conservative officers ditched their uniforms and fled (Ruiz Vásquez, 2009:68; Aparicio Barrera, 2019:46). The *Bogotazo* had a spill-over effect throughout the country, and the bipartisan conflict escalated quickly: “in the provinces, Valle, Caldas, Antioquia, Tolima and Boyacá, in many places the police joined the rebels. In response, local authorities with the help of Conservative supporters improvised ‘civic police forces’ to defend

⁴⁰ For a more detailed account of the many reforms and re-configurations of the police that took place during this time, see Aparicio Barrera, 2019:33–44.

themselves and to foil pillaging and destruction. Finally, the revolt was extinguished and the army were able to control the police mutiny” (Ruiz Vásquez, 2009:68).

As part of his plan to assert a firmer grasp over the police, the Conservative president, Ospina, made some attempts (at the end of 1948 and during 1949) to nationalise them, issuing decrees to the effect that all regional and departmental corps should comply with norms and orders coming from the central government (Aparicio Barrera, 2019:48). The National Police and all regional and local police forces were re-staffed exclusively with Conservative officers (Aparicio Barrera, 2019:47).⁴¹ At the same time, unofficial Conservative forces emerged, known in some places as *pájaros* (Melo, 2017:219) and even the military, which had maintained a semblance of non-partisanship (Melo, 2017:221), “lost its aura of fairness” (Safford and Palacios, 2002:350). As the tension between Liberals and Conservatives escalated, the police became further embroiled in *La Violencia*. In November 1949, the Liberal presidential candidate, Darío Echandía, was targeted by a military police squad—he survived the shooting, but his brother, two students and a merchant did not (Castaño Zuluaga, 1994). This incident prompted the Liberals to declare abstention from participating in the 1950 elections (Safford and Palacios, 2002:348) and the ultra-Conservative (Safford and Palacios, 2002:320) candidate, Laureano Gómez, ran unopposed. In 1951, Gómez stepped down for health reasons and left the presidency in the hands of Roberto Urdaneta. Urdaneta restored regional governors’ power to staff police forces, which meant that what little progress had been made in terms of centralising the police was backtracked. In 1953, after a brief return to power, Gómez was swiftly unseated by the commander of the armed forces, General Gustavo Rojas Pinilla.

It can be argued that the events that transpired at the end of the nineteenth and the first half of the twentieth century did not impact on the development of the Colombian police in quite as meaningful a way as has been presented. In terms of institutional development, the so-called ‘national’ police body remained substantially the same during this period: understaffed, underfunded and operational only in Bogotá. The Thousand Days’ War and *La Violencia* truncated what little institutional development had been initiated by Gilibert’s efforts at professionalisation and nationalisation (Llorente, 1999:400). And although President Ospina

⁴¹ This newly re-staffed police was known as ‘*la policía Chulavita*’ or simply ‘*los chulavitas*’, in reference to a settlement in Boyacá called Chulavita (Safford and Palacios, 2002:350).

attempted to bring local police bodies under a centralised control, the effect of this effort was slight and was soon abandoned by Ospina's successor Urdaneta. As for the connection between policing and socio-political order, the fact that the National Police were staffed and re-staffed by whomever was governing, and that multiple regional police groups remained active throughout this period, meant that the role of the police as a partisan tool for the attainment and maintenance of political power remained alive and well, and was even accentuated.

The Rojas Pinilla dictatorship (1953-1957)

From 1953 to 1957, Colombia was governed by Gustavo Rojas Pinilla's military dictatorship. During his time in power, the military took over the police in an effort to depoliticise and centralise it (Llorente 1999:402). The police, although seemingly less partisan, became deeply militarised.

Rojas Pinilla's strategy seems to have revolved around attempting to break the partisan war by distancing himself and the military from the bloodbath brought about by the confrontation between the Liberals and the Conservatives (Aparicio Barrera, 2019:50). He established the General Command of the Armed Forces (replacing the General Command of the Military Forces) to command the army, the navy, the air force and, now recast as the fourth branch of the military, the police (Decreto 1814 de 10 de Julio de 1953). The National Police was given the name *Fuerzas de Policía* [Police Forces], which he infused with military character, implementing military ranks, hierarchy structures, disciplinary procedures and judicial standing (Aparicio Barrera, 2019:52). As Ruiz Vásquez points out, however, there is ample reason to contest the belief that "the militarization of the police force [was] as a rampart against party allegiances and patronage, to transform it into a non-partisan body after the deviations of *La Violencia*" (2009:75). All branches of the military—army, navy, airforce and police—took part in the repression of dissidence during the dictatorship (Melo, 2017); in this sense, using the police as a tool to seize and keep power remained common political practice. As for centralisation, Rojas Pinilla endeavoured to nationalise all local police corps under what was called the *Fuerzas de Policía Nacional*, the National Police Forces. By 1954 he had managed to centralise several departmental police bodies but, for reasons that remain unclear, the nation did not finance the entirety of the nationalisation process, which meant that a significant number of police bodies remained under the control of local politicians (Aparicio Barrera, 2019:51).

By 1957, a resistance movement had gained significant strength; it included not only students and workers but also members of the oligarchy and eventually the military. In May 1957 a military junta took power. By the end of the year the populace (including, for the first time, women) voted to approve a pact signed by the Liberals and the Conservatives to split power between the two. This arrangement was called the *Frente Nacional* [the National Front], and it sought to put an end to bipartisan violence by having the two parties share government by alternating “the control of the presidency and [providing] equal division of all government posts at all levels between the two traditional parties” (Bergquist, 1986:6).

To sum up, then, we can say that during the Rojas Pinilla dictatorship the police remained a key tool for the maintenance of socio-political order as mandated by the military ruler. In this sense, there is still no significant change in the police’s job of enforcing a ‘brand new’ socio-political order every few years. With regard to institutional development, however, there is indeed one development that took place during the dictatorship that brought about significant institutional change. The nationalisation of local police corps marks the beginning of an important turning point for the police: the first stages of institutional consolidation.

The Cold War and the Rise of the War on Drugs

- Nationalised, Militarised Police -

As we have seen, up until the mid-1960s, the police force remained a tool for political elites to enforce competing views of social order. Rojas Pinilla’s reform of the CNP in the middle of that decade was an important development that finally saw a degree of institutional consolidation of a national police force. This section will address the decades that followed this consolidation, during which the bipartisan wars were brought to a close and promptly replaced with other forms of violence which required that the CNP take on a more militaristic character than previously. Before we proceed, it is important to briefly clarify what is meant by ‘militarisation’ in this context—a term that will be used throughout this chapter and the next. I utilise the definition of Kraska (2007): “police militarization (...) is simply the process whereby civilian police increasingly draw from, and pattern themselves around, the tenets of militarism and the military model” (2007:503). Markers of a militarised police force will be found in the institution’s material resources (e.g. weaponry, equipment, technologies), cultural

makeup (e.g. language, values, appearance), organisational components (e.g. elite squads, special-op groups), and operational practice (e.g. intelligence-gathering, taking part in high-risk operations) (Kraska, 2007:503). The CNP has, however, one further particularity that makes militarisation an even more important component of their work: police have often worked as military, as soldiers, engaging in confrontational war with insurgent armies. This complicated dimension of the CNP will be illustrated throughout this and the next sections of this chapter, and will be expanded in Chapter 7.

The National Front and the Cold War (1960s)

The end of the 1950s and the beginning of the 1960s marked the last stages of the police force's nationalisation process which had started during the military dictatorship. In 1959 the state began to pay the salaries of all police officers nationwide (Ley 193 de 30 de Diciembre de 1959); the national police force was restored its independence, at least to some extent, becoming detached from the General Command of the Armed Forces and placed instead under the purview of the Defence Ministry (Llorente, 1999:403); the name 'Police Forces' was dropped in favour of the name *Policía Nacional de Colombia*, Colombian National Police (Aparicio Barrera, 2019:55); all autonomous local police forces were dissolved and the *Policía Nacional de Colombia* became the only police body in the country (Decreto 1217 de 15 de Mayo de 1962). For all of these reasons, it has been argued that the "real take-off of the institution can be situated as late as 1965, when the first professional officer to have been educated in the colleges of the institution was appointed as director of the police" (Ruiz Vásquez, 2009:54). By the midpoint of the decade, then, the Colombian National Police had gained further autonomy (De Francisco, 2005:172) and it was finally organised—in theory as well as in practice—into a single body.

An important part of the division of power between Liberal and Conservative political elites under the National Front pact, was a pledge to put some distance between politics and state forces: police, military and political elites vowed to stop stepping on each other's toes in order ensure balance and stability (Aparicio Barrera, 2019:54). In this sense, a nationalised, non-partisan institution was only consolidated when the political elites deemed it convenient. Formal displays of intention before the era of the National Front, such as the enacting of legislation creating a National Police under Gilibert's command, did not translate into action because the parties still needed their small police armies to wage war against each other. Once

this intra-class conflict ceased, the political elites took joint control of the state and allowed for the consolidation of a unified police corps that would protect the social arrangement that kept them in power.

The nationalisation of the police, together with a political commitment to introducing distance between the police and politicians, created enough space for the force to develop some semblance of unified institutional character. However, this new nationalised, professionalised institutional configuration did not produce a new way of policing in Colombia: the issues that police officers had to face during the 1960s and 1970s, which will be discussed below, only served to solidify the already deeply ingrained military character of the CNP that had been cultivated during the dictatorship. Before moving on to a discussion of the ways in which the Colombian police changed or did not change during this period, it is worth providing an overview of the conflict that had begun to emerge and that would go on to become a strong shaping force on the institution.

The socio-political landscape of the 1960s and 1970s in Colombia was a particularly complex one. One might be tempted to view it solely through a Northern lens, emphasising the narrative of the international Cold War, but while this would present some insights it would be only partially illuminating. By the same token, to assume that these developments represent as a simple continuation of pre-existing local conflict would also be misleading. Rather, the Colombian conflict of the 1960s and 1970s was neither solely an imported artefact from the global Cold War nor a simple continuation of national bipartisan wars—instead, I would argue that it must be understood as something that developed through the interaction of old national conflicts with an emergent international narrative.

It is important at this juncture to recall that the partisan wars between the Conservatives and the Liberals that gave rise to *La Violencia* had been officially resolved with the *Frente Nacional* in 1958. However, several insurgent groups refused to lay down arms, particularly those whose political views or interests were not represented in the bipartisan power-sharing agreement—e.g. communist and some liberal guerrillas (Aparicio Barrera, 2019:111). These groups were regarded as criminals, *bandidos*, who operated outside the law and all of whom were suspected to be under the influence of international communism (Pécaut, 2008:24 as referenced by Penagos Carreño, 2013:154). At the time, the presence of the state was not felt throughout all of the national territory; this allowed for these *bandidos* to establish full control over individual

areas of the country, which they referred to as ‘independent republics’ (Olave, 2013:152). 1964 and 1965 saw the foundation of the FARC and the ELN respectively (Melo, 2017:247)—initially inconsequential groups which would later become the country’s most active and powerful guerrilla forces.

While it is possible to draw a connective line between these issues and the old conflict between the Liberals and the Conservatives, their struggles for power during *La Violencia*, the resolution of the conflict through a bipartisan distribution of power, and the consequences of that resolution as expressed through the consolidation and expansion of a variety of insurgent forces and protest movements (Aparicio Barrera, 2019:111; Leal Buitrago, 1981), it is clear that the international context of the Cold War had a part to play in the way the conflicts of the 1960s and 1970s unfolded. The international communist and socialist movements of this era resonated with Colombian students and peasants, “who used their local and regional experience of waging guerrilla warfare to strengthen the left’s military projects” (Acevedo Tarazona and Samacá Alonso, 2013:199). Similarly, the Anglo-American vision of combatting the threat of communism through military counter-insurgency tactics resonated with the armed forces of a state that had been fighting partisan guerrilla wars for decades. The national conflict that had been in the making since *La Violencia* and which was now flaring up during the *Frente Nacional*, found overlap and compatibility with the international Cold War rhetoric and rationale.

In this sense, the international narrative aligned effortlessly with the national context and thus it made sense for the Colombian state to adopt a military approach to national security (Aparicio Barrera, 2019:111). For the police this meant working with the military and receiving training from a US mission in 1963 that helped them “develop counterinsurgency tactics and methods in intelligence and information retrieval (...) emphasizing the military character [that they] needed to combat, jointly with the army, the communist guerrilla movement” (Ruiz Vásquez, 2009:64). Joint operations between the military and CNP were a common sight in the fight against *bandidos*, turning the police into what has been described as “a secondary army. (...) The police wore the camouflage uniforms and helmets of the army and their commanders were under the orders of the heads of the military brigades” (Ruiz Vásquez, 2009:87). I will return to the discussion of this militarisation in the next chapter.

By the mid 1960s, social order was being threatened not just by rural pro-socialist guerrillas—

who at the time did not have enough power to represent a significant threat to the establishment (Guáqueta, 2002:62)—but also by various social groups that opposed the political arrangement of the *Frente Nacional* (Aparicio Barrera, 2019:119). The student movement, in particular, was gaining traction—the consolidation of the national union of the universities, *Federación Universitaria Nacional*, in 1963 allowed for the coordination of efforts—and it produced several protests in 1964 and 1965 (Leal Buitrago, 1981) and about 50 strikes between the years 1968 and 1972 (Acevedo Tarazona and Samacá Alonso, 2013:204). Because of the varied nature of these two threats to the socio-political order, the CNP had to develop two different lines of response, one rural and one urban. The rural police consisted mostly of *Carabineros* [mounted police] who, at the end of 1963, began to receive training from the military in counterinsurgency tactics designed to combat rural guerrillas (Aparicio Barrera, 2019:120, 127). The urban police focused on infiltration, intelligence and control of insurgent groups, and mostly targeted labour unions, public schools, universities, and other hotbeds of the emerging social movements (Aparicio Barrera, 2019:120). Despite these differences between rural and urban approaches, police officers in both contexts found themselves working alongside the army to suppress the ‘communist influence’ through counter-insurgency tactics.

While the nationalisation of the police in the 1960s has not entirely escaped the attention of scholars, it has faded into the background somewhat in comparison to the emphasis placed on the 1891 legal foundation. Many historians of the Colombian police have entirely glossed over the consolidation that occurred under the *Frente Nacional* (in fact, several historical accounts of the police do not get as far as the 1960s: e.g. Becerra, 2011; Martinez, 1998); some few have drawn attention to its relevance (e.g. Ruiz Vásquez, 2009:54; Llorente, 1999:403). Even these scholars, however, have not fully explored the importance of this transition period and the implications that it has for the narrative of the Colombian police history and the institutional development of the CNP.

The Colombian police underwent an significant moment of institutional crystallisation, therefore, in this period. It is important to note, however, that, despite its consolidation as a national force, the police continued to be shaped by the political exigencies of the moment. The partisan feuds of the first half of the twentieth century were replaced with new struggles against new enemies. From the moment of consolidation, the CNP, as well as maintaining civic order, found itself fighting guerrillas and urban social movements using tactics borrowed from the army. This militaristic character would continue to grow in strength as the decades passed,

as we shall see.

The rise of the War on Drugs (1970–1980s)

The transition from the War on Communism to the War on Drugs in Colombia first began to take shape with the signing of the counter-drug agreement between Colombia and the United States in 1971. Nevertheless, at the time, the country's role in the consumption and production of narcotics was not especially remarkable, especially in comparison with other Latin American and Asian countries (Guáqueta, 2002:70). At this point, Colombia's incentives to participate in the emergent War on Drugs were not so much grounded on the need to address a pressing problem, but on a socio-cultural compatibility with the prohibitionist approach to narcotics:

Most of Colombian society, and certainly the central ruling elite, had strong sentiments against the use of drugs. Social censure in Colombia was so deep that when cases of drug use arose in the 1960s and 1970s, experts on drug abuse underwent great pains to produce full statistics because families were ashamed to report use or seek professional rehabilitation. Unlike in Bolivia and Peru, the majority of Colombians had no perception of having ancient cultural ties to coca. National regulation had begun in 1920, and slowly evolved towards tighter controls (...). By 1947, Colombia had completely outlawed the cultivation of coca leaf, though actual enforcement was rather weak (Guáqueta, 2002:70).

During the 1970s the US Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA) lent support to the Colombian police both through training of officers in anti-narcotics tactics and through the provision of financial aid to procure equipment (Ruiz Vásquez, 2009:88–9). In 1972 the CNP held the first international seminar on narcotics, an event which culminated with the creation of a modest anti-narcotics group comprised of six men who operated within the CNP's F2 division,⁴² under the name *Información Criminalidad y Estadística* [information, crime and statistics] (US Senate, 1981:131). In 1978 and 1979 the US provided financial and strategic support for the

⁴² The police's organisation at the time mirrored that of the military, which was organised into 'F' divisions: F-1 personnel; F-2- information, crime and statistics; F-3 planning; F-4 administrative services; F-5 accounting and budget; F-6 teaching; F-7 sanitation; and F-8 public relations (Llorente, 1999:408).

operation known as *Operación Fulminante*, for which the military joined forces with the Colombian national security department (*Departamento Administrativo de Seguridad, DAS*) and the judicial police in order to tackle extensive marijuana crops in the Guajira region, in the south of the country (Guáqueta, 2002:74). As relayed in the proceedings of the 1981 US Senate hearings on International Narcotics Trafficking (US Senate, 1981), *Operación Fulminante* revealed a degree of corruption in the Colombian military that led the US to cease collaboration with them and instead choose the CNP as partner in its anti-narcotics efforts (US Senate, 1981:182). This alliance seems to have led to the consolidation of a special police anti-narcotics unit in 1981⁴³ (US Senate, 1981:141), which would be instrumental in the years to come in combatting the Medellín and Cali drug cartels.

The establishment of this unit signified an important institutional development of the 1980s: the emergence of a trend for special-ops teams. This trend emerged from the changing nature of the Colombian scene in the late 1970s and early 1980s. Iberoamerican guerrillas had experienced a second wind after the 1979 Sandinista Revolution in Nicaragua (Rivas Nieto and Rey García, 2008:45) while the emergent narcotics market of the period presented a profitable opportunity for the Colombian guerrillas (Pico Malver et al., 2018:64). As guerrilla groups grew stronger, anti-guerrilla and so-called self-defence groups also began to proliferate. By the beginning of the 1980s the character of these *autodefensas* [self-defence groups] began to shift, their defensive character jettisoned in favour of an active, offensive strategy (Rivas Nieto and Rey García, 2008:44):

The autodefensas went from being small groups that protected land, goods and lives, to be bandas [gangs, groups] that defended people's private interests from guerrillas. Different paramilitary groups started to consolidate, (...) [to advance the interests of parties such as] drug lords, emerald mafias, cattle

⁴³ The exact foundation of such a police group is not entirely clear. Several sources (García Fernández, 2017b; Robles González et al., 2017:36; Pico Malver et al., 2018:65; Padilla de León, 1988) cite *Resolución 2743 de 28 de Abril de 1981* as the legal foundation of the anti-narcotics police group. The earliest reference to this legal provision dates back to 1981 US Senate hearings on International Narcotics Trafficking, where it is stated that *Resolución 2743* created an anti-narcotics division in the police (US Senate, 1981:140). However, there is no record of such a resolution in the official legal database, SUIN Juriscol, which makes it difficult to establish whether there was such a resolution and, if there was, what it contained. It seems that the first appearance of a narcotics-related group was in the 1983 *Decreto 2137*, within the 'special services division' [*División de Servicios Especializados*] that sat within the Directorate of Operations [*Dirección Operativa*]: Article 97 of *Decreto 2137* mentions a *policía de control de sustancias que producen adicción física o psíquica* [police for the control of substances that produce physical or psychical addiction]. It was not until 1987 that this group was merged with the police air force to create an anti-narcotics group (*Decreto 423 de 1987*).

ranchers and landowners (Rivas Nieto and Rey García, 2008:45).

Even though both the guerrillas and the paramilitary groups had grown stronger, however, drug cartels were the strongest extra-legal groups during the 1980s, to the point that they threatened to overpower the state itself (De Francisco, 2005:176). The Medellín Cartel accumulated so much financial and political power in this decade that it destabilised the country (Otera, 1991:956).

The relationships between these different illegal actors (paramilitary groups, guerrillas and narco-traffickers) were somewhat brittle, subject to change, and difficult now to reconstruct with any degree of certainty due to the illegal nature of their enterprises. However, it is certain that they interacted with one another and with the state, both through antagonistic confrontation and corrupt dealings. To give a general idea of these interactions, I provide a brief overview of one facet of such inter-relationships. The flourishing drug dealing business led several narco-traffickers to acquire vast amounts of land—this made them an attractive extortion target for insurgent guerrilla groups (Moncada, 2016:46). Furthermore, drug lords and their families were also at risk of being kidnaped for ransom which, in turn, led to the creation of the MAS group in 1981, which stood for *Muerte a Secuestradores* [Death to Kidnappers], a militia organised by Pablo Escobar, leader of the Medellín drug cartel, to combat guerrilla kidnappings (Pardo Rueda, 2010:675). The threat posed by Escobar and his violent methods in turn prompted the emergence of a vigilante group calling themselves *Los Pepes* ('Perseguidos por Pablo Escobar' [Persecuted by Pablo Escobar]) in the early 1990s, a “clandestine terrorist organization that waged a bloody campaign against people and property associated with the reputed narcotics kingpin” (National Security Archive, 2008). The paramilitary Pepes were later to collaborate with the police, particularly its Bloque de Búsqueda—a task force created to locate Pablo Escobar—in order to bring down their shared enemy, the leader of the Medellín Cartel.

1980s Colombia was thus the setting for a multi-actor conflict kindled mostly by narcotics profits (De Francisco, 2005:173). This landscape prompted the mushrooming of special-ops groups in the CNP, each individual group tailored to a particular angle of the conflict: anti-narcotics units to combat drug cartels; raid and rescue specialists to foil guerrilla takeovers; elite armed squads to take down *sicarios* [paid assassins]; the famous *Bloque de Búsqueda* [Search Block] to find and kill Pablo Escobar; protection schemes for members of the judiciary who were being threatened and intimidated by the drug cartels and paramilitaries; airport

police, in order to control drug trafficking; and protection schemes for the oil extraction infrastructure, which was being targeted by guerrillas (Llorente, 1999:410–1). The fact that the Colombian government was reluctant to involve the military in the fight against narcotics (due to fear of corruption) meant that the CNP stepped up its military training in order to carry out tasks such as eradicating coca crops or finding and destroying cocaine labs in the jungle (Ruiz Vásquez, 2009:88–89).

During this period, the security concerns that guided police priorities remained strongly influenced by international powers. Police efforts to tackle internal political unrest chimed with the US security agenda: the goals of defeating left-leaning armed groups (which had been only of minor concern during the *Frente Nacional* but which were now gaining traction as guerrilla groups) remained key in the international War on Communism; and drug lords, whose wealth and political power was growing exponentially, were a priority target of the US-led War on Drugs. The CNP as an institution was thus shaped to a great degree by the socio-political context, both national and international, in which the police found themselves enmeshed at this time. The war against the guerrillas and the drug cartels required it to refine and further enhance a militaristic character that had long been part of its institutional makeup. The institutional separation of military and police that had taken place in the 1960s had happened in the midst of complex socio-political conflicts that only served to reinforce the operational overlap between police and military in the coming decades. The proliferation of various special-ops groups at this time marks the beginning of an institutional configuration that has, as we shall see in Chapter 7, characterised the CNP until the present day.

The 1991 Constitution and Participatory Reforms **- Decentralised Police with Civic Aspirations -**

The decade of the 1990s saw a series of reforms that sought to curb the militarised character that the CNP had been cultivating since its institutional consolidation during the dictatorship. This section will discuss the contents of these reforms and the changes that were and were not brought about by them. We will see that, despite multiple attempts at reforming the body, there were far more continuities in the CNP's institutional development and the type of socio-political order that they enforced, than there were changes.

Participatory reforms (1988–1998)

The 1990s were a key decade of reform for the CNP and for the country as a whole. The 1991 Constitution brought about important changes in the structure of the state, the economic model of the nation, and the way the country conceived of politics and participation. The state's constitutive framework was replaced by a new one which reflected different parameters of social order, as it professed “reconciliation, inclusion and participation as the antidotes against decades of exclusion and elitism” (Restrepo, 2006:371). In the spirit of a more participatory democracy, the new constitution fostered decentralisation, which aimed at bringing government closer to the people and to adapt to local and regional needs. Mayors were locally elected for the first time in 1988 (*Acto Legislativo 01 de Enero 9 de 1986*), and the 1991 constitution gave them the power to give orders to the police (Article 315, Paragraph 2). This was an important change for the institution, seeing as local government officials were given more control over the planning and execution of police efforts in their cities (Moncada, 2016:51). We should note, however, that “political and administrative decentralisation [is not the same as] police *desconcentración* [scattering/dispersion] at the institutional level” (Ruiz and Romero, 2006:12); this means that, even though since 1991 police have had to collaborate with local government to strategise in security matters, local police did not cease to follow their central, national command (Aparicio Barrera et al., 2019:125). The participatory spirit of the 1991 Constitution therefore brought about changes in the line of command of the CNP and it marked the beginning of a decade of police reforms.

A couple of years after the new Constitution, the CNP started a reform process. The 1993 police reform sought to harmonise the CNP's role with the key principles of the new state-mandated social order by “guarantee[ing] civil rights, citizen participation, decentralization and social inclusion” (Ruiz Vásquez, 2009:96). In addition to adapting to the new constitutional principles, the 1993 reform was also a response to a serious institutional crisis. There was mounting evidence of police involvement in illegal activities, amongst them widespread corruption, extrajudicial violence, collaboration with drug cartels, and participation in the infamous Death Squads⁴⁴ (Amnesty International, 1994; Llorente, 2005; Llorente et al., 2008:20; Moncada, 2009:435). In a sense, the reform was an institutional pledge to stop police

⁴⁴ Death Squads were ‘social cleansing’ groups committed to getting rid of ‘undesirable’ people. Such groups featured significant police participation and were often backed by business owners and traders (Moncada, 2016:66; Amnesty International, 1994:2). This issue will be revisited in Chapter 7.

involvement in illegal networks and fall in line with the legal, state-mandated order.

The 1993 reform was based on the findings of a report produced by two consultive commissions (*Decreto 0591 de 30 de Marzo de 1993*) created by Rafael Pardo, the Minister of Defence at the time. One of the key⁴⁵ recommendations of the report was to ensure the participation of civil society in the construction of a model of public security (Comisión Consultiva, 1993:8). The National System of Citizen Participation was created for this purpose, and it included a series of commissions that were meant to issue policy aiming at connecting with citizens, overseeing police practice and fostering good relationships between local authorities and police (Comisión Consultiva, 1993:9–10; Casas Dupuy, 2005:v). Maria Victoria Llorente, who at the time was an advisor to the Ministry of Defence, (as quoted by González, 2019:86) noted the following about the initiative:

“[The National System of Citizen Participation] originates from a notion that police should be responsive to the citizenry, that they have to connect with the needs of the citizenry . . . [but] the citizenry never demanded it. The mayors weren’t interested in it, nobody was interested in it” (Llorente 2012, as quoted by Gonzalez, 2019:86).

The 1993 reform, thus, suggested institutional changes that the police had no will to implement, the citizens had no interest to monitor, and politicians were not keen to enforce. No grand transformation materialised in practice. However, at the time, this did not seem to be particularly concerning: in 1995, president Samper was dealing with the *Proceso 8000* (an investigation into the financial contribution of the Cali Drugs Cartel to his presidential campaign), and guerrillas were dealing heavy blows against the military, but the police, in contrast, were leading a successful fight against drug cartels (Casas Dupuy, 2005:29). The shaky condition of state institutions by the mid-1990s as well as police success in the war against drug cartels provided the CNP with a moment of power during which they backtracked the 1993 reform (Llorente, 1999:414–5) by introducing their own institutional reform (Casas Dupuy, 2005:29), *Programa de Transformación Cultural y Mejoramiento Institucional* [Programme for Cultural Transformation and Institutional Improvement] in 1995.

⁴⁵ For a more detailed look at the reforms see Camacho Guizado, 2000; Casas Dupuy, 2005; and Ruiz Vásquez et al., 2006.

Two of the key goals of the 1995 Cultural Transformation Programme were to get close to the citizenry (Ruiz Vásquez et al., 2006:204; Casas Dupuy, 2005:31), and to introduce the principles of efficiency and efficacy in resource management and service provision (Soacha Sánchez, 2013:70)—otherwise known as managerialist principles. But perhaps the most impactful aspect of this reform was the fact that the director of the police was granted the power to unilaterally dismiss officers. This resulted in an institutional purge that saw 7,000 officers dismissed because of corruption between 1995 and 1998 (Casas Dupuy, 2005:31). In 1997 yet another reform was introduced, this time to tackle the organisational structure of the CNP in order to merge and flatten the multitude of divisions that coexisted at the time in a military-style vertical hierarchy (Llorente, 1999:414–5, 420; Ruiz Vásquez et al., 2006:207).

These three reforms, buttressed by a strong track-record in the fight against *narcotráfico* [drug trafficking] through intelligence (Llorente, 2005:197), had a positive impact on the police's public image (Dammert, 2007:159). However, beyond the personnel purge and the modification of the organisational structure of the police, institutional transformation did not quite materialise (Ruiz Vásquez et al., 2006:204; Llorente, 2005:194). The lack of internal enthusiasm for reform (Ruiz Vásquez et al., 2006:204), as well the national government's poor interest in actively monitoring and enforcing change (Casas Dupuy, 2005:43) prevented most of these measures proposed by these reforms from touching the institutional core of the CNP in terms of policing culture and practice (Ruiz Vásquez et al., 2006:201, 2015). There are three key exceptions that made an impact in the institution and that, to varying degrees, remain relevant to this day: the introduction of local government as a decision-maker in matters of security, the formulation of community-oriented initiatives, and the implementation of the very first steps toward a managerialist functioning of the institution. I will now address each of these items.

Local government and private interest

Regarding the introduction of local government as a party to decisions relating to security, it is important to note that this devolution of power coincided with another change in legislation: from 1996 private sector actors were authorised to give donations to the police and other state institutions. These two changes created a significantly more complex matrix of (legal but sometimes questionable) interactions in matters of security, given that police now found

themselves having to negotiate, collaborate and clash with local government and private sector actors. Moncada (2016) offers an interesting example from the city of Cali. In 1992, newly elected city mayor, Rodrigo Guerrero, endeavoured to identify structural causes of violence to formulate data-driven policy, in order to move away from the ‘more police’ approach to solving security problems. Simultaneously the city’s most prominent business leaders formed a commission that aimed at actively contradicting the mayor’s strategy by suggesting that the only possible solution was the strong deployment of state forces thus gaining police favour. The private sector financed police infrastructure, provided new equipment and offered financial support that the city could not match, thus curtailing the mayor’s authority over the force and his ability to dictate security policy. As illustrated by this case, there are several actors who have a say in the way in which security is dealt with, and the interests that drive each of them are often competing or different.

This issue has not been sufficiently studied but, if we take Moncada’s (2016) case study as an indicator, it is likely that this phenomenon has significant implications for the administration of security all over the country. The CNP (and other state institutions) have been able to receive donations since 1996, but it was not until 2014 (*Resolución 5342 de 25 de Junio de 2014*) that such contributions were regulated by the law and, even to this day, there are serious concerns regarding the extent to which private sector actors use such donations to bend the police and other state institutions for their benefit (La Liga Contra el Silencio, 2019a). A 2019 official document providing annotations on the finances of the CNP, for instance, specifies that private entities donated goods such as vehicles, printers, computers, etc. (Policía Nacional, 2019b:108), which suggests that there is a relationship between private interest and the police that may be worth exploring.

In terms of institutional operation, these changes added extra actors to the process of setting goals and formulating strategies in matters of security. As a result, several mandates concerning police practice coexist, to this day, in a muddled environment that supports varied (and sometimes contesting) priorities.⁴⁶ It follows from this that order, in terms of security, is not an unequivocal set of state-dictated rules that police must enforce, but rather an interactive process by which several parties, such as local government and the private sector, set their priorities and demand, encourage or lure the police to uphold their vision of order.

⁴⁶ For a detailed case study on this matter see Aparicio Barrera et al., 2019.

Community-oriented initiatives

The origins of community policing are uncertain—mostly due to the vague and wide-encompassing nature of the term—but it is clear that this approach to policing dominated security agendas in a multiple countries throughout the 1990s (Cordner, 2014:148-9). As defined by Skogan (2006), community policing is “a process rather than a product” (2006:28) that aims at improving the way police relate to the public which, in turn, is meant to inform a better, more tailor-made, local police practice (Cordner, 2014:153-54; Frühling, 2012:78; Skogan, 2006:27-28). Despite the vague nature of the concept, there seems to be a modest degree of consensus regarding the key principles of community policing: “citizen involvement, problem solving and decentralization” (Skogan, 2006:28; see also Karpiak, 2014:129). An interesting aspect of community policing is how it originated in the North and then mushroomed all over the world. Brogden and Nijhar (2013) suggest that, in so-called “failed and transitional societies”, community policing was introduced as “the new cargo cult, as the Western missionaries promote a policing elixir that will resolve a range of social ills” (Brogden and Nijhar, 2013:3). In Colombia, the trend gained traction in during the 1990s, when a group of carefully selected officers were sent to Spain to learn from Barcelona’s neighbourhood policing strategy (Frühling, 2012:80).

There were several attempts to introduce programmes to enhance police-community relations in the decade of the 1990s. Some of these aimed at the decentralisation of policing practice: CAIs (*Centro de Atención Inmediata*), satellite mini-stations, were introduced as local police units designed to apply community-oriented strategies such as problem-oriented policing (a strategy whereby “police, communities, and local agencies are encouraged to work together to identify specific problems that cause incidents and tackle them together” (Gooch and Williams, 2015). In addition, the CNP trained a group of officers to become *Policía Comunitaria* [Community Police], a division in charge of fostering a sense of shared responsibility amongst civil authorities, police and the general citizenry in matters of security (López Riaño, 2007:495, 497). Neighbourhood-watch-style initiatives were also promoted, such as Local Security Fronts [*Frentes de Seguridad Local*] and Security Schools [*Escuelas de Seguridad*] (Llorente, 2005:200).

In practice, however, the CAIs did not end up operating as they were meant to, partly because

of lack of personnel (Llorente, 1999:417), but also because the CNP was not prepared to support the high levels of discretion, as well as training and oversight, required for the successful devolution of powers related to such a policing strategy (Llorente, 1999:430; Ruiz and Romero, 2006:12). The neighbourhood-watch-style initiatives ended up overlapping with tasks performed by the Community Police, and they both ended up conducting public outreach activities, more than providing any significant shift in police practice overall (Llorente, 2005:201). Nowadays CAIs remain operational as organisational units in the administrative sense—the territorial jurisdiction of each police station is further divided into CAIs—but this seems to be the extent of their purpose. The Community Police, in turn, was somewhat dissolved by transitioning it from a dedicated group of trained officers, to a generalised approach to policing, *Vigilancia Comunitaria* [Community Policing], which every officer in the CNP should apply (López Riaño, 2007:497). These trends on community-oriented policing—modelled after Northern policing strategies—failed to gain purchase within the institution and eventually faded away (community police) or were repurposed (CAIs).

It follows from this that community-oriented initiatives, although having an important cosmetic impact on the institution, did not truly engrain themselves in the CNP's core, and thus did not amount to ground-shaking institutional reform. We do see, however, that the trend of importing security agendas and policing models from the North to address local priorities remains firmly in place. Brogden and Nijhar (2013) draw a parallel between the implementation of community policing initiatives in non-Western contexts and the US's police aid which was used a few decades before “as an instrument of foreign policy to prevent the encroachment of socialist ideas and rule in contested Latin American societies” (Brogden and Nijhar, 2013:4). Thus, the implementation of various community policing programmes amounted to little more than passing fads, but they are indeed a clear illustration of the fact that the CNP continued to follow Northern models of security and order maintenance.

The seed of managerialism in the CNP

One noteworthy aspect of the CNP's institutional development during the 1990s was the appearance of a seminal idea that would later affect much of police practice: managerialism. Managerialism is based on the notion that all organisations, whether public or private, can benefit from a business-like management style that prioritises “economy, efficiency and effectiveness” (Harris and White, 2018:1), where “progress is seen as lying in the achievement

of continuing increases in productivity” (Harris and White, 2018:2).

The managerialist approach was only beginning to permeate the CNP in the 1990s, as suggested by the introduction of ‘Strategic Institutional Plans’ for the modernisation of management and planning practice within the institution (Llorente, 2005:199). Clearly laying out specific goals and objectives through the publication of an institutional strategic plan was the first step toward the organisation of policing in managerialist terms. Planning, executing and delivering concrete results started to feature prominently in the institutional landscape of the CNP: the 2000s decade started off with the introduction of a points-based system to score officers’ performance, and geo-referencing and statistics became of central importance to the institution. The seed of managerialism that was planted during the 1990s grew and propagated during the 2000s and, to this day, this approach continues to shape policing in Colombia. Chapter 8 will dedicate ample space to the discussion of managerialism and the impact it has had in the institution as the strongest driver of police practice in Bogotá.

The reforms that took place during the last decade of the twentieth century did not, for the most part, result in a profound institutional transformation (Casas Dupuy, 2005:43; Llorente, 2005:194; Ruiz Vásquez et al., 2006:204; 2015). Though some aspects of the institution did, to varying degrees, change: CAIs were created, community-oriented initiatives were implemented (though mostly failing to achieve their intended goals), local government became more involved in matters of security, and the notion of managerialism made its first modest appearance in the CNP. Despite the fact that the 1990s reforms were inspired by the Northern trend of community-oriented policing, the idea of democratising the police did not have much purchase in the Colombian society (see quote from Llorente above). It may be for this reason that the institution itself did not suffer a significant transformation as a product of these initiatives. Perhaps with the exception of corruption—which was very much a concern specific to the CNP—the reforms were mostly responding to international trends on policing (aimed at cultivating the civic character of police bodies), as opposed to the major security concerns that threatened the country’s socio-political order (armed conflict, which were thought to require a more militarised police),⁴⁷ which could potentially explain why little came out of them.

⁴⁷ The next chapter will discuss those national security issues that were not tackled by the reforms but that, nevertheless, shaped police practice in the 1990s.

War on Terror and Peace Agreements - Militarised Police and Renewed Civic Aspirations -

The participatory reforms of the 1990s resulted in very little lasting change, as we have seen, but important developments would come about not from any movement towards reform, but as a result of the policing tactics of the Uribe presidencies (2002–2010). In this period, the police force was used to launch an aggressive military strategy against illegal armed forces. The CNP also had to contend with new forms of violence that followed the signing of two peace agreements in 2006 (AUC, paramilitaries) and 2016 (FARC, guerrillas).

The War on Terror (1998–2010)

From the second half of the 1990s it became apparent that the FARC had been making significant military and territorial gains (Centro Nacional de Memoria Histórica, 2013:172, 197). Andrés Pastrana assumed the presidency in 1998 and began to negotiate a peace agreement with the guerrilla. The slow pace of the negotiations, the inherently antithetical agendas of government and guerrilla, the continuation of the armed conflict, as well as the post-9/11 declaration of war on terrorism were some of the key reasons why the talks came to an end in 2002 (Centro Nacional de Memoria Histórica, 2013:172, 208). The failed peace talks with Pastrana's government left the armed group in a powerful position and encouraged the voters to elect a president who promised a heavy hand against the FARC, Álvaro Uribe. Uribe began his first of two terms in office in 2002 (–2010), the year in which the FARC reached their highest peak in terms of offensive military activities (Centro Nacional de Memoria Histórica, 2013:172, 211). His 'Democratic Security' plan laid out a strategy for regaining control over lost territories and recovering the security of the citizenry (Presidencia de la República, 2003). Uribe's "hardline tactics to reestablish security in Colombia" (Moncada, 2016:78) dealt the final blow to those initiatives that had aimed at creating a more civic, friendly, community-oriented brand of policing during the 1990s.

These efforts were significantly aided by the events of September 11, 2001, and their worldwide repercussions. After the World Trade Center attacks, the financial aid that the United States had been giving since 1998 to the Colombian state through *Plan Colombia* to

advance the War on Drugs broadened its terms to include counterinsurgency efforts (Aguilar Peña, 2013:101; Ramírez, 2010:4). This development opened up financial resources that helped fund Uribe's efforts to dismantle the guerrillas not through dialogue but through military force. In order to achieve these aims, a significant increase in the number of officers was required. The urgent need for personnel led to officer training periods being cut in half, from one year to six months, and to the recruitment of many more non-professional individuals (e.g. police assistants), who undertook a mere three-month training course before deployment (Llorente, 2005:204). The lack of proper police training for new recruits meant that the cohesiveness of the institution—something that would usually develop organically through officer's education in police doctrine—became severely weakened. In the words of Llorente et al., Uribe's push for territorial control was executed "without any regard for matters of doctrine or the differentiation between police and military" (Llorente et al., 2008:10). It was at this time that the CNP accentuated the military character that had remained latent since its inception, often fulfilling war-time roles as soldiers would (Ruiz Vásquez, 2009:89). The issue of police militarisation as it unfolded at this time will be the subject of the next chapter.

During the 2000s, the socio-political order upheld by the police was significantly re-shaped by a national security agenda guided by American foreign policy. Leftist guerrillas, once the target of the international War on Communism, were now re-cast as one of the antagonists in the new War on Terror. Thus, the existential threat to the Colombian state's socio-political order was made to align with the existential threat to the United States from fundamental Islamist terrorism, as embodied by Al-Qaeda. Important changes took place in the CNP during Uribe's terms, not as a result of reform,⁴⁸ but because of an aggressive governmental strategy aimed at the military defeat of the guerrillas and backed by Northern powers. The military undertones that had characterised the CNP since its institutional consolidation during Rojas Pinilla's dictatorship were considerably strengthened and, even though there was no formal merging with the military, the police force became, in many respects, little more than an extension of the army.

⁴⁸ In 2003 there were renewed attempts to reform the police, triggered by new scandals of corruption in the force and a suspected collapse of their internal control mechanisms (Ruiz Vásquez et al., 2006:211). It is not clear why exactly this reform never came to be. Casas Dupuy (2005:60) suggests that some of the recommendations put forward by the reform commission were geared towards strengthening the civil character of the police, which clashed with Uribe's need for a militarised police. On the other hand, Ruiz Vásquez et al. (2006:213–4) argues that such a reform did not impinge on Uribe's plans for the force, and instead suggests that the reform did not materialise due to lack of political interest in its implementation. In any case, this reform fizzled away having effected little to no change.

Peace agreements (2006–2016)

From 2003 to 2006 Uribe negotiated a disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR) agreement with the most prominent of the rightwing paramilitary groups, the AUC (Grajales, 2011). As early as 2007, however, the *Comisión Nacional de Reparación y Reconciliación* (CNR), the commission in charge of monitoring the implementation of the DDR process, released a report which highlighted the presence of several local armed groups formed from the remnants of the AUC (Comisión Nacional de Reparación y Reconciliación, 2007:3), though the commission noted that it was unclear whether these groups represented paramilitaries that had refused to demobilise, paramilitaries who had demobilised and then rearmed themselves, a new generation of paramilitary groups or simply emergent criminal organisations with ties to former AUC members (BACRIM, *Bandas Criminales Emergentes* [Emergent Criminal Bands]). In any case, the demobilisation of the AUC did not, by any means, put an end to violence and armed conflict in Colombia. Juan Manuel Santos assumed the presidency for two terms, from 2010 to 2018. The flagship achievement of his administration was a peace treaty with the FARC. As the FARC disbanded (a process that began in 2016) there was a propagation of *disidencias* [dissidences], smaller groups comprised of former members that either never demobilised or that took up arms again after the treaty—an outcome similar to that brought about by the DDR agreement with paramilitaries. Rather than ridding the country of illegal armed groups, therefore, these peace agreements have given way to different forms of violence and criminal enterprise (Porch and Rasmussen, 2008; Neild, 2001:22).

In an attempt to reinstate state-mandated order in those places that were once controlled by large, organised illegal groups such as the FARC and the AUC, these agreements to set arms down have resulted in what is referred to as a ‘breakdown of protection systems’ (Nussio and Howe, 2016). Such ‘protection systems’, as defined by Nussio and Howe (2016), are often provided by armed actors such as paramilitaries, mafia groups, warlords and guerrillas—these groups can sometimes contain certain types of crime and violence in the areas they control due to the harsh penalties they impose on non-compliance.⁴⁹ This balance is upset when such groups demobilise or are driven out of their control area and the state does not step in to establish and

⁴⁹ The authors quote the following example from a woman in Tierralta: “Some years ago, somebody stole my Christmas lights and I reported it to the [paramilitary] commander of my town. Some days later, the thief was dead. That wasn’t the punishment I hoped for” (Nussio and Howe, 2016:855).

enforce order: “new competition between criminal organizations over existing rents, reduced costs for committing crime, and expanded opportunities for revenge seeking may lead to increased violence in the post-demobilization period” (Nussio and Howe, 2016:849). In addition, there is a significant likelihood of ex-combatants who are not able to transition to a legal life being recruited by criminal gangs (Sullivan and Bunker, 2017). This nurtures criminal enterprises that now find themselves with the opportunity and the space to grow.

The police, then, must now contend with both dissident forces who did not set arms down and emergent criminal organisations that are taking up the illegal businesses (including narco-trafficking and racketeering) left vacant by demobilised forces (Sullivan and Bunker, 2017). This task is significantly different to combating cohesive armed groups, given that “the organizational structures and operations of post-demobilization organizations—including leadership, rules and behavior—are murky and unpredictable” (Nussio and Howe, 2016:856). Despite the dissolution of important armed groups, state-mandated socio-political order remains threatened by strong illegal forces; the police, therefore, continue to strive to contain these illegal actors as their organisational/network configuration mutate and develop.

Even though the accords have not eliminated the problem of para-legal social order, the signing of peace treaties did create some political space for the CNP to attempt a shift towards preventative forms of policing (Ley 1801 del 29 de Julio de 2016, art. 1). For instance, there was a renewed effort to get close to the community through the implementation of the programme *Vigilancia Comunitaria por Cuadrantes* [Quadrant Community Patrolling] (begun in 2012 and still in effect). This strategy, reminiscent of the community-oriented reforms of the 1990s, consists of the division of police activity into small areas of jurisdiction, *cuadrantes* [quadrants], which are patrolled by the same officers for up to two years in order to foster better police-citizen relations through the tailoring of police service to the specific needs of the local area (Fundación Ideas Para la Paz, 2012:11). Furthermore, a new police code was enacted in 2016 (Ley 1801 del 29 de Julio de 2016) and came into force in January 2017, replacing the old one that had been in operation since the 1970s. Its aim, in its own words, is “preventative and it seeks to establish the conditions necessary for coexistence in the national territory, and to foster the respect of the rights and obligations of natural and legal persons, as well as determining the functioning and activities carried out by the police, in line with the political

constitution and the current legal system” (Article 1).⁵⁰

A number of academic works have discussed the role of the police in the post-peace treaties era (Vargas Velásquez, 2006; Cárdenas Sepúlveda and Petro González, 2014; Jiménez Vega, 2017; Cruz Rodríguez, 2017; Baracaldo Méndez, 2018; Ramírez Salgado and Céspedes Prieto, 2016). However, all are speculative and centred on presenting ideas about what the role of the police should be in this scenario (they generally argue that the institution should shed its military functions and focus on professionalisation and civic policing duties). Such works have very little to say about the actual role the police have played since 2016 or whether there has in fact been a substantive change to policing practice. As outlined in the previous section, there is evidence that police reform projects in Colombia have not often translated into actual, or at least significant, institutional change. Neild (2001) suggests that “police reforms [in war-torn settings] are probably always fragile and politically contingent” (2001:35). As we shall see, the punitive, coercive side of the CNP remains very much active and, in that sense, it seems like a move towards a largely preventative police service has not fully taken place. The fact that new generations of violent groups and networks have been mushrooming throughout the country, coupled with a rise in social protest, potentially supports the idea that the military character of the police will remain relevant going forward. I will explore this theme further in Chapter 7.

Conclusion

The period covered by this chapter comprises the history of the police as it transitioned from a series of decentralised, politicised bodies to the nationalised, militarised institution of the present day. I have demonstrated that the institutional development of the CNP has not been a straightforward progression guided by carefully executed turning points: the legal creation of a National Police in 1891 did not bring about a nationalised body, as has often been claimed,

⁵⁰ One of the most obvious tasks of the new code was to update it to encompass a series of behaviours and phenomena that have become prevalent in society but that were not included in the previous code. The use of technology is an illustrative example: Article 87 Paragraph 4 establishes that only vendors who have acquired a permit from the Ministry of Technology and Information can sell mobile phones—this is a measure introduced in order to tackle the commercialisation of stolen phones. The code, however, raised the alarm in some sectors for several reasons, amongst them the ambiguous language used in articles such as those dealing with protests, house raids and stop and search procedures (Barbosa, 2017). The ambiguous terminology used in these articles lends itself to interpretation in an arbitrary way (Jiménez Ospina, 2019) and has the potential to curtail people’s rights and result in the further marginalisation of already vulnerable populations (Lalinde Ordóñez, 2017).

because regional corps remain operational; Rojas Pinilla's endeavour to depoliticise the police, an effort often taken at face value by historians of the Colombian police, did not in fact materialise, as the institution was used to keep the military regime in place; finally, as numerous critics have pointed out, the multiple participatory police reforms of the 1990s did not achieve significant institutional change because they did not attract political interest and because the internal conflict was thought to require a militarised police. In this sense, it is clear that when it comes to the institutional development of the CNP, these much-vaunted turning points in the history of the institution are not as significant as often presented. Instead, I identify two key phases as: 1) a period of localised bipartisan groups, which began in the nineteenth century and which ended with the transition to a truly national police body in the mid-1960s; and 2) a period in which a unified CNP has cultivated a strong military character that we recognise in the War on Drugs and the War on Terrorism (narratives that have been informed by Northern politics) but, as we shall see in the following chapter, is also evident in the way in which the CNP exercises its day-to-day policing duties to this day. The character of the police, in other words, has tended to closely mirror the contemporaneous socio-political order: when the country's elites were at war with one another, numerous bipartisan police bodies allowed them to continue their struggle through force, repression and intimidation; when these elites had united, and a threat to the established socio-political order had arisen in the form of extra-legal armed groups, the police became a unified, militarised weapon to be used to defend the establishment.

As for the future of the Colombian National Police, I would suggest that, notwithstanding the two peace treaties that have been signed with the FARC (guerrillas) and the AUC (paramilitaries), the military traits that have characterised the institution since its nationalisation will remain central to its operations. The new forms of violence and social unrest that have emerged in the post-peace era are likely to curb initiatives aimed at transitioning toward more civic forms of policing. In the next chapter I will delve deeper into the militarisation of the CNP in order to present a more detailed view of what this form of social order maintenance entails.

CHAPTER 7

Police and War

The Militarisation of the CNP

Introduction

In the last two chapters, I discussed the institutional development of the CNP in relation to wider socio-political developments in Colombia. The police have regularly been called on to handle problems of order, a category covering not just petty crimes but also major political threats aimed at destabilising the power of the ruling elite (for example, ‘communist’ armed groups during the National Front and drug cartels during the 1980s.⁵¹ In Colombia, then, police have been useful not so much as civic servants providing services of crime prevention, problem-solving and crime-fighting, but as defenders of order tasked with quashing threats to national security. For this reason, as we have seen, police officers have often been deployed to fight alongside the army to defend the political order against illegal actors. In this sense, the CNP have, for a long time, exercised their role in a militarised fashion, drawing on discipline, indoctrination, tactics, and equipment typical of the army (Llorente, 1999; Puentes Cala, 2017). The military character of the Colombian police, however, goes beyond their participation in

⁵¹ Granted, protecting people’s private property and investigating (as well as *attempting* to prevent) personal injuries, are beneficial for the people in general. However, we shall see that, in practice, these are often not a central concern.

the internal armed conflict. Scholars have advocated for thinking of militarisation not just as the use of weaponry and military tactics but as the adoption of an ideology that accepts violence as an adequate means to deal with problems of order (Herzog, 2001; Kraska, 2007). In addition to exploring the police's role in the internal armed conflict, therefore, I will also discuss police violence and the militarised character of police ideology.

We have, then, two interrelated issues which I will treat under separate headings: the role of the CNP in the internal armed conflict and the militarisation of everyday police practice. Under the first heading, I will discuss the war-time role fulfilled by police particularly in the 1990s and 2000s. This section is grounded in the experiences of a number of the fieldwork respondents who recalled the challenges of being deployed alongside or in place of the army in areas controlled by insurgent armed groups. Under the second heading, I will explore the ways in which the CNP have become increasingly militarised along the lines discussed by Kraska (2007). This is evidenced by the fact that policing duties can be carried out through forceful—and sometimes lethal—means, often aided by military armament and militaristic problem-solving strategies. To illustrate this point, I will discuss police violence directed at minorities and people who participate in social protest, as reported by a small number of studies that have been developed on these issues, and I will complement these studies with data from my fieldwork as well as journalistic sources.

The aim of this chapter, then, is **to explore the militarised institutional character of the CNP as evidenced by their involvement in the internal armed conflict, and their violent police practice against citizens**. These analyses will support the argument that the CNP often disregard their civic duty, instead leaning on a military ideology that has been, as we saw in the previous chapters, a common feature of the organisation for several decades.

Conceptualising militarisation

Recent decades have seen the production of a number of studies on the subject of the militarisation of police forces, as a reaction to the expansion of the phenomenon since the 1970s. These studies have focused on several different parts of the world, with scholars arriving at the conclusion that “the issue of police militarization is (...) a global one” (Bolduc, 2016:168). In Chapter 6, I introduced a brief definition of the concept of militarisation; I will now expand upon this definition in order to support a more profound analysis of this

phenomenon in Colombia.

‘Militarism’ as an ideology is defined as “a set of beliefs, values, and assumptions that stress the use of force and threat of violence as the most appropriate and efficacious means to solve problems. It emphasizes the exercise of military power, hardware, organization, operations, and technology as its primary problem-solving tools” (Kraska, 2007:503). ‘Militarisation’, meanwhile, is the implementation of that ideology, “the process of arming, organizing, planning, training for, threatening, and sometimes implementing violent conflict” (Kraska, 2007:503; cf. Enloe, 2004). When exploring the issue of police militarisation, Kraska argues that we should not be concerned with establishing whether or not a police force is militarised, as all police forces are militarised to some degree: “after all, the foundation of military and police power is the same—the state sanctioned capacity to use physical force to accomplish their respective objectives (external and internal security)” (Kraska, 2007:503). The question, therefore, should be aimed at exploring *the extent* to which police are militarised. In recent decades, societies around the world, in states such as United States, France and Israel, have, to a greater and greater degree, come to organise themselves around “the production of violence or the threat thereof” (Kraska, 1999:208); “war” as Muzzatti writes in the context of policing in late twentieth- and early twenty-first-century America, “has become a permanent condition adopted by a State that is becoming increasingly defined by its repressive functions” (Muzzatti, 2005:109).

In this chapter, I will attempt to show how military values and ideas have been filtering through to, and gaining prominence in, the CNP. In particular I will focus on two key aspects of militarism: the belief that “physical force, aggressiveness, order, discipline, and self-sacrifice [are] appropriate and desirable for the resolution of [police] problems” (Herzog, 2001:183), and the glorification of “military means such as military power, sophisticated equipment, and advanced technology for the achievement of goals” (Herzog, 2001:183). One of the most relevant traits that are brought about by the heightened presence of a militarised ideology in the police is the idea that “having enemies is a natural condition” (Enloe, 2004:119; cf. Herzog, 2001:188; Meeks, 2006:37; Hill and Beger, 2009:25); this leads them to engage with offenders as they would with a war-time adversary (Hill and Beger, 2009:25). ‘The enemy’, as conceived in the military ideology, is a threat that “must be neutralized by aggressive means”, given that they “only understand the language of force” (Herzog, 2001:182, 188). Referencing Kremnitzer, Herzog explains that this narrative about the enemy fosters ‘pre-violence

behaviour’: “namely exaggerated suspicion, rude and inconsiderate conduct, resort to unreasonable and unnecessary measures, unwillingness to explain or listen, and acceptance of violence for its own sake” (Kremnitzer, 1994:13, as referenced by Herzog, 2001:188). This ‘pre-violence behaviour’ will be a theme of my discussions of everyday police practice in Colombia. A corollary of this militarised view of internal enemies is that marginalised groups within society will often slip into the role of the enemy: in a society where the crimes of the poor and powerless are heavily penalised and vilified, these groups are the ones most easily cast into the role of ‘the enemy’ (Vitale, 2017:6). We should not be surprised therefore find that disadvantaged populations are often more likely to be the target of police abuse (Lalinde, 2015; Temblores, 2020), as I shall discuss below.

Before proceeding, it is worth highlighting one aspect of this phenomenon of militarisation that will not be dealt with in depth in the current chapter: that of gender. As we shall see in Chapter 9, police forces were conceived of as all-male spaces where men carry out *macho* activities requiring physical strength and an imposing attitude (Brown and Heidensohn, 2000; Martin, 1980). This construction of the archetypal officer leaves women in a position of disadvantage and marginalisation because of the female traits that are attributed to female officers such as being submissive and non-confrontational (Miller, 1999). In line with the militarism ideology, CNP officers often regard “the use of force and threat of violence as the most appropriate and efficacious means to solve problems”. In Chapter 9 I will develop the argument that, by studying the place of women in the CNP, we can see that their marginalisation serves to protect and maintain the confrontational, coercive, violence-based, *macho* character of the CNP. The present chapter analyses some of these masculinised, institutional traits, as related to the militarisation of the police force, and I will return to these findings later in the thesis in order to explore how militarisation interacts with the construction of gender relations in the police.

Finally, there has been much discussion in the context of policing in Colombia of the militarisation of the CNP. Scholars have identified a number of key pieces of evidence that speak to the military character of the police force in Colombia: the fact that police officers came to fight side by side with the military on a regular basis, the fact that the force is part of the Ministry of Defence, that police ranks mirror those of the military,⁵² that their strict hierarchy fosters a militaristic order in the institution and that even their uniforms were

⁵² Although they are currently being phased out.

designed for war (Goldsmith et al. 2007:82; Llorente, 1999; Ruiz Vásquez, 2009:87). These kinds of characteristics have been used to define militarisation worldwide (Bieler, 2016:587–90) and are useful evidence of such a process in Colombia but these Colombian studies have been insulated to some extent from sociological theories of militarisation. Their arguments rest on the wartime role played by the CNP over a number of decades, as well as the evidence of the organisation and hierarchy of the institution. Sociologists and criminologists of recent decades, as we have seen, have suggested several other markers that indicate militarisation, notably, the acceptance of violence as an appropriate means to use on day-to-day police practice. This approach has not been thoroughly explored in the Colombian context, a context in which the wartime role of the CNP has overshadowed the exploration of other less glaring forms of militarisation. It is therefore worth considering what we can learn from applying this model to the CNP. Before that, however, we must look at the history of the police involvement in the internal conflict and explore its ramifications on the officers of the CNP.

CNP Officers and the Internal Armed Conflict

In the last chapter, I traced the history of the CNP and discussed the militarisation that has characterised the institution since its consolidation in the 1960s and that peaked during the 1990s and 2000s. The present analysis complements this historical overview by bringing in the experiences of the officers I spoke to many of whom vividly recounted their experiences in the armed conflict of the 1990s and 2000s. Many officers, during both interviews and informal conversations, addressed the war-role that they had had to fulfil in the 1990s and 2000s. Though I never brought up this topic, it emerged numerous times as a theme of our conversations and interviews, an indication of the deep impact that this period has had on many officers and their professional careers. This section, in other words, emerged from the war stories relayed by officers.

A number of interviewees relayed how a salient aspect of their job in the 1990s and 2000s was their deployment to conflict areas where they were expected to be in direct, armed confrontation with guerrilla groups.⁵³ In order to understand this part of the police's role it is necessary to make reference to the way in which the guerrillas, particularly the FARC, fought

⁵³ There were other prominent armed groups operating at the time but we will focus on guerrillas because the stories relayed by the respondents concerned these groups.

their war in the last decades of the twentieth century and the first decades of the twenty-first. As illustrated in Figure 4, these decades correspond to the period when the guerrillas were strongest. This was also the period of Uribe’s ‘Democratic Security’ plan, which aimed at achieving a military defeat—as opposed to a dialogue-based demobilisation—of the guerrillas. One of the main strategies implemented by the guerrillas at this time was the *toma* [lit. ‘the taking’]. A *toma guerrillera* is defined by the *Centro Nacional de Memoria Histórica* [National Centre for Historical Memory] (CNMH) as an incursion into a municipal capital or settlement during which “territorial control is exercised through military power”, and which “combines most of the following variables: a somewhat sustained confrontation with the public force (military and police) when there is one (sometimes there is no state-presence to begin with); the exercise of proselytism; the establishment of *justicia guerrillera* [guerrilla justice], where the guerrilla exercises legislative and executive powers; partial or total destruction of the municipal infrastructure (including police stations); confiscation of goods; and different degrees of victimisation stemming from collateral or premeditated damage” (Centro Nacional de Memoria Histórica, 2016:47–8). *Tomas* were used as part of a *guerilla* strategy to penetrate towns and seize control of them as a necessary step towards defeating state forces (Centro Nacional de Memoria Histórica, 2016:34). The CNMH estimates that, over the course of the last six decades, “at least 569 municipalities—out of the 1,096 that comprise the national territory—were subject to guerrilla *tomas* and police station attacks” (Centro Nacional de Memoria Histórica, 2016:42). The far-reaching power of illegal armed forces led to the deployment of the police as a bulwark against their growing influence; this meant that deployment to areas controlled by insurgent armed groups became part of the purview of the CNP police officer.

Presidential terms	1990–1994	1994–1998	1998–2002	2002–2006	2006–2010	2010–2014	2014–2018
President	Gaviria	Samper	Pastrana	Uribe	Uribe	Santos	Santos
Negotiations			Failed Caguán peace talks			Havana peace talks start (2012)	Peace accord approved by Congress (2016)
Guerrilla strength	Guerrilla strongest			Guerrilla curtailed by Democratic Security plan		FARC announces indefinite ceasefire (end of 2014)	De-escalation FARC conflict and peace talks with ELN

Figure 4: Key stages of the internal armed conflict since the 1990s

During the 1990s the guerrillas were so strong that the public force was often unable to stop

insurgents from taking over territories (Aguilar Peña, 2013:94). The *tomas guerrilleras* of this decade “led to the expulsion of police and civil authorities from remote villages or to a co-governing scenario where state and guerrilla authorities [shared governing power]” (Aguilar Peña, 2013:95). At the time, the commanders of the military attempted to curtail the power of the guerrillas by implementing a strategy whereby guerrillas were driven out of their controlled territories and then, in order to maintain the newly reclaimed order, police and military units were rotated in and out of the areas (Ospina Ovalle, 2006:60). State order was, therefore, not fully reinstated and police officers who were deployed as part of this strategy had to face the very real possibility of having to fight against armed groups for control of these territories. This phenomenon was recalled by *Intendente Florez*:

Intendente Florez (male): Most of us in the police—well, at least in my time, (...)—had to work for a period of time in groups called contraquerrillas [counter-guerrilla]. (...) So we always had to go into towns or city neighbourhoods that were controlled by guerrilla groups. It was so hard. It wasn't easy at all. And it's not that I want to sing my own praises, but I simply served in such hard times. The peril of war—because I had to hold towns down during tomas guerrilleras. In 1999 I was in a town called La Uvita, Boyacá, and two of my compañeros [peers/mates] died during a guerrilla takeover—to see that (...) to carry the corpses of your compañeros and to keep on warring. The fear, the war, the psychological warfare, being mistreated sometimes even by the citizens. (...) You gotta be crazy to want to be a police officer.

The way in which Florez described this role indicates that it was a perilous job, closer to the role of a soldier in combat than that of a police officer as we would usually conceive it, a situation that was not uncommon in this period (Centro Nacional de Memoria Histórica, 2016; Suárez Mendoza, 2017:228).

At the same time, as discussed in Chapter 6, the CNP were introducing participatory reforms aimed at bringing the police closer to citizens, implementing community policing strategies in urban areas and harmonising police practice with the progressive 1991 Constitution. In here we see a stark disconnect between aspiration and reality in the CNP—while they were announcing the 1993 reform and the subsequent 1995 ‘Programme for Cultural Transformation and Institutional Improvement’ reform, police remained deeply engaged in the waging of war,

particularly in rural areas, where most of the conflict took place (Llorente, 2005:186). The inability of the state to recover *and keep* control over these territories made any attempts to carry out ‘normal’ policing (e.g. patrolling) particularly difficult. *Intendente* Gaviria illustrates these challenges in the following excerpt:

Intendente Gaviria (male): Dolores, Tolima was a town controlled by guerrilla forces; there was no police station in there. Two days before we arrived the army had run the guerrilla out of town. And this was such a drastic change for us because we arrived and we were offering up to 30,000 pesos for lunch [probably around 5 times the price of a standard lunch at the time] but nobody would sell us anything. People didn’t even talk to us. They would shut the doors on our noses and close all the businesses as soon as we arrived. And it was a very uncomfortable situation because we had no food, no place to sleep, nothing.

Interviewer: And why were the people behaving like that?

Intendente Gaviria (male): (...) Because people thought we were not gonna last there. They thought ‘If we do you favours or start trusting you, the minute you leave the guerrilla will come back and we will be seen as police collaborators’, and if that were to happen, they would get, at the very least, killed or kidnapped. And we would tell them ‘Listen, we’re here to stay! This will be a permanent police station’, but they wouldn’t believe us much. (...) The police had been run out by the guerrilla before and had never been able to come back, so the state had practically abandoned the town. The army would go every now and then, run the guerrilla out, stay for 4 or 5 days and then leave again. The guerrilla would return and they would say ‘Oh, were you the one who housed the soldier? Were you the one who gave water to the soldier?’ and they would retaliate.

The lack of a stable form of state-mandated social order, and the violent ways in which illegal armed groups enforced their own version of social order (e.g. Nussio and Howe, 2016:855), meant that the people did not trust state forces, particularly the CNP, anymore (Goldsmith et al. 2007:97) and were inclined to bend to the rule of illegal armed forces. “The withdrawal [of state forces from a significant number of provinces] left the population either at the mercy of the violent struggle between the guerrillas and the paramilitaries for territorial control or under the domination of one of those actors, in many cases due to police and military powerlessness,

neglect, or complicity” (Llorente, 2005:190). We can discern some of the effects of this arrangement from Gaviria’s experience in Dolores, where the people had so little faith in the ability of the state to impose its order, that they were unwilling to cooperate with the police. It was clear, then, that this strategy of intermittent state presence in reclaimed territories was a “poor substitute for permanent, long-term presence” (Ospina Ovalle, 2006:60).

Álvaro Uribe’s presidential term started in 2002, and his national programme *Seguridad Democrática* [Democratic Security] brought about change in the state’s efforts to recover control over the national territory. Bolstered by money given by the US in line with their post-9/11 ‘War on Terror’, as discussed in Chapter 6, Uribe formulated an integrated approach to security that involved all arms of the state and even the population. As part of this programme, the *Plan Patriota* [Patriot Plan] “a portion of the annual draft was ultimately allocated to local forces. A revived economy provided funding for additional strike [units] and other specialized units as well as a substantial increase in manpower (*Plan Choque*). (...) The changes were relentless and extensive” (Ospina Ovalle, 2006:60). The role of the police was key at this stage; they worked to suffocate insurgent forces, teaming up with the military to recover and maintain control over lost territory (Cortés et al. 2011:15): “local forces had all the more impact, because the police (...) systematically established a presence in every *municipio* (county) in the country” (Marks, 2005:vi).

During Uribe’s two terms in office the police were “subordinate[d] (...) to a role in the counterinsurgency strategy” (Llorente, 2005:181). His national policy accentuated the already existing overlap between military and police, arguing that “the nature of the threats faced by the nation (...) have blurred the boundaries between internal security and national defence” (Presidencia de la República, 2003:20). Police officers were deployed alongside the army in military engagements; the use of offensive special ops units—several of them trained in military tactics and organised in line with military operative models—was increased; at the same time, military units in many areas undertook policing duties (Goldsmith et al. 2007:83; Llorente et al., 2008:10; Ruiz Vásquez, 2009:89; Vargas Velásquez). This military role of the police has continued up until the present day, though it is associated now with special task forces rather than with rank-and-file officers. Indeed the work of the special task forces is more relevant than ever as the demobilisation of the FARC has led to a diffusion of less-structured criminal organisations, as the absence of state presence in those areas once controlled by guerrillas has been exploited by other illegal armed groups. The CNP do not offer up-to-date

information on the way in which rank-and-file police officers operate in this current political context but the evidence of my fieldwork suggests that the police are not being deployed as adjuncts to the military as persistently as they had been in previous decades.

All of this might suggest that the militaristic character of modern police methods in Colombia owe something to this history and, as we have noted, much modern scholarship on the Colombian police draws attention to their militaristic character (Goldsmith et al. 2007:82; Llorente, 1999; Ruiz Vásquez, 2009:87). However, as we shall see in the following section, the militaristic methods used by the CNP in Bogotá are broadly in line with worldwide policing trends, and it is difficult to say with any certainty that the wartime role taken up by the CNP has had any effect on its day-to-day approach to policing.⁵⁴ This is not to say that the wartime experiences of the CNP have not had some effect—stories like those of Gaviria and Florez serve as self-evident proof of the blurring between police and army in the context of the Colombian armed conflict. One link between these two forms of militarisation lies in the treatment of offenders as ‘the enemy’—but it is unclear whether this has lent itself to a more welcoming environment in the CNP for what is a worldwide trend.

Militarisation of Everyday Police Practice

[La Policía es] una institución que, en nombre del Dios superior y del Estado patriarca, bolea bolillo, bala, puño y patada a diestra y siniestra en contra de la ciudadanía.
[The Colombian Police] is an institution that, in the name of God above and the patriarchal state, sends batons and bullets, punches and kicks to the left and to the right against the citizenry.

Temblores, 2020:9

⁵⁴ When talking about the impact that this era had on policing in Colombia, one aspect that has not yet been addressed is that of officer trauma. Soldiers that go to war can often experience Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). The fact that police officers fulfil a wartime role means that they too can experience such psychological ailments, as pointed out above. It would be important to explore how the trauma of war, particularly PTSD, affects officers’ police practice, given that people with PTSD often “lose control over automatic emergency responses, like prolonged startle or aggressive outbursts” (Van der Kolk, 2014:61). Furthermore, “the stress hormones of traumatized people (...) take much longer to return to baseline and spike quickly and disproportionately in response to mildly stressful stimuli” (Van der Kolk, 2014:46). One would imagine that exercising policing duties while being easily startled, sensitive to stressful situations and prone to aggressive outbursts would have tremendous effect on policing practice. Considering that Colombian police officers have fulfilled wartime roles for so many decades, this type of studies could bring new light to our understanding of the CNP.

Let us now turn to everyday police practice in Colombia and the extent to which this practice reflects the kind of militarisation discussed by scholars such as Kraska and Herzog. In particular, this section will explore the phenomenon of police violence and asks what populations this violence has been aimed against. Militarisation as evidenced through the use of violent policing has been explored in several contexts (e.g. Argentina: Auyero, 2010; Canada: Roziere and Walby, 2018; South Africa: Lamb, 2018; US: Delehanty et al. 2017)—here, I will extend this work to the Colombian context.

As we have seen, a key aspect of a militarised ideology is the designation of certain sectors of society as the ‘enemy’, and the adoption by the police of ‘pre-violence behaviour’ in their interactions with such groups. This behaviour involves “exaggerated suspicion, rude and inconsiderate conduct, resort to unreasonable and unnecessary measures, unwillingness to explain or listen, and acceptance of violence for its own sake” (Kremnitzer, 1994:13, as referenced by Herzog, 2001:188). In doing so, the police act as if violent confrontation is both a foregone conclusion and the most effective way of neutralising the threat posed by such an enemy.

In the following sub-sections, I will focus on two key population groups that have been subject to militarised, brutal police action in Colombia: minorities and those engaged in social protest. These two groups have been chosen in line with the findings of a study conducted by the organisation Temblores (2020) that, through analysis of police violence in Colombia from 2017 to 2019, established that: “(i) [police violence] happens systematically in the context of social protest; and (ii) it disproportionately affects Afro-Colombian people, LGBTI people, women, indigenous groups, young people and students” (Temblores, 2020:18). I will bring together the findings of the small number of published studies on the issue of contemporary police violence in Colombia and complement this information with journalistic data and my own observations of the police in Bogotá. I will argue that violent policing, though not often addressed when discussing the militarisation of the Colombian police, is a worrisome trait that promises to remain relevant even as the internal armed conflict comes to an end.⁵⁵

⁵⁵ Once again, it is of utmost importance to note that peace agreements do not mean the end of armed conflict in the country, but a mutation of conflict dynamics.

The enemy within: stigmatising social protest

People who take part in protests in Colombia find themselves at the receiving end of excessive, coercive force at the hands of the police (Tembloros, 2020:18). Social protests are perceived as threats to social order (Betancur Betancur, 2006; Cruz Rodríguez, 2015) and, thus, citizens who participate in these demonstrations are almost invariably confronted with what is the most militarised expression of the CNP: the anti-riot police known as the ESMAD.

Unlike other countries, particularly in the south of Latin America (Bravo Vargas, 2012; Cabalin Quijada, 2014; Lozano, 2001; Scribano and Schuster, 2001), Colombia does not have a remarkably strong tradition of social protest, possibly because these demonstrations have been consistently criminalised and repressed (Betancur Betancur, 2006; Cruz Rodríguez, 2015). As a result, those groups who have made use of social protest to communicate dissent, such as students and trade unions, have been stigmatised and dealt with through coercive, violent police action (Cruz Rodríguez, 2015; Pereira Fernández, 2012). Following a Northern trend (Bolduc, 2016), since 1999 there has been an anti-riot police group dedicated to intervening in social protests, The ESMAD (*Escuadrón Móvil Anti-Disturbios*, Anti-Riot Mobile Squad). Elite task forces such as the ESMAD (or, for instance, SWAT teams in the USA), are in many ways very similar to the military—most notably, they do not operate as individuals but as a unified force, and they make use of military equipment and armament to deal with citizens (Ministerio de Defensa, 2019). The ESMAD's purpose is to dissolve mass demonstrations—they are, theoretically, to do so with the use of minimal, proportionate force, after exhausting every form of non-violent intervention and only in the event of such protests becoming violent (Policía Nacional, 2009:16). To carry out their job, officers belonging to this task force are provided with several so-called less lethal arms: baton, teargas grenades, pepper spray launchers, gas launcher rifles, stun grenades, calibre 12 rifle loaded with rubber bullets, and two types of munition (*cartucho de impacto dirigido and cartucho impulso*) (Ministerio de Defensa, 2019:4). Despite the fact that they claim to use non-lethal forms of coercion, there have been several casualties at the hands of the ESMAD—police officers have brought war to the streets. In 2005, for instance, during the international Worker's Day day demonstrations in Bogotá, a *patrullero* from the ESMAD launched a teargas canister at 15-year-old Nicolás Neira and killed him. After more than a decade and a half of legal proceedings the *patrullero's* commander confessed to have received orders to coverup the crime and, in March 2021, Neira's killer was finally found guilty (El Espectador, 2019; Noticias Caracol, 2021). This case is not an outlier: an

investigation carried out by Temblores registers 34 deaths at the hands of the anti-riot squad since its creation in 1999 and up to 2019 (Temblores, 2019:37–55), while the organisation CINEP registers 43 deaths from 1999 and up to June 2019 (La Liga Contra el Silencio, 2019b).

My own observation of the CNP was necessarily limited and did not encompass the kind of policing that would have allowed me to observe violence against social protest. Even so, the ways in which the CNP casts certain people as ‘the enemy’ was apparent from my interactions with officers. On the first day of my fieldwork at the Andes station, I approached one of the commanders to request him to participate in the study. Before assenting, he asked me which university I was attending. This was important because, as he explained, “I will have nothing to do with anyone from the Universidad Nacional”. The Universidad Nacional—along with the two other prominent public universities in Bogotá, the Universidad Distrital and the Universidad Pedagógica—has a long history of clashing with police during protests. In Chapter 6 we noted how public universities have been a strong source of political dissent, particularly since the early 1960s when the *Federación Universitaria Nacional* was consolidated (Leal Buitrago, 1981). At that time, these educational institutions were targeted by the police, who gathered intelligence on staff and students, claiming that they were infiltrated by communists (Aparicio Barrera, 2019:120). While in other latitudes the ‘communist threat’ narrative may have lost traction, in Colombia, where leftist guerrillas such as FARC and ELN remain active, the notion of a ‘communist/guerrilla threat’ remains very much alive. The commander’s refusal to engage with anyone from the Universidad Nacional was not a matter of personal preference, but an institutionalised narrative of stigmatisation grounded in the belief that ‘the enemy’ has infiltrated and taken over these institutions. As recently as 2006, the then-Director of the CNP, Jorge Daniel Castro, announced that the police would start entering the campus of these universities to seek out infiltrated guerrillas. “Outlaws and terrorists”, he said, “infiltrate universities such as Nacional, Pedagógica, and Distrital and we must apprehend them” (Castro, 2006, as reported by Caracol Radio 2006). Given this institutional rhetoric, it is not surprising that student protests have been so criminalised and violently repressed.

Since the conclusion of my fieldwork, this trend has only been further intensified. The year 2019 featured a return of massive social protest in Latin America (Open Democracy, 2020), protest that involved students but also—perhaps for the first time in Colombian history—many other sectors of society. The police, in particular the ESMAD, has been a key protagonist in the demonstrations, and “in a number of instances [they have] abused the mostly peaceful

demonstrators protesting throughout the country” (Human Rights Watch, 2020). The use by ESMAD of teargas, stun grenades, beatings and arbitrary detentions along with the death of 17-year-old Dilan Cruz—who was shot dead by the ESMAD with a supposedly non-lethal bean bag round (“a synthetic bag filled with lead pellets [that] is fired from a shotgun”: De Brito et al., 2001:384)—have raised alarms about the criminalisation of protest through the use of repressive state force. Since the 2019 protests, some attempts have been made to adopt measures in response to this controversial use of the ESMAD against protestors. The Mayor of Bogotá, Claudia López, sought to standardise and regulate state response to social protest, putting a protocol in place that would require the exhaustion of other forms of mediation before deployment of the ESMAD (Alcaldía de Bogotá, 2020), yet such measures have had very limited effect and, instead, have revealed that the power of mayors over the police is more modest than expected (Saldarriaga Hernández, 2020). Meanwhile, the expansion and militarisation of the ESMAD continues apace. In July 2020 it was reported that the CNP were developing a self-driving tank for the ESMAD (El Tiempo, 2020). The remotely controlled vehicle will be equipped with water and tear gas cannons, stun grenades and will have the force to destroy barricades, all of which points to the continuation of coercive/repressive forms of policing that significantly rely on the use of force (Tapia Jáuregui, 2020). If the aim is to decrease police violence, then, the the existence of the ESMAD will need to be seriously re-evaluated.

Police violence against the marginalised

Very few studies have addressed the issue of police violence in relation to discrimination in Colombia. Amongst them we find two dedicated studies on the issue of racial discrimination (Lam and Ávila Ceballos, 2013; Ilex, 2020) and two studies on the Colombian police which address various forms of questionable practices more generally (Lalinde, 2015; Temblores, 2020). It is particularly difficult to study the issue of discriminatory policing, at least using official data, as the available statistics on police ‘incidents’ (e.g. complaints by members of the public) do not provide data on anything other than the sex of the complainant. This is a troublesome obstacle because it prevents the public from knowing who is being policed and how: are black populations disproportionately selected for stop and search measures? Are homeless people more likely to receive violent treatment from police officers? Who is filing complains about police behaviour?

As part of their study on racial profiling in the city of Cali, Lam and Ávila Ceballos (2013) submitted *derechos de petición* (freedom of information requests) to the Cali Metropolitan Police and the National Public Prosecutor requesting information on: the number of complaints filed against the police; how many such complaints had resulted in disciplinary action; how many were archived; and how many such complaints were filed by people who self-identified as *personas afrodescendientes, negras, raizales* or *palenqueras* (these are different categories associated to black communities in Colombia, see Ministerio de Cultura, 2010). No such information was made available and, paradoxically, the CNP argued that collecting information on race and ethnicity would itself be discriminatory (Lam and Ávila Ceballos, 2013:6). The organisation Temblores has been the only group that has succeeded in obtaining significant data on police violence directed at marginalised populations, this after more than three years filing *derechos de petición* to several state bodies. The only body that was able to produce any data on categories such as ethnicity was the *Instituto Nacional de Medicina Legal y Ciencias Forenses* [National Institute of Forensic Science] (known colloquially as *Medicina Legal*). The scarcity of official information has barred us from gaining any significant insight into the issue of police discriminatory practice and, as a result, there is still much to be learned.

Around the world, police use of violence is rarely indiscriminate. Rather, certain marginalised populations in society are disproportionately affected. As I shall argue, in Colombia there exists a cycle of violence that starts with social prejudice against marginalised populations is followed by the solidification of this prejudice through police indoctrination, which then feeds disproportionately aggressive policing towards these populations and can escalate to lethal ‘neutralisation’ of members of these marginalised communities. Before beginning, however, it is important to note that ‘the marginalised’ are not a homogenous sector of the population. Some are marginalised, for instance, due to their economic vulnerabilities; some for their non-hegemonic sexualities or genders; and others for their racialised identities. These factors often intersect with each other, resulting in a set of interlocking forms of oppression that accentuate their marginalisation (Hill Collins and Bilge, 2016). For example the colonial-inherited system of inequalities remains alive in Colombia through the consistent discrimination of racialised peoples, who have been caught in a cycle of poverty for centuries (Herrera, 2012:ii). Their racialised identities intersect with their categorisation as economically deprived, thus placing them in a position of acute disadvantage in the social matrix of power and inequalities (Hill Collins and Bilge, 2016:15). Marginalised minorities are presented as a deviation from the archetypal citizen and their framing as ‘others’ (Long, 2018; Solhjell et al., 2019) makes it

easier to label them as an outsider threat, an exterior enemy, which triggers a violent police response for their neutralisation (Herzog, 2001:182). It is of central importance that this phenomenon is recognised, because it has significant explanatory power when it comes to understanding why militarised responses are more often deployed against certain sectors of the population (Bowling et al., 2003).

Violence against black people

Studies from several countries have established that ethnic minorities are subject to more encounters with police than other groups and that these encounters are more violent (e.g. Bowling et al. 2003). That racism is prevalent in Colombia has been amply documented (e.g. Herrera, 2012) and, for this reason, we should not be entirely surprised to find that police engage with racialised and ethnic minorities with emphasised military violence. During my fieldwork, I did not witness firsthand any racialised incidents of policing (the black population in Bogotá, which is relatively small, is concentrated in specific sections of the city, mostly outside the Andes locality), though I did note the racialised nature of police training, as I discuss below. The data provided by other studies of the issue, however, tell a stark story. According to information provided to Temblores by the National Institute of Forensic Science, the police force killed 289 people between 2017 and 2019 (Temblores, 2020:26—and 86 in 2020, according to the same source). 11.42% of the people killed by police were black, though black people comprise only 9.34% of the population (DANE, 2019a). Ilex (2020) and Lam and Ávila Ceballos (2013) have shown that black populations are subject to particularly coercive and intimidating forms of policing. They sustain that black populations in Colombia are easily labelled as delinquent (Lam and Ávila Ceballos, 2013:23; Ilex, 2020:13) and that police interactions with this sector of the population are coloured by the assumption that an implicit threat lies just beneath the surface. This prejudice then prompts more aggressive police encounters with this population, including excessive use of force and inadequate or illegal use of military equipment such as guns and teargas. This phenomenon recorded by scholars of Colombian policing echoes the situation in other countries, particularly in the United States, where a “military operational model” has been adopted following a view that “the inner-city environment is a war-zone and the enemy is the urban underclass” (Meeks, 2006, 37), thus reinforcing the belief that “entire communities are disorderly, dangerous, suspicious, and ultimately criminal. When this happens, police are too quick to use force” (Vitale, 2017:3). This phenomenon stands at the intersection of class and race—they are mutually constitutive

factors, particularly if we take into account the fact that the percentage of black people living in poverty in Colombia is 30% higher than the national average (DANE, 2019b:63). Police forces, in both the United States and Colombia, deploy “a specific discourse that constructs and stereotypes criminals as occupying intersectional marginalized social positions” (Dottolo and Stewart, 2008:351), thus encouraging disproportionate policing of these populations. Black and lower-income neighbourhoods, which are often one and the same, find themselves doubly demarcated as the enemy. As reported to Lam and Ávila Ceballos, when police officers enter such areas they get out of their vehicles “with their guns out, ready to shoot” (Lam and Ávila Ceballos, 2013:6).

To this, it might be objected that these racially motivated situations represent rare occurrences perpetrated by individuals that are not reflective of any institutional biases. Variants of this explanation have been used to excuse such behaviours both in Colombia in previous years and in other countries around the world (El Colombiano, 2016; The New York Times, 2020). But social prejudice against Afro-Colombians is bolstered by institutional indoctrination that frames black people as a threat. I attended a training seminar for newly-transferred officers, delivered by a seasoned commander, that was aimed at familiarising the new arrivals with the city and with the disparate challenges they would encounter in different neighbourhoods. During the session, I witnessed the way in which rank-and-file police officers were educated to assume that Afro-Colombian people were more prone to threatening and criminal behaviour. When characterising each of the localities in the city, the commander delivering the training gave the following descriptions of two areas of Bogotá that have a high concentration of Afro-Colombian people (note again that the names of the localities have been changed):

Mayor Arango (male): In Cerro Alto the most common crimes are burglaries and assault and battery. There are lots of people from the Pacific Coast [in other words, Afro-Colombian people] and they get aggressive, especially if they have been drinking. (...) In Asunción there are a lot of Afro-Colombian people and they like to party, so when you get there and tell them that the party is over they get aggressive.

Unsurprisingly, this language was absent from Arango’s discussion of the other areas of the city. In fact, he advised against heavy policing of wealthier localities. Officers should be wary

in high socio-economic areas of the city, as powerful people “will be upset if traffic officers stop underaged drivers with no permits, because these minors are the children of politicians”. Once again, we find that institutional discourse fosters heightened oppression occurring at the intersection of race and class.

Violence against the homeless

In Colombia, homelessness is supposed to be treated as a social problem in need of multi-institutional intervention, aimed at “guaranteeing, promoting, protecting and re-establishing the rights of these people, with the purpose of giving them integral attention for their rehabilitation and social inclusion” (Ley 1641 de 12 de Julio de 2013, Article 1). Article 41 of the Police Code addresses the type of attention that the police must give to street dwellers. It states that the needs of homeless people ought to be met through a holistic model based on the principles of equality, diversity, and the recognition of the individual, the family and the community as subjects of attention. The model seeks to protect and re-establish the rights of homeless people in a way that promotes the holistic development and wellbeing of the person. Yet this welfarist approach to homelessness is at odds with the aim of improving perceptions of security, as advanced by the mayor of Bogotá from 2016–20, Enrique Peñalosa, amongst others.⁵⁶ Peñalosa’s approach to the improvement of the city was mostly focused on policies of beautification that sought to influence citizens’ perception of security through the removal of aesthetically unpleasant aspects of the city, from ‘non-artistic’ graffiti to homeless people (Escobar Correa, 2016).

In the city, order and beauty go hand in hand and generate security. If cities are li[t] and clean, do not have graffiti, garbage, or have fewer street vendors, people will feel safe, will go out to the streets and fewer crimes will be committed (Daniel Mejía, Secretary of Security, 2016, as quoted by Escobar Correa, 2016:17).

This institutional view of security frames vulnerable populations who occupy public space such as street vendors or homeless people as a threat to social order. In this, Bogotá is hardly an outlier: this narrative has been adopted in cities around the world, often explicitly, in the pursuit

⁵⁶ It is important to note that the fieldwork carried out for this study took place during the Petro term as a mayor, I focus on Peñalosa’s mayorship, though, because he had an explicit and agenda of beautification as a means to improve perceptions of security.

of a 'broken windows' style of policing, but also as simply a silent but widely accepted part of modern police practice. It is a narrative that legitimises the marginalisation of homeless people and their physical removal from jurisdictions as an appropriate means of attaining security and order. Such practices are "aimed explicitly, and primarily, at spatial exclusion; by compelling their targets to 'quit' a place, they entail banishment" (Beckett and Herbert, 2010:5). The 'move-on powers' (Taylor and Walsh, 2007) allocated to police forces allow officers to displace homeless people for no other reason than existing in the public space; they are 'the enemy', an existential threat to social order. This phenomenon has been identified in other latitudes (e.g. Auyero, 2010; Robinson, 2019), thus suggesting that it may be a standardised way of enforcing a neoliberal social order that benefits from the protection of a system that oppresses those that are most deprived (Wacquant, 2009).

This kind of rhetoric was uncritically reproduced by many of the officers I spoke to. Respondents discussed how they would be called to remove homeless people from public areas, as the homeless "generate a perception of insecurity" (interview with *Patrullero Galán*). Such a characterisation reinforces and gives legitimacy to a wider societal prejudice against homeless people, views that are illustrated by this exchange between two officers:

Teniente Correa (male): The biggest problem we have is the street dweller. I wish they would take them all away ... to an island or something. They steal, they damage, they are the worst; a plague.

Patrullero Ángel (male): They should take them to the Amazon.

Teniente Correa (male): No way! To the Amazon?

Patrullero Ángel (male): They would come back! Haha!

Teniente Correa (male): They would smoke up all those plants and make their way back up here.

Patrullero Ángel (male): Maybe to that island that used to be a prison.

Teniente Correa (male): Yes, Gorgona.⁵⁷ They should take them away to an island to see if they're willing to starve just to avoid working.

Correa and Ángel describe homeless people as a menace to society. They are drug addicts who would do anything to avoid working for a living, yet they are also a tenacious enemy that will

⁵⁷ An island formerly used as a prison which nowadays is a natural reservoir.

walk the 454 miles from the Amazon to Bogotá just to keep on stealing and damaging things.

Again, it might be objected that such views may not be institutionally endorsed, that they may simply reflect the personal biases of individual officers. But, in fact, institutional legitimation of a violent approach to the issue of homelessness does exist. In the same seminar for newly arrived officers in which the instructor spoke of the different approaches one should take in different sectors of the city, the same commander also advised on the usefulness of ‘*Plan Despertar*’ [Awakening Plan] as “an effective way of improving the perception of security” in one’s jurisdiction. This is an approach to homelessness which consists of waking sleeping homeless people and removing them from the area: a classic example of the type of spatial exclusion strategy discussed by scholars (Beckett and Herbert, 2010; Taylor and Walsh, 2007). If the homeless person is uncooperative or does not wish to leave the area, officers forcibly take them to the overnight detention centre. Another institutional plan that I became aware of during my time at the Andes station was called ‘*Plan Cambuche*’. A *cambuche* is the name given to a homeless persons’ lean-to, a makeshift shelter in which they can keep their things and perhaps rest. The plan involved the destruction of these homeless shelters, in order to avoid them becoming more permanent structures. Regarding this practice, one of the respondents said:

Teniente Posada (male): Back in the day, the shelters would be set on fire, with the tramp inside and all. But now we do things a bit differently.

Notwithstanding the possibility of even more ruthless methods in the past, so brutal is the current practice that the officers at the Andes station made sure to conduct it at times when public scrutiny was unlikely. As a number of officers noted in interviews, the police were expected to remove homeless people from their jurisdictions but members of the public would often object when faced with the reality of violent eviction of the homeless. “And so you think: ‘well, what’s it going to be?’” *Patrullero* Galán told me, “They want the area cleared of homeless people because they generate a perception of insecurity, but when you’re undertaking the procedure of removal, the citizens are against it”. Thus, the *Plan Cambuche* was carried out every Thursday at three in the morning.

This militaristic approach to the problem of homelessness, which frames the homeless as the enemy, is neither productive nor in line with the welfarist approach endorsed by national law.

This fact was acknowledged by some respondents, who recognised the importance of an integrated system of support for homeless people:

Intendente Mosquera (male): In Bogotá we have many institutions, we have the office of the mayor, the office of social affairs, etc. In Bogotá the issue of homelessness is prevalent, and people are always saying 'call the police so that they can remove the homeless person because it is making people uncomfortable and it generates insecurity'. But really the other institutions are the ones who should be in charge of taking care of the reasons why the homeless person is there. Homeless people are not there just because—they are there because they have a drug problem, a social problem, a family problem, a financial problem. (...) So that's the issue—all the problems are police problems, but where are the other institutions? We can't do it all.

Mosquera highlights the social issues that lead people to homelessness as the real problem, as opposed to labelling homeless people in themselves as the problem. He recognises that the answer to the problem is that all of the institutions concerned, not just the police, step up in order to alleviate the social conditions that give rise to homelessness in the first place—an acknowledgement of the wider response needed, beyond the militarised vision of homelessness as something that can be dealt with by force.

Conclusion

The military ideology prompts police officers to think of offenders not necessarily as citizens who have overstepped the word of the law, but as threats to be neutralised. Within this logic it is very difficult to understand police work as a civic service. Furthermore, it is particularly difficult to transition out of this militaristic way of operating, because the Colombian internal conflict, as well as global trends in policing, foster the maintenance of this capacity to react coercively and with force. Here we can say the way in which Northern trends resonate with Southern contexts, thereby reinforcing and solidifying these ways of policing. The problem is exacerbated by a number of factors: the lack of transparency in the institution and the concomitant paucity of data; the scarcity of detailed scholarly studies on this topic in a Colombian context; and, finally, as we shall see in the next chapter, the fact that these

militaristic practices are obscured through the use of managerialism. It is this same militaristic, *macho* ideology that supports some of the key arguments used to marginalise women within the force, as we shall see in Chapter 9. The militaristic functioning of the CNP is not fit for purpose yet an agenda of reforms is unlikely to be able to address this issue; as we saw in Chapter 6, the institution has historically been able to resist attempts at reform as the military character is felt to be desirable in the context of a country at war. Furthermore, the CNP is nowadays able to present an image of ‘good performance’ through managerialist performance indicators. In the conclusion, I will return to the question of police militarisation and what can be done.

CHAPTER 8

Police by Numbers

Managerialism as the Organising Principle of Police Practice

Introduction

During fieldwork, it quickly became apparent that managerialism—as briefly described in Chapter 6—was one of the key principles that guided everyday police practice in Bogotá. This chapter will explore the CNP’s managerialist approach to performance measurement (both at an institutional and officer level) and the ways in which it has affected police practice in Bogotá, as revealed in my fieldwork. I will argue that **police use quotas and targets as an inadequate proxy of actually preventing and fighting crime—in fact, managerialism obscures police practice as it occurs on the streets.**

In order to pursue the aims of this chapter, I will first analyse the CNP’s self-presentation, as found in its annual reports. These reports offer a rare window into the CNP’s vision of good police work and their own success in achieving such a vision. They represent the only avenue by which the CNP communicates its performance to the general public. As we shall see, these

documents suggest an institution that has adopted a fetishised view of numbers, reporting data that often have no intelligible relevance beyond their impressive ability to produce numbers and that in fact serve to obscure the work of the CNP as it unfolds in practice. I will then turn to the empirical, qualitative data that I collected during fieldwork to demonstrate the repercussions that the managerialist approach to performance measuring has had on the job of policing in Bogotá. The meeting of quotas has become a key driver of police practice because it is enforced through a points-based system for officer evaluation that penalises failure to reach targets. As I will demonstrate, the managerialist rationale adopted by the Colombian Police has warped the meaning of police performance—a phenomenon that is evidenced both in the annual reports and in the experiences of officers on the ground—and it has introduced a powerful driver of police practice that serves the purpose of producing quantitative markers of managerialist performance.

As explained in the previous chapter, policing is heavily influenced by a militarised ideology that shapes the way in which police carry out their job and who they direct their violent strategies towards. This chapter complements the previous one, in that it shows another angle of police practice. Managerialism is a key driver of police practice, as observed during fieldwork and, as we shall see, the citizens that are most affected by this questionable approach to policing are often vulnerable populations. If marginalised populations were already prone to diminishing, violent and even lethal treatment by socially informed and institutionally accepted forms of prejudice, as illustrated in the previous chapter, then managerialism amplifies the odds of them being sought out by police and thus exposed to state violence.

International context

Grounded in the assumption that all organisations can benefit from a private business model of operation (Esposito et al., 2017:481), managerialism, also referred to as ‘new managerialism’ (Vickers and Kozumin, 2001), emerged in the United States and proliferated all over the world throughout the twentieth century (Eagleton-Pierce and Knafo, 2020:767). In general terms, managerialism is concerned with the ‘good’ administration of organisations (Dixon et al., 1998:167) and it centres on the idea that “the performance of all organizations can be optimized by the application of generic management skills and knowledge” (Klikauer, 2015:1107). One of the most attractive features of this approach is that it seeks to achieve what are perceived as

the value-neutral goals of efficiency and effectiveness through the establishment of concrete and fairly straightforward performance indicators (Fielding and Innes, 2006:127).

The managerialist trend permeated the public sector during the last two decades of the twentieth century in response to concerns about the perceived lack of efficiency of state bodies (Esposito et al., 2017:481), and the “increasing pressure to modernise, to improve overall performance and service delivery and to increase accountability to their stakeholders” (Wisniewski and Olafsson, 2004:602). Managerialism or ‘new *public* management’ (Cope et al., 1997) was thus introduced as “the private sector ‘solution’ to the public sector ‘problem’” (Dixon et al., 1998:165). Its objective is to transform what are perceived as bloated, intrusive and inefficient public sector bodies (Keating, 2001:142) into “product-producing organization[s]” (De Lint, 1998:263), ‘production units’ capable of implementing adequate ‘production processes’ in order to “generate measurable objective-related ‘outcomes’ that measure given and known ‘organizational objectives’” (Dixon et al., 1998:167).

In line with private-sector practice, public managerialism seeks to maximise value for money, quality, efficiency and effectiveness (Fournier and Grey, 2000:10; Keating, 2001:145), aims that are meant to be achieved through “goal setting; performance benchmarking; performance definition; performance measurement; performance feedback and performance enhancement incentives” (Dixon et al., 1998:166); *results*, rather than processes and procedures are the focus of managerialism (Vickers and Kouzmin, 2001:12). The work carried out by public bodies is thus re-shaped and re-packaged in order to conform with these parameters. The multiple dimensions of serving society and the process of negotiation through which rights and benefits are distributed to the populace lose visibility (Vickers and Kouzmin, 2001:11) as they become upstaged by the achievement of narrowly-defined goals. The often-complex problems that a public body inevitably encounters are thus understood in managerialist terms as ‘technicalities’ that can be solved through good management (Klikauer, 2015:1107; Eagleton-Pierce and Knafo, 2020:768). In this sense, managerialism is an attractive political tool, since it offers a straightforward way of organising and ‘taming’ a complex world through the “deploy[ment] of management ideas and practices” (Eagleton-Pierce and Knafo, 2020:768-769).

There is no shortage of drawbacks associated with managerialism, particularly in the public sector. The fixation on meeting targets and benchmarks, as well as the requirement to follow a prescribed plan of action on the road to maximum efficiency and success, ignores the fact that

public organisations do not mirror their private counterparts. For instance, one key pillar of managerialism is the devolution of power: public sector officials at lower levels are assumed to be keen professionals, eager to learn, and willing to take individual responsibility for their failures and achievements (Vickers and Kouzmin, 2001:12). However, these officials work in bodies with often fickle goals and only modest continuity, which means that they may have “neither the required expertise nor the willingness (or ability) to learn from the outcomes of past decisions” (Dixon et al., 1998:169). Furthermore, the fluctuating character of public sector organisations’ goals means that these bodies do not often have a consistent set of specific goals like a private company would—the complex societal problems they deal with; their duty to serve multiple stakeholders with often contending interests; and the (ever-changing) political forces that shape their priorities, can prevent them from committing to a fixed path and plan of action (Dixon et al., 1998:169). Still, the organisations that implement this managerialist approach are encouraged to work in the pursuit of targets and leave aside those concerns and complexities that are not central to the managerialist operationalisation of performance. Those aspects that are not quantifiable are rendered almost invisible and thus are often displaced from the organisational agenda (Mennicken and Miller, 2016:26). This shortcoming is particularly worrisome in the context of the public sector because of the nature of the services these organisations provide—such as education, healthcare and social care—and the importance of such services being understood in all their depth, complexity and multi-dimensionality (Smith, 1993:142).

Managerialism in police bodies

As illustrated above, seamlessly grafting private sector managerialism onto the public sector is not without its challenges but these challenges are obscured by the very logic advanced by the model: fixation on outcomes without regard for means or context. Unsurprisingly, then, the application of managerialism in police forces has triggered an abundance of concerns which have been highlighted by scholars and professionals and which I will now proceed to summarise.

When it comes to understanding the role of the police in society, it is worth keeping in mind Bittner’s observation that “there is scarcely a human predicament imaginable for which police aid has not been solicited and obtained at one time or another” (Bittner, 1967:703). Citizens see police officers as not only in charge of fighting crime, but also of arbitrating their day-to-

day problems and providing aid to them in everyday situations; from solving quarrels between neighbours to giving directions to the nearest supermarket, police officers are the go-to authority for all sorts of citizen issues. Policing as it occurs in practice, therefore, entails a wide array of tasks covering all sorts of aspects of life in a given society and which require responses of a varied nature. The managerialist preoccupation with the concise operationalisation of outputs and quantitative measurement of performance is, thus, not a particularly suitable match for police work (Collier, 2006:166). In the conclusion chapter of this thesis I will evaluate the merit of having police in charge of such a wide variety of societal problems—for now, I will discuss the suitability of managerialism to measure police performance, and assess the impact that this system has had on police practice.

The introduction of managerialist rationality to police forces can be traced back to the last decades of the twentieth century, perhaps most notably with the development and implementation of CompStat in New York in the 1990s, closely followed by similar programs all over the US and around the world (e.g. USA: Weisburd et al., 2003, UK: Butterfield et al., 2004, Australia: Vickers and Kouzmin, 2001; France: De Maillard, 2018, Canada: De Lint, 1998). This model was characterised by the process of including precinct managers in the setting of goals, giving said managers the autonomy to decide how to achieve those goals, and having them explain their progress regularly in a forum with top managers. In short, the “emphasis [was placed] on measuring the performance of police managers while holding them accountable for the crime that occurs in their districts” (Bratton and Malinowski, 2008:260). The rise of CompStat-like programmes, what Moore and Braga refer to as ‘Compstat and its progeny’ (Moore and Braga, 2003), marked a shift in the way policing was carried out; it established the production of quantifiable results as a cornerstone of policing from there on out (Cockcroft and Beattie, 2009:527).

There are two key practical problems that emerge from the application of managerialist logic to policing: 1) it fosters “types of police activities that are deemed appropriate for performance measurement” (Cockcroft and Beattie, 2009:534)—i.e. those that can be expressed in quantitative terms—at the expense of non-quantifiable work (Davis, 2012:3); and 2) as phrased by Sparrow (2015), the “relentless pressure to lower the numbers, without equivalent pressure to preserve the integrity of the recording and reporting systems, invites manipulation of crime statistics (...) and other forms of corruption” (Sparrow, 2015:3). The emphasis on quantifiable outputs and the lack of attention to means allows officers to take ‘shortcuts’, disregard

standards of procedure and engage in ethically questionable practices (Vickers and Kouzmin, 2001:12; De Lint, 1998:280).

Furthermore, there is another serious problem associated with the application of a managerialist approach to police practice, one which is not necessarily of a practical nature, but of important ideological relevance. The rhetoric that managerialism champions is based on the assumption that its goals are ‘common sense’, ‘natural’, and ‘value-free’, and it presents efficiency and effectiveness as universally desirable (Delbridge and Keenoy, 2010:803; Eagleton-Pierce and Knafo, 2020:768). Performance measurements are, however, inherently political (Collier, 2006:171) as they function “both to articulate and animate normative concerns” (Fielding and Innes, 2006:127); as expressed by Faull (2016) “measurement of police work is a reflection of what elites think good policing looks like” (Faull, 2016:163). This is a problematic issue given that, as we have seen, there is a colonial-inherited social structure of inequality that is perpetuated through the oppression of some sectors of the population.

It can be argued, then, that the combination of a) the deeply political nature of performance measurement, b) pressure to bolster the numbers, and c) the invisibilisation of means, constitutes a managerialist policing trifecta that has the potential to foster police misbehaviour and obscure the mechanisms through which policing unfolds in practice. In this sense, the construction of organisational reality in managerialist terms “can only offer a highly distorted one-eyed account of the realities of organizational life” (Delbridge and Keenoy, 2010:803-804), as it ignores the political and socially complex context that these organisations are embedded in.

Institutional context

As discussed above, the managerialist approach to the administration of public sector institutions has at its core the production of quantifiable data. The data produced are used to measure performance in a way that allows for comparison, and is said to promote accountability (Bratton and Malinowski, 2008:262). However, the emphasis on the production, collation, comparison and reporting of data not only obscures all of those aspects that lie behind the numbers (Vickers and Kouzmin, 2001:13) but also promotes the erroneous idea that through these ‘objective measures’ we can truly know and improve institutions. Instead of providing a

comprehensive insight into an institution, these numbers only offer a limited window-view of particular aspects of its functioning. Once certain portions of the institution are re-conceptualised and transformed into quantifiable expressions of themselves, “the objects and subjects of economic calculation (...) are accorded a very particular form of visibility” (Mennicken and Miller, 2016:25-26). This section will explore those elements of institutional performance that the CNP has given visibility to in its annual reports (2014, 2015, 2016),⁵⁸ and discuss the shortcomings of the way in which the institution chooses to communicate ‘good’ performance. The analyses presented here will give context to the next section, which will address the way in which this managerialist understanding of institutional performance affects day-to-day police practice.

Inspired by the Compstat model, various police forces around the world have implemented similar managerialist systems (e.g. UK: Butterfield et al., 2004; Australia: Vickers and Kouzmin, 2001; France: De Maillard, 2018; Canada: De Lint, 1998). Though it was meant to use numbers as a guiding thread for commanders to be reflexive about their job, and to account for, as well as justify, their performance, COMPSTAT and the models derived from it have worked differently in practice. Often, a heavy emphasis has been placed on producing ‘good numbers’ and other aspects of the model, such as reflexivity, accountability and responsabilisation, have faded into the background. In Colombia, the introduction of this managerialist approach has been less grounded in an understanding of numbers as a vehicle to understand performance than in a view of these numbers as an expression of performance in and of themselves. The ability to produce numbers, in other words, seems to be equivalent to good institutional performance. Evidence of this mentality is found in the annual reports presented by the CNP. These annual reports are seminal documents in the institution’s presentation of itself, in that they are meant to communicate to the general public and to the state the performance of the CNP. As such, they can tell us much about the narrative that the institution wishes to present, and the discursive artefacts that it uses in order to promote this narrative.

The fact that these annual reports are designed to cater to managerialist needs is clear from the vocabulary used, as can be seen in the introductions to the 2014 and 2016 reports, in which we

⁵⁸ These were all the reports available at the time fieldwork was completed.

find an emphasis on efficiency and administrative competence:⁵⁹

*[The aim of this document is] to report on the objectives, goals and results of the services provided by the National Police in order to remain **accountable** to citizens and state authorities regarding the institution's **operations** and its **administration** (Policía Nacional, 2014:5 emphasis added)*

*The present document reports the progress made in achieving the goals set out by the government and the institution itself—goals that seek to simplify **internal processes** and procedures; take **full advantage** of the human resources available in the institution; and use administrative, financial and technological resources in an **efficient** manner” (Policía Nacional, 2016:3 emphasis added)*

The language used in these two reports is very much in line with the pillars of managerialism. As discussed above, accountability, efficient use of resources, and streamlined institutional processes, are characteristic goals of managerialism, aimed at implementing ‘good’ management practices. The 2016 report goes so far as to suggest that this reporting exercise contributes to the recovery of the institution’s “good name, respectability and trustworthiness” an exercise which, in turn, responds to citizens’ demand for “more legitimacy, transparency, innovation and effectiveness” (Policía Nacional, 2016:3). As we shall see, however, the promise of clarity and accountability expressed in these introductions is not fulfilled. There are two types of shortcomings that can be identified in these reports, one regarding lack of intra-paradigm coherence and one in relation to paradigm suitability.

On paradigms

The two types of shortcomings I will discuss below each adopt a different paradigm or worldview. Paradigms or worldviews are “basic belief systems” (Guba and Lincoln, 1994:107) based on assumptions about “‘the very essence of the phenomena under study’ (ontology), ‘the grounds of knowledge’ (epistemology), ‘the relationships between human beings’ (human nature), and ‘the way in which one attempts to investigate and obtain ‘knowledge’ about the ‘real world’ (methodology)” (Hassard, 1991:275). The assumptions we make as researchers in

⁵⁹ The 2015 report does not have an introduction.

each of these interlocked categories define and limit the scope of what we regard as a “legitimate inquiry” (Guba and Lincoln, 1994:108). There are numerous accounts of the different types of paradigms and the assumptions that underpin each of them. For example, Guba and Lincoln (1994) suggest a general four-paradigm model including positivism, postpositivism, critical theory and constructivism; while Burrell and Morgan (1974)—speaking more specifically from an organisational studies perspective—suggest the functionalist, interpretive, radical humanist, and radical structuralist paradigms. For the purpose of this analysis it is not necessary to explain in detail what all of these paradigms stand for and the specific assumptions that each of them make about ontology, epistemology, methodology and human nature. It is enough to understand, in very general terms, that on one side of the spectrum we find more positivist paradigms, which are (to varying degrees) based on the assumption that there is a ‘true’ reality, independent from the researcher, which can be apprehended if we use rigorous, objective, scientific methods (mostly quantitative). On the other end of the spectrum, we find more constructivist paradigms which assume (to varying degrees) that there is no objective ‘reality’ which exists independent from the researcher, and we can only hope to understand (mostly through qualitative methods) the mechanisms through which phenomena materialise as the product of interaction.

The paradigm adopted by managerialism stands at the positivist end of the spectrum, given that it assumes that “organisational realities have objective existence and [can] be studied scientifically using quantitative techniques” (Idika and Waribugo, 2015:45). The first criticism that I will levy against the CNP’s reports, that of intra-paradigm coherence, is respectful of the positivist paradigm—that is, my critique will assume, for the sake of argument, that there is logic (and value) in the application of managerialist principles. Assuming that the positivist, managerialist approach to the study and communication of police performance has the capacity to produce valuable and insightful data, I will then argue that the CNP’s application of this methodology is so flawed that no such insights can be gleaned from the institution’s annual reports. In this sense, this critique speaks of intra-paradigm coherence, in that it explores the reports’ (lack of) success in delivering the insights promised by positivist inquiry. To develop these analyses I will study the annual reports for the years 2014 to 2020. No other evidence is reviewed for this purpose, seeing as the goal of exploring internal coherence of the reports can be done in a self-referential fashion.

The second criticism revolves around the question of whether a positivist paradigm is suitable

for studying police performance. This argument questions the assumptions made by managerialism by confronting quantitative ‘hard data’, with empirical, qualitative data collected during fieldwork. The aim of this exercise is to uncover the ‘reality’ that lies behind the numbers and to use this evidence to highlight the shortcomings of managerialism when it comes to understanding the institution and its inner workings. The discussion about paradigm suitability will be further expanded later in the thesis, as part of the discussion of officer performance assessments and the way in which they affect police practice.

Intra-paradigm coherence

If one of the key aims of the New Public Management is to improve accountability by having institutions produce clear, comparable data that can explain actions and decisions (Chan, 1999:252–253) then the reports produced by the CNP do not meet the necessary criteria to achieve these basic managerialist goals. Below, I will discuss three of the most salient shortcomings that make the CNP annual reports inadequate, even from within the positivist paradigm.

The first shortcoming identified is that the data presented every year varies significantly—there is no uniform template guiding the drafting of reports. This means that reports do not allow for year-to-year comparison, which is one of the core purposes of producing this type of data (Fielding and Innes, 2006:143). There is one section, however, that does appear in all the available reports: data on drug trafficking. Despite the fact that there is information available on this subjects for every year, it is still not possible to formulate any substantive analyses based on the data presented. Let us review the evidence:

2014a: 17 items (e.g. number of kilograms of cocaine confiscated; number of drug kingpins arrested; and number of extradited drug criminals) (Policía Nacional 2014a, p. 21–23)

2015: six items (i.e. tonnes of confiscated drugs; drug crop hectares treated with aerial aspersion; eradicated drug crop hectares; destroyed drug labs; drug-related extraditions; and drug-related domain extinction cases) (Policía Nacional, 2015:8)

2016b: one item—tonnes of confiscated drugs—disaggregated into 5 types of drugs (Policía Nacional, 2016:22)

2017: 15 items (e.g. eradicated illegal crops; drug-prevention programmes; and number of police injured during operations) (Policía Nacional, 2017:23–24)

2018c: the number of items is not clear because of the way in which the information is presented. There are approximately 10 items (e.g. number of citizen phone calls to report drug-related information; number of extraditions; and destroyed laboratories) (Policía Nacional, 2018:14–16)

2019a: 2 items (i.e. confiscated drugs in kilograms, disaggregated into 5 types of drugs; and drug trade venues intervened) (Policía Nacional, 2019:7)

2020a: 5 items (e.g. drug trade-related arrests; eradicated illegal crops; and destroyed laboratories) (Policía Nacional, 2020:26–28)

The lack of consistency in the categories/items reported render the data non-comparable and thus not fit for the purpose of statistical analysis—it is not possible to properly assess whether police performance has improved or worsened over the years based on the information made available to the public.

The second shortcoming of the CNP’s annual reports is that, often, the ‘total’ figures do not match the disaggregated data that they claim to represent. Let us consider some examples from the earliest (2014) and latest reports (2020). The reported data on total number of arrests for the year 2014 is 272,316, yet the sum of the disaggregated figure is 274,841 (Policía Nacional, 2014:13). Since there are no explanations or accompanying text provided it is impossible to know whether this is indeed an error, or if there is a possible explanation for this discrepancy (for example, if there are arrests that fit in more than one category). Similarly, the 2020 report claims a total of 314,746 cases of *hurto* (robberies, thefts, burglaries, muggings), yet the sum of the disaggregated data is 442,906 (Policía Nacional, 2020:24). When examining the crime statistics dataset available for 2020 in the police webpage, the picture becomes even murkier. Of the six categories that *hurto* is disaggregated into in the annual report, only five of them appear in the dataset. Furthermore, none of the categories that *do* appear in the crime statistics match the numbers presented in the annual report.⁶⁰ As is evident from the examples from the 2014 and 2020 reports, the data offered in the annual reports are either carelessly tabulated or erroneously recorded, and since there is no clarification that can help the reader make sense of

⁶⁰ Statistics available for download from: <https://www.policia.gov.co/node/164647/> [Accessed 19 February 2021].

the various discrepancies, the information can be regarded as unreliable and, for all intents and purposes, unusable.

The third problem identified in the CNP's annual reports has to do with the lack of explanatory texts, particularly in the 2014, 2015, 2016 and 2017 documents. The data reported by the police are better described as inventories—essentially lists—rather than comprehensive or meaningful information. The overwhelming majority of the sections in the 2014–2017 reports mirror the following structure: name of an event or item (e.g. number of arrests, number of police cars purchased) and a corresponding number, nothing more. When the item accounted for is concrete and fairly straightforward—e.g. kilos of cocaine confiscated—the lack of an explanatory text is not necessarily fatal; however, when the numbers correspond to specific police programmes or unclear/complex concepts, the lack of explanation renders the data meaningless to the reader. For instance, the 2014 report states that the police carried out 246 drug-related *operaciones de impacto* [impact operations] but the report does not explain what these are and why having carried so many should be regarded as a success. In a similar vein, the 2015 report gives the following information about *frentes de seguridad* [security fronts] (Policía Nacional, 2015:5):

1,633 security fronts created, 27,238 participants

8,224 security fronts strengthened, 88,315 participants

There is no explanation of what security fronts *are*, what ‘participants’ means in the context of *frentes de seguridad*, or why the public should care about the creation of more of them and the strengthening of existing ones. In a similar vein, the 2017 (Policía Nacional, 2017:17) and 2019 (Policía Nacional, 2019:8) documents only report on the strengthening of existing fronts and the creation of new ones, respectively. The 2018 document is the only one that contains information on what security fronts are and why they are important:

Prevention and Consolidation of Security Fronts:

The National Police provides spaces where the community and local authorities can meet and discuss problems of citizen security. This is done in order to improve safety and to seek cooperation and consensus in the finding of solutions through the formulation of a working plan [where each party has] responsibilities.

The addition of these two short sentences constitutes a significant improvement on the decontextualised data inventories found in other years, and highlights just how much meaning is lost in the ‘inventory’ approach to the communication of institutional performance.⁶¹ There have been visible efforts to add some context and explanatory texts to the data presented in the reports since 2016. The 2016 and 2017 documents, for instance, sometimes offer examples of police action as related to an item. To illustrate: when reporting on police action in response to mobile phone theft, the section that provides numbers related to this issue (e.g. number of recovered phones and arrests associated to phone snatching) is followed by a brief text providing descriptions of three operations that were carried out to dismantle phone-snatching criminal networks. The report provides information on the geographic scope of each of the criminal networks, the number of individuals arrested, and the number of recovered stolen goods, amongst other details (Policía Nacional, 2016:27). The 2019 and 2020 reports are better at providing information that goes beyond ‘data inventories’. There are texts explaining different crime control and crime prevention strategies, and the numbers presented are often compared to those of the previous year. Recent reports, thus, suggest that the institution has seen modest improvement in this particular pitfall. However, they all continue to suffer from the other two problems discussed above (numbers not adding up, and variations in year-to-year reported data) and, as such, they remain unfit for purpose.

Overall, the three pitfalls identified are evidence of the fact that the CNP’s annual reports do not fulfil the managerialist aspiration of successfully measuring and communicating institutional performance to the public. Even when assuming that presenting series of quantitative data give a good-enough picture of the institution, as the positivist paradigm does (Idika and Waribugo, 2015:45), the major flaws in these reports make it impossible to draw meaningful insights from the information provided. If one of the key aims of managerialism is to improve accountability and measure performance (Bratton and Malinowski, 2008:260), then the CNP reports evaluated are a failure on both counts. The data presented is often neither intelligible or clear enough to communicate to the public the work that is carried out by the police, nor is it comprehensive enough to derive performance assessments from it.

⁶¹ The 2016 and 2020 reports contain no information on security fronts.

Paradigm suitability

The problems stemming from the CNP's managerialist approach to the measurement of performance, however, do not stop with intra-paradigm coherence. Even when the numbers offered are straightforward enough to qualify as adequate positivist evidence, an empirical, qualitative exploration of their context leads us to question the paradigm's ability to provide an accurate picture. I will now discuss two concrete examples based on data collected during fieldwork that challenge the notion that good institutional performance can be determined by the CNP's ability to produce desirable numbers. This analysis will highlight the fact that the numbers presented in the CNP reports do not represent a fully accurate portrayal of the items/issues/subjects that they claim to measure.

Evidence gathered during fieldwork suggests that there is a complex empirical world behind some of the items that are so plainly and neatly presented in the CNP's annual reports. For example, all of the reports carefully enumerate the number of new vehicles acquired that year—a number that is intended to signal that the institution's operational capacity has improved. However, my own observations in the field of the state of police transportation offer a very different picture. Though there were several cars and motorcycles in the station's parking lot, one of the most salient problems with the institution's operational capacity, according to officers' testimonies and corroborated by my own observations and those of Ruiz Vásquez (2009:260), is that a high volume of their vehicles are out of order or in need of repair. The high percentage of cars that do not start is a real hindrance to police work. For this reason, one of the commanders at the station felt compelled to spend a significant amount of his own money to fix his police car, as, he claimed, 'the institution has no money to repair them'. During the time he spent with the police, Ruiz Vásquez also noted the incapacitating nature of this issue, writing that "half of the twelve motorbikes [in the station] were out of order" (Ruiz Vásquez, 2009:260). In addition, there are several cars that, while not entirely disabled, have significant mechanical issues that compromise their functioning. As an officer and I made our way to jump-start a police car, he said to me that it was quite common to get calls from colleagues in need of a jump-start. What is more, one day we went on a full eight-hour patrol shift without at any point turning off the police car—leaving the ignition on while we stepped out for breakfast or to respond to calls. When I asked about the reason behind this, the officer who was driving said that this was common practice when cars were known to have an unreliable ignition: "If we turn it off, it won't start again". My experience in the field, then, gave me

access to details that are not reflected in the CNP's reports and that, in fact, contradict the notion that the number of new vehicles purchased is a reflection of an improved institutional capacity. The evidence produced gathered during fieldwork shows that these numbers do not actually reflect the state of transportation in the CNP which is, in fact, quite dire.

Similarly, CNP reports often highlight the number of technological gadgets, such as Personal Digital Assistant (PDA) and License Plate Recognition (LPR) devices, that have been bought during the year. These numbers, however, do not reveal anything about the way in which police are adapting to the use of these technologies. The first time I saw an LPR in a police car, I asked what the tablet was for; the officer driving said to me: "Don't even touch that! We *never* turn it on". He then proceeded to explain that the tablet controlled the LPR system, a programme that uses a camera to scan license plates and check them against a database containing information on stolen vehicles or vehicles of interest. According to this officer, the LPR can flag more than one vehicle at a time. This is a problem for officers, who are held accountable for *all* the cases that are recorded in the system. If two cars are flagged by the LPR system at the same time, the police car can only pursue one of the flagged vehicles. At the end of the shift, however, commanders inquire about the cars that were not pursued and officers get penalised for depressing the station's statistics with unresolved LPR cases. The fetishised view of numbers promoted by managerialism can be pushed to such extremes that insurmountable constraints such as the inability to be in two places at once are regarded as irrelevant. As reported by an officer: 'There is no excuse for not going after all the flagged cars, so we don't turn the LPR on at all'. This case shows that the irrational approach to the quantification of police work can dissuade officers from using the very technology that is proudly displayed in annual reports as an important institutional achievement.

The shortcomings of relying heavily on this inadequate version of quantitative methodologies can also be gleaned from the process of collecting this type of data. In 2016 a hot-spots policing pilot—carried out under experimental conditions—was implemented in Bogotá. For this intervention, police officers were supposed to police predetermined segments of a given area for a particular amount of time, and their compliance was monitored through the PDA's location tracker. After noticing that 50% of the police stations seemed not to be policing the prescribed segments sufficiently, it became apparent that the PDA devices were faulty. The PDAs were repaired by the IT team and the experiment resumed, yet officers continued to be called out and penalised for underperformance. As reported by the *Secretaría de Seguridad*

(2017:13–15)—the division of the Mayor’s office in charge of security—it eventually transpired that police officers were not refusing to comply with orders, but that devices were continuing to malfunction and that their location was not being accurately recorded due to poor mobile reception. The rigid application of experimental rules, as enforced by the people in charge of the pilot, left no room for consideration of contextual difficulties and how they could seriously affect the data collected, not to mention the morale of officers who were unfairly penalised.

One of the dangers of the managerialist focus on quantitative data is that “quantification facilitates a peculiarly modern ontology, in which the real easily becomes coextensive with what is measurable” (Espeland and Stevens, 2008:432). Despite the managerialist efforts to contain—and even constitute—reality, the context that surrounds the quantifiable cannot be factored out. All of the complexities that have been ignored in order to present a seemingly all-encompassing dataset, and the shades that have been monochromised for the sake of accounting, remain very much alive on the ground. They continue to operate in the background, limiting and conditioning the ability of those performance numbers to fully or accurately represent what actually goes on on the ground in practice. The examples above are evidence that the positivist paradigm as promoted by managerialism is not entirely suitable for the purpose of demonstrating institutional performance. The constructivist approach that characterises qualitative research restores some amount of depth and contextual nuance to an otherwise distorted presentation of police performance. Having presented a critique of the theoretical assumptions and practical implementation of the managerialist project in the CNP at the institutional level, the following section will discuss the effects that managerialism has had in police practice in Colombia. I will continue to use empirical, qualitative data collected from fieldwork to discuss the ways in which managerialism has fostered questionable police practice, affecting the work that officers do on a daily basis and concealing behind the numbers the means that they use to achieve institutional goals.

Police Practice Under Managerialism

The CNP adopted a managerialist approach to the evaluation of police officers at the beginning of the 2000s,⁶² with the introduction of the *Decreto 1800 de 2000* ‘On the evaluation of officer

⁶² Although the idea that the CNP should have the efficiency and cost-effective approach to resource management

performance'. Police officers' performance is expressed in a score that is marked on a scale of 0 to 1400: scoring 1200 points means the officer has achieved 100% of the goals; scoring over 1200 points means that goals have been achieved beyond expectations (Article 39, *Decreto 1800 de 2000*); a score under 800 points leads to a disciplinary report. The interaction between quotas and this points-based system (PBS) shapes a very particular form of police practice. *Patrullero Botero* explained this predicament:

Patrullero Botero (male): Well, over here you get graded. Each person has a score of 1200 points and every time you get what we call a 'negative [report]', your score decreases by a hundred points. If you reach 800 points, then your superiors file a disciplinary report against you.

Interviewer: So, if you do not reach the monthly quota you get a hundred points deducted from your score?

Patrullero Botero (male): Yes, if you do not reach the monthly quota they send you a 'negative [report]' saying that you do not follow orders—because not reaching the quota is like not following orders—and they put it in your file.

Even if quotas are not directly enforced, the PBS is the mechanism through which they are enforced in practice. The system allows for direct action against the officer's professional performance score if 'orders are not followed', where 'orders' can cover a wide array of tasks and duties, thus making this a very effective and powerful tool for ensuring officer compliance. As such, the PBS is a managerialist tool that has the capacity to influence what policing looks like—what tasks get prioritised and how officers carry out those tasks (Espeland and Stevens, 2008:432).

One of the key issues with this system is that it ignores the fact that what could be regarded as successful police work is often difficult to measure (Cockcroft and Beattie, 2009:529–530). Take, for instance, crime prevention. The product of prevention is not directly and readily measurable—some year-to-year comparisons can be made, but it is impossible to assess with certainty how many crimes have been *prevented* from happening. For this reason, the CNP attaches prevention tasks to quotas—the number of tasks completed is meant to indicate how much prevention has been accomplished. In this managerialist system, the completion of these

of a business had already started with the organisational reform of 1997 (Soacha Sánchez 2013, p. 70).

measurable tasks signals that officers have done an exhaustive and quantifiable effort in crime prevention.

One of the strategies constituting prevention work was what officers called the door-to-door campaign. This consisted of knocking on every door in the officers' quadrant, introducing themselves to the residents or shopkeepers and giving them the patrol's mobile phone number in case they ever needed anything from the police. After this brief encounter, the police would then ask the person or people to sign a sheet confirming that they had received this information. The signature sheets were to be handed in to shift commanders once per week with at least 20 signatures. Scholarly literature supports the idea that citizen informants are key to the work of police (e.g. Skogan and Antunes, 1979) but building strong ties with the community is not an endeavour that can be easily quantified. This door-to-door campaign arguably represents an attempt to express such a task in a simple, quantifiable way: presenting a sheet full of residents' signatures is meant to serve as the principal evidence of the fact that a police officer is fostering citizen relations, and that this, in turn, is regarded as effective prevention work.

Another form of prevention work is what officers referred to as checking antecedents. This activity consisted of asking passersby for their ID card and inputting the number on a Personal Digital Assistant (PDA) device. The PDA checks this number against the criminal justice system's database and displays the person's criminal record and any ongoing cases against them. According to the officers, they were required to check 100 antecedents per shift. The logic behind this strategy is similar to that behind the door-to-door campaign, in that it attempts to break down the complex goal of crime prevention, into simple tasks that can be quantitatively measured.

The translation of this goal into a straight-forward exercise of signature collection or checking people's IDs makes it easier for commanders to express precisely what they want in concrete terms—i.e. number of signatures/IDs checked and timeframe to acquire them—and for officers to know exactly what is expected of them. While this may be regarded as important in order to fairly assess an officer's performance (in terms of whether or not the quota was met) it is less clear how relevant the exercise of collecting signatures is as evidence of having done adequate prevention work. This questionable managerial logic is challenged by some officers:

Patrullero Ronderos (male): Asking people for their ID number in order to verify

their antecedents works, but really [the police] have to lose the quotas: it is no secret that we are required to check 100 antecedents per shift. And I can do that perfectly well. I can stand in a corner for an hour asking people for their ID, but I don't see why we have to. I would normally verify the antecedents of a person if I find them suspicious, and you can find maybe twenty suspicious people in a day, but who's gonna find 100 suspicious people in one shift? Nobody! It is useful to check antecedents to see if someone is wanted by the judiciary, but how many times does that happen? Maybe once every two days. 39 patrol cars means 3,900 antecedent checks for just one [successful] case.

As Ronderos explains, several prevention activities, such as checking antecedents, are directly linked to quotas—the aim of *prevention* is deemphasised and the aim of *meeting the quota* becomes the sole *raison d'être* of checking antecedents. As scholars have contended, the managerialist approach often places emphasis on the quantifiable aspect of a task but neglects the non-quantifiable portion of the activity (Cockcroft and Beattie, 2009:529–530). In the CNP, this sends a message to officers that meeting the quota for the sake of meeting the quota rather than for any other reason is the primary goal. The focus on these quantifiable tasks generates a sense of discomfort in officers, who see a significant part of their work invisibilised:

Patrullero Mosquera (male): If you have a mugging in your jurisdiction and you have not met your operational targets [i.e. quotas], then your performance report is negatively affected. But what about the [non-measurable] prevention work that I have done?

Patrullero Restrepo (male): let's say two robberies took place in my jurisdiction. But last week I organised community meetings, crime awareness campaigns, and did everything to follow orders. None of that is translated into good scores—it is there, it happened, but it doesn't count. Yet it will always be registered that there were two robberies in my jurisdiction.

The problem when discussing responsibility for crime prevention is that it is not possible to prevent all crime. In this sense, it would be unreasonable to expect the job of crime prevention to entail the eradication of crime. The question then becomes: if crime prevention does not require the prevention of all crime, what does it entail? Meeting prevention quotas becomes

key when a crime does occur, because providing evidence of having done prevention work is enough to absolve officers from responsibility. They are not held responsible for a crime in their jurisdiction if they can prove that they did all they could to prevent crime—in other words, fulfilling quotas that relate to prevention work. This phenomenon adds another layer of complexity to the matter, and pierces new holes in the already weak logic that links crime prevention to prevention work:

Interviewer: Why do you think commanders ask you for these [quotas]?

Patrullero Herrera (male): Well, firstly, as a prevention measure. You are preventing something. But, I have analysed this issue based on what commanders tell you and what you hear on the internal radio communications whenever something like a bank robbery happens. The first thing the commanders want to know is how many antecedents the quadrant officers have checked and whether they have taken people to the overnight detention centre. I mean, I don't understand how those things are related to a bank robbery. (...) But that's when they start looking into you, they ask 'how many people does the quadrant send to the detention centre every day? How many sanctions have they issued? How many antecedents have they checked?'. I mean, I don't understand—I don't know what they...it should not be like this. These are all issues unrelated to a bank robbery. The same happens when there is a homicide: 'how many people have they sent to the detention centre in this police station?' that has nothing to do with a homicide.

The logic of the managerialist position seems to run as follows: police cannot prevent all crime, therefore, their performance cannot be measured in terms of lack of crime; instead, to prove they have done all they can to prevent crimes from happening, officers must fulfil certain quotas; in the event of a crime occurring, the evidence of those fulfilled quotas is regarded as proof that the officer did as much as they could to prevent the crime from happening. Fulfilling the quotas therefore becomes important to officers because, when a crime inevitably happens in their quadrant they must show that they have fulfilled quotas so that they can avoid being held responsible for the occurrence of this crime. The attribution of responsibility for crimes committed in an officer's jurisdiction is therefore not attached to the actual prevention of crime, but to the completion of prevention work. This notion of responsibility with regard to crime prevention does not seem particularly logical to officers, as evidenced by the quotes above, and it makes it difficult for them to regard this type of work as meaningful.

An even more problematic by-product of the enforcement of quantitative targets is that it fosters questionable police practice (Loveday, 2006), as officers struggle to find ways to fill quotas and meet targets:

Intendente Melo (male): If this year I made 10 arrests, does that mean that in 5 years I will have to make almost 40 arrests? That's impossible! (...)

Interviewer: So what do officers do [to meet these targets]?

Intendente Melo: Well, what do you think? We have to find other means—somehow find [arrests] in other places, all to keep commanders happy.

Patrullero Ronderos (male): If I don't find a person with the necessary characteristics to send them [to the detention centre] then why should I? But if I don't [send them there] then [commanders] think I have been doing nothing, and that's when they start [handing out] negative reports and annotations.

Requiring a minimum of arrests and penalising officers for not complying with these orders fosters an environment where officers are willing to ignore legality, due process and fairness. As illustrated in the quotes above, police will wield their coercive power in unjust ways in order to meet performance targets. When the fulfilling of these quotas intersects with the concept of efficiency, another problematic phenomenon emerges. As I witnessed during a ride-along, if officers do find someone who has to be sent to the overnight detention centre, it is regarded as inefficient to drive all the way there with just one detainee. In order to make the trip 'worth it', the officer I was with drove to an area where he knew he would find many homeless people and detained two of them on the grounds that "we told you not to loiter around here"—a banishment strategy that we discussed in the previous chapter. One of the officers, furthermore, said that filling up a police car was 'nothing' compared to what officers working in poor areas had to do. Their quotas included filling up a cargo-truck with people to be sent to the overnight detention centre. This was a shockingly high quota, even for the officer I was with, who was in awe of his colleagues having to pick up "52 people to fill up the truck". People who already find themselves in a condition of vulnerability are thus subject to arbitrary police action in the name of efficiency. The establishment of unsustainable managerialist goals puts pressure on officers to produce results—arrests, detentions, etc.—which are fulfilled by preying on the vulnerable. This institutional mentality is breeding a generation of police who

are willing to disregard human decency, integrity and the rule of law in order to perform well in their professional evaluations. As seen from the two examples above, these practices are directed at populations that are marginalised by a societal arrangement based on deep inequalities, thus complementing the already violent disposition that police have toward them, as discussed in Chapter 7.

Having quotas puts officers under undue pressure, and it often pushes them to find ways to comply that are unfair or even illegal (Sparrow, 2015:3). When confronted with these issues, the leaders of the institution do not consider eliminating the quota system, but instead design strategies to give officers better chances to meet the targets. For instance, one of the officers reported that some of the jurisdictional units have too much crime and others too little, the latter making it particularly difficult to reach arrest and detention quotas. The solution to this problem was to restructure the jurisdictional units so that crime was better spread out throughout them. This example is a good representation of what Newburn (2008) observed over a decade ago:

The evidence that the imposition of ever greater numbers of statistical performance targets is not only not having the intended benefits, but in some cases is stimulating almost the reverse of what was desired, is met not by the search for alternative ways of governing performance, but by ever more frantic attempts to make the existing, somewhat discredited methods, work (Newburn, 2008)⁶³

Managerialism has penetrated all levels of operation in the police and it conditions not only the job of beat officers, but of their commanders too. Commander Martínez reported that high-ranking officers are also subject to quotas in matters of internal oversight: commanders have to issue a minimum of sanctions against personnel. This means that there are often investigations against officers where the goal is not to establish the truth—he says—but to sanction them in order to meet the target. The adoption of managerialism in the CNP, thus, has tremendous impact on all echelons of the institutional hierarchy and it has positioned itself as a leading force in the shaping of police practice. As evidenced above, it seems that those aspects that have been touched by managerialism have taken on different meanings: prevention work

⁶³ Page number not available in e-book.

can be reduced to filling out signature sheets; efficient resource management can be interpreted as arbitrarily detaining extra people before making a trip to the detention centre; and initiating an internal disciplinary procedure can be regarded as an opportunity to meet sanction targets. This phenomenon illustrates how ‘turning qualities into quantities creates new things and new relations among things’ (Espeland and Stevens 2008 p. 412). Such a change is not inherently or necessarily bad, of course, but, as observed in Bogotá, this type of alchemy has fostered an undeniably brutal form of police practice that has extremely detrimental effects for vulnerable populations.

Conclusion

The analyses presented in this chapter confirm that we continue to live “in times in which an increasingly crude form of managerialism has taken hold” (Newburn, 2008).⁶⁴ An imported trend from the Global North, the managerialist rationale has thoroughly permeated the practice of urban policing in Colombia as well as the institutional measurement of good performance. The unrelenting ‘target-chasing mentality’ (Faull, 2016:160) promoted by managerialism has had a detrimental effect on beat officers and middle-management and, more importantly, on those citizens who are at the receiving end of an illegitimate, coercive form of policing. What is more, the coveted numbers that the CNP produces in order to measure and communicate institutional performance are not even endowed with sufficient coherence to be internally logical or to be a useful measure of performance. It is the contention of the present study, then, that demonstrates that the adoption of managerialism in the CNP has served the purpose of legitimising the existence of the force and its policing methods through the production of unreliable and even meaningless data. Further, this confirms findings that have been amply documented in other contexts; for instance: managerialism’s impressive ability to change organisational practice (e.g. Willis et al., 2003:58); its tendency to put an undue amount of pressure on beat officers (e.g. Eterno and Silverman, 2010); the displacement of tasks and goals that cannot be expressed in quantifiable terms (Mennicken and Miller, 2016); and the presence of inadequate measures that distort perceptions of performance (Fielding and Innes, 2006). Managerialist forms of accounting “may serve only imperfectly” but it is through their logic that “daily routines make sense and have value” (Power, 1999:7). Police’s collective imaginary, which claims to protect and help citizens—as we shall discuss in the conclusion to

⁶⁴ No page number provided in e-book.

this thesis—stands in contrast with the reality of day-to-day police practice as shaped by managerialism. The fact that the institution is still operating under an unchallenged assumption that “the real” is “the measurable” (Espeland and Stevens, 2008:432) when it comes to performance should be a reminder that managerialism remains to this day an attractive—but flawed—rationale for the organisation of police and policing.

CHAPTER 9

Protecting the Masculinised Profession

Women in the CNP

Introduction

Police forces have traditionally been conceived as male-dominated institutions tasked with carrying out ‘masculine’ jobs (Brown and Heidensohn, 2000; Martin, 1980). Police culture is thus dominated by machismo (Reiner, 2010:129), an ideology which operates on the assumption that “women and men have essentially different characteristics and that only men’s characteristics support effective police work” (Morash and Haarr, 2012:3). Deploying masculinised traits is particularly important in the context of the CNP due to the fact that, as

discussed earlier in the thesis, the institution is heavily militarised. Militarism is regarded as “a hegemonically masculine project, one based on stereotypical masculine values of activity, physical force, domination, group loyalty and heroism” (Barberet and Carrington, 2018:825). The added layer of militarism in the CNP, therefore, further “legitimise[s] discrimination [against women] and marginalisation in these institutions” (Silvestri, 2017: 294).

The aim of this chapter is **to explore the role of women in the CNP and to use this analysis as evidence to support the argument that the CNP remains invested in maintaining a *macho, militaristic corps***. To do so, I will develop two main arguments. First, I will demonstrate that, historically, women have been segregated and othered in the Colombian police because of the attributes that have been socio-culturally assigned to them and the way in which these attributes have clashed with the masculinised values of police work. For this analysis I will make use of historical evidence, particularly examining the male and female versions of the police anthem as well as differential forms of address for male and female officers. The importance of this argument lies in the fact that “present organisational structure, practices and culture are the devices by which past forms of agency have been stored and sedimented such that they can be maintained and reactivated” (Savage and With, 1997, as paraphrased by Brown and Heidensohn, 2000:5). This historical analysis will serve as context to better understand the position of women in the modern-day police force, which will be the second subject of discussion in this chapter. I will examine the qualitative evidence that I collected during fieldwork in order to give account of the views that male officers have of female officers, as well as female officers’ understanding of their own professional identities. I will conclude that, by analysing the expressions of gender-based discrimination in the police, we can ascertain that it is unlikely that the CNP will transition to a civic service with more feminised traits any time soon (the merits of this hypothetical transition will be discussed in the conclusion to this chapter and the conclusion to the thesis), but instead will keep on striving to protect the more coercive, masculinised character of their police practice.

The Colombian context

Since the 1970s, there have been significant changes in the positions occupied by women in Colombian society. This is reflected in the visibilisation of reproductive rights, increasing numbers of women attending university, and the placement of women in senior roles in government, the police and other notable institutions (Wills, 2007). However, the advancement

of this kind of inclusion does not necessarily mean that the social inequalities that produce oppression disappear (Curiel, 2013:83). This is visible in certain public arenas that up until fairly recently were not open to women (e.g. political parties, universities, academia, etc.): even though the participation of women in these spheres is no longer explicitly disallowed, their ability to partake as equals is obstructed by socio-cultural perceptions of women in Colombia (Wills, 2007:22). Wills (2007) suggests that the legal changes that have opened up the public sphere to women have not been accompanied by the socio-cultural transformation that would serve to buttress women's ability to position themselves as equal to men. One of the most important of the changes that were meant to improve women's (and marginalised groups') social, political and legal standing was the 1991 Constitution, the most progressive legal framework Colombia has seen in terms of rights and equality. Its intentions for equality are illustrated in the following quotation:

The 1991 Constitution (...) recognises gender equality (...) and thus discrimination has been forbidden and the right of women to be part of the political and working spheres is [now] guaranteed (Policía Nacional, 2016:27).

There is, however, a mismatch between the absolute rights granted by law and the ways in which these rights have been partially or superficially enacted in women's lived experience. In this sense, the "naturalisation of those [legal] changes is an obstacle to the careful evaluation of what those changes mean for [women's] own lives" (Wills, 2007:15). This is certainly the case for women in the CNP. In line with the 1991 Constitution, the police officers that I have spoken to claim that there is no sexism in the institution, but this belief is often accompanied by a variety of sexist views that go unchallenged on a day-to-day basis. This statement by an *Intendente* is a good illustration of this phenomenon:

Intendente Mosquera (male): The woman in the police is very important. You don't see machismo, [or people saying] 'Women can't'. No, women can! And not only in the police, but in any job (...).

Interviewer: And are there men officers who do not like working with women?

Intendente Mosquera: Yes, maybe because, like I was saying, they are the weak gender, right? (...).

Intendente Mosquera feels that women are able to carry out any job, anywhere, and that

machismo is not present in the institution. However, in answering the follow-up question he is quick to point out that the reason men do not like working with women is because they are ‘the weak gender’. Mosquera does not seem to make a connection between sexism/*machismo* and his comment about women being weak. Rather, officers appear to adhere to the belief that sexism is a phenomenon from the past and that women now stand on the same footing as men, while at the same time perceiving female officers as inherently less than, and different to, their male counterparts. In this sense, officers can “convince [themselves] that there is no longer a social hierarchy between the sexes and that on the whole, in spite of their differences, woman is an equal. As [they] nevertheless recognise some points of inferiority—professional incapacity being the predominant one—[they] attribute to nature” (de Beauvoir, 2010:34). This observation is compatible with Wills’ analysis of the position of women in Colombia: while legal rights for women were enacted in progressive laws such as the 1991 Constitution, there exists a socio-cultural context which both accepts the general idea of equality while simultaneously rejecting it in practice. Both paradigms—though they appear incompatible—have purchase in the Colombian reality.

We have seen a theme emerge several times throughout the thesis: the aspiration to be a civic service versus the reality of militarised practice; the aspiration to serve the people versus the relentless chasing of managerialist targets (often in unfair and illegal ways); and, perhaps most notably, the aspiration towards being “society’s best defence against crime” versus the reality of this premise being “a myth” (Bayley, 1994:3). The treatment and perception of women in the CNP follows the pattern: there is a mismatch between aspiration and reality. Furthermore, this gender analysis serves as evidence of the fact that, contrary to their declared aspiration to be a civic service, the CNP are still deeply attached to the idea of a *macho*, militaristic, coercive police force, and that this institutional character is perpetuated through the marginalisation of women officers. In summary, the way in which gender relations unfold in the CNP reproduces Colombian society’s gendered social order inside the institution (i.e. male dominates female); and shapes the way in which other dimensions of social order are policed in Colombia (i.e. coercive, masculinised forms of policing instead of conciliatory, feminised ones). Before we continue, it is necessary to clarify what is meant by ‘gender’ and how it has been studied in other police forces throughout the world.

On gender

When discussing gender in the Colombian National Police it is important to note that the institution operates on a strict gender binary—members of the CNP are not given the opportunity to identify as anything other than male or female in application forms and personnel statistics. Institutionally, difference between people is constructed through the application of “socially agreed upon biological criteria for classifying persons as females or male” (West and Zimmerman, 1987:127), usually genitalia at birth. The introduction of this dichotomy whereby “a person is either feminine or masculine” (Renzetti, 2011:130) provides what Bauman (1990) calls ‘cognitive (classificatory) clarity’. The strict application of a gender dyad acts as “an intellectual equivalent of behavioural certainty” (Bauman, 1990:146): it provides a gender ‘script’ and allows people to police expected behaviour and penalise those who deviate from it. It is clear, therefore, that a person’s classification is established on the basis of this biological criterion, but it is also “sustained by the socially required identificatory displays that proclaim one’s membership in one or the other category” (West and Zimmerman, 1987:127). It is at this point, then, that the ‘biology of sex’ intersects with the social interactions that shape and give meaning to people’s identities. Much has been written about the social and interactional character of gender—in this section I will present a brief summary of some of the key arguments in this field and how they relate to the study of gender in the police.

Scholars who have studied the social construction of gender sustain that gender identity emerges from a cultural matrix that bolsters the “production of discrete and asymmetrical oppositions between ‘feminine’ and ‘masculine’, where these are understood as expressive attributes of ‘male’ and ‘female’” (Butler, 1990: 24). The organisation of social life in these gendered terms creates “socially constructed expectations or norms governing female and male behavior and attitudes” (Renzetti, 2011:129). It is argued, thus, that men and women do not have intrinsically different characteristics inherent to their biology—gender, instead, is conceived and sustained through socialisation (West and Zimmerman, 1987). The notion that gender is not natural but performative suggests, as phrased by Butler, that “what we take to be an internal essence of gender is manufactured through a sustained set of acts, posited through the gendered stylization of the body” (Butler, 2007:xv). This social construction of the genders as different from one another is not neutral—in the majority of societies, as imposed through colonialism, “what is considered masculine is more highly valued than what is considered feminine” (Renzetti, 2011:130). The power of the ‘gender as performance’ conceptualisation

lies in the fact that it allows us to de-naturalise gender difference and therefore question the hierarchy that conceives women as ‘the other’ against the archetypal male specimen—it proposes that “the inequalities between the sexes are not natural but socially and historically constructed” (Curiel, 2014:6). This social hierarchy is even more pronounced in the context of police forces because these institutions have traditionally been male-exclusive spaces (Brown and Heidensohn, 2000; Martin, 1980; Reiner, 2010:129), which means that female gender identities are heavily marginalised and stigmatised (Veldman et al., 2017:2).

The gender hierarchy that operates within the CNP emerges as a product of what Acker (2006) calls ‘inequality regimes’, which she defines as: “loosely interrelated practices, processes, actions, and meanings that result in and maintain class, gender, and racial inequalities within particular organizations” (Acker, 2006: 443). For example, in the case of police forces, the belief that physical strength is essential for policing (Birzer and Craig, 1996) plays a key role in upholding the gender inequality regime. I will analyse this belief in depth later in the chapter; for now it is enough to mention that such a belief reinforces the idea that policing is mainly about “coercion [which] requires force which implies physique and hence policing by men” (Heidensohn, 1992:73, as referenced by Brown and Heidensohn, 2000:31). Sexism in police forces “is not simply a product of sex role learning but is a deep structure which is articulated in every aspect of the police world. As such, it is organizationally crucial to the practice of policing as well as the occupational identity of individual police” (Hunt, 1990:26). We can see, therefore, that the place of women in the CNP (and in police forces in general) is significantly conditioned by the social conceptualisation of gender: female officers’ professional competency is assessed *ex ante* based on the assumption that they are imbued with female traits, traits that are unsuitable for the job of policing. This argument will be illustrated throughout the present chapter.

Finally, it is worth noting that there is not only one type of femininity and one type of masculinity (Connell, 1987; Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005). I will not explore the question of this multiplicity in this occasion but will instead use ‘male/masculine/masculinised’ and ‘female/feminine/feminised’ as shorthand to refer to the commonplace assumptions that females are physically weak, emotional, irrational and in need of protection (Hunt, 1990; Miller, 1999) and males are physically strong, protectors, and in control of their emotions (Brown et al. 2018; Stiehm, 1982). Of course, these are not full representations of people’s experiences and they are an essentialised version of the feminine versus the masculine. I will

be using these distinctions not because they represent an entirely adequate understanding of gender, but because they will help us explore how gender relations operate in the CNP at a basic level.

A History of Women in the CNP

We swim in the past as fish do in water

Hobsbawm, 1972:17

This quotation from Hobsbawm expresses the idea that the past continues to shape our present, something that becomes particularly evident when we study the place of women in traditionally male-exclusive organisations such as police forces. Police forces were conceived as places where *macho* men carried out masculine tasks (Brown and Heidensohn, 2000; Martin, 1980). This construction of the job of policing effectively excluded women from policing duties for many years and, even though they have since gained entry to several police forces, this historical memory still informs an organisational culture that discriminates and marginalises female officers (Silvestri, 2017: 294). In this sense, it is true that “a group’s representation of its history will condition its sense of what it was, is, can and should be” (Liu and Hilton, 2005:537). In studying the challenging path toward female admittance into the ‘male police force’, therefore, we are not exploring the tale of a bygone era but the institutional origin of a gender structure that remains the backbone of police forces such as the CNP. The past, as Hobsbawm put it, “is essentially the pattern for the present” (Hobsbawm, 1972:3).



Una de las señoritas de la Policía Femenina se dedica con maternal cariño a distraer a varios niños con la lectura de un cuento.

Figure 5: Picture 1 *Policía Femenina*. Caption: “One of the *señoritas* of the *Policía Femenina* devotes herself with maternal affection to distract some children by reading them a story” (Fuerzas de Policía, 1954c:36)

This section will explore the introduction of women to the CNP and the conditions under which they were allowed to become (honorary) police officers. In doing so, we will see how the traits associated with women and their femininity were not significantly challenged as they made their first appearance in the force. These analyses will help us understand the current role of women in the police which, in many ways, follow the pattern established by the early introduction of women in the CNP. By the end of the chapter it will become clear that, indeed, the historical foundation of gender relations in the CNP has been “central to the construction of [the institution’s] identity, norms, and values” (Liu and Hilton, 2005:537).



Figure 6: Picture 2 *Policía Femenina*. Caption: “Accompanied by the Commander of the *Fuerzas de Policía* in the Magdalena region, we find the Honorary Lieutenants [names]” (Fuerzas de Policía, 1954b:75)

The advent of the first female police officers in Colombia came during General Rojas Pinilla’s dictatorship (1953–1957), with the creation of the *Policía Femenina* [female police corps]. This initiative, as well as the decision to give in to feminist demands for the women’s vote, was likely part of the dictator’s strategy to appeal to the masses and gain popular support (Luna, 2001:86). The *Policía Femenina* was established as part of the *División del Bienestar Social de la Policía* [Social Welfare police division], a wing of the CNP dedicated to fostering the well-being of police officers and their families (*Resolución 1863 de 2 de Julio de 1953*; Policía Nacional, 1954a); the aim of the new *Policía Femenina* was specifically to ensure the well-being of all children. The *Policía Femenina*—headed by General Rojas Pinilla’s daughter, *señorita* María Eugenia Rojas Correa, and General Rojas Pinilla’s wife (Policía Nacional,

1953a:59)—came into being with the appointment of 68 women as *Tenientes Segundo Honorario* [Honorary Second Lieutenants], and General Rojas Pinilla’s daughter as commanding *Teniente Primero Honorario* [Honorary First Lieutenant] (*Resolución 3256 de 5 de Noviembre de 1953*). These honorary lieutenants of the *Policía Femenina* were to lend their service to the police’s Social Welfare Division (*Resolución 3256 de 5 de Noviembre de 1953*), and to look after the welfare of children, a role that was summarised in a ten-item list. They were expected to:

1. *provide services to children’s parks;*
2. *control minors in public events;*
3. *control the selling of books and magazines for children;*
4. *monitor children’s school attendance;*
5. *care for lost/unattended children until their parents or legal guardians are located;*
6. *provide services at day-cares for infants;*
7. *provide services at kindergartens;*
8. *lend services in hospitals and mental institutions for children;*
9. *set up orphanages and children protection homes;*
10. *organise events for children (Policía Nacional, 1953a:58–9)*

A year later, a prospectus for a training course for the *Policía Femenina* was approved through *Resolución 473 de 6 de Febrero de 1954*. The accompanying circular stated that this training course should run twice per year in Bogotá (*Circular 033-A de 27 de Febrero de 1954*). The one-year course included subjects such as knitting, children’s literature, cooking, songs and nursery rhymes, first aid, criminal sociology of minors, and professional ethics and religious culture (*Policía Nacional, 1954b:21*). The prospectus (*Policía Nacional, 1954b*), meanwhile, expanded the original ten-item list, cited above, to a full sixteen items, all of which concerned children and their well-being. Even though women had been added, in a limited capacity, to the Colombian Police, then, the role they were cast in was one that remained firmly grounded in feminised forms of work: “an extension of the supportive and caring tasks that they normally performed in the domestic sphere” (Weinberger, 2016).



El chiquillo también goza de los cuidados propios de su edad; una de las señoras de la Policía Femenina lo pasea por las calles de la capital.

Figure 7: Picture 3 *Policía Femenina*. Caption: “this little one enjoys the cares required by him at his age: a *Señorita* of the *Policía Femenina* takes him on a stroll in the streets of the capital city” (Fuerzas de Policía, 1954c:37)

This is in line with the introduction of women in other police institutions across the world, where their entry into the force was not accompanied by a true process of inclusion, but was instead firmly grounded in gender-based separation (Garcia, 2003:334; Heidensohn, 1992). Just like the women of the *Policía Femenina*, female officers in other latitudes were also granted access to these institutions in order to carry out ‘feminine’ tasks: “the nation became a macrocosm of the home, where the women cared for other women, children and those unable to care for themselves” (Schulz, 1995:13 as quoted by Miller, 1999:75).

In Colombia, there were explicit efforts to differentiate the *Policía Femenina* from its male counterpart, both through the tasks assigned to each division, but also through the use of distinct organisational symbols which reinforced the ontological separation between the two. A distinct anthem was created for the *Policía Femenina*, for instance, and different forms of address were

used for women officers. To study these symbols is of great importance, given that “discursive agents (...) evoke meanings, norms, values and feelings on the role of women and men, texts such as national anthems (...) produce and evoke particular norms and meanings” (Lombardo and Meier, 2014:40). By looking at this evidence we can understand some of the building blocks of gender inequalities: “the analysis of such discursive constructions is useful when studying gender because it helps to bring otherwise submerged norms about gender and gender roles to the surface” (Lombardo and Meier, 2014:42).

Anthems are of great symbolic importance because they have the power to define and reaffirm the identity boundaries (Cerulo, 1993:224) of the institution/nation/organisation they represent. Since anthems are commissioned and selected by those in power, they can offer an insight into how these nations or institutions are conceived by their rulers (Cerulo, 1989:77). Police anthems transmit the institutional construction of the ideal police officer—they delineate the particulars of that imagined officer’s identity and provide a model for the rank and file to follow. In 1954—the year after the creation of the *Policía Femenina*—an anthem was chosen for the police force as a whole (Policía Nacional, 2019). The commander of the *Fuerzas de Policía* under Rojas Pinilla’s dictatorship, *Coronel* Francisco Rojas Scarpetta, announced an open call to find the police’s national anthem (Policía Nacional, 2019b). The musician Luis María Carvajal Prada won the contest, and his three-stanza lyrics made it clear that the *Policía Nacional* was a place for men:

(Male) Police Anthem

Stanza I

Onward, guardians of order
With manly courage, valour and dignity
Ensure that the rights of men
To liberty are enjoyed in order.

Stanza II

If duty compels you to act,
Then prudence you must display
Be loyal to balance and justice,
Citizens are equal in the law.

Stanza III

As fathers you must safeguard
The sacred rights of the home
May God and the Homeland reward you,
Defenders of social order.

The anthem presents a clear image, one that emphasises ensuring the ‘rights of men’ with ‘valour’, ‘dignity’ and *hombria* (which literally translates as ‘manliness’ or ‘manhood’, but which could be more accurately rendered as ‘manly courage’) and calling upon officers, in their role as ‘fathers’, to safeguard ‘the rights of the home’. Such instances of institutional speech transmitted a message about the ideal or ‘normal’ police officer. The choice of this song as the anthem of the *Policía Nacional* is significant because it established a police officer identity that was only applicable to men. The *Policía Femenina*, rather than being included in the important institutional symbol that was the main police anthem, was provided with a separate anthem, also in 1954 (Fuerzas de Policía, 1954d:186).

Female Police Anthem

Chorus:

Colombia claims from us
Virtue and abnegation;
Let’s give it the flame
Of our hearts.

Stanza I

Lets bring the precepts
Of Christ and Bolívar
“Law, Peace, Work,
Justice and Liberty”,
To young and old,
Weak and strong;
And that way we will foster
Social welfare.

Stanza II

No more struggles between brothers,
No more retaliation,
Let hatred and resentment
Cease forever;
In a sea of oblivion
Let passions drown
And amongst Colombians
Only love prevail.

Stanza III

The boy, in our hands,
Will have a warm nest;
With them, their soul and mind
We will model,
Blossom of tomorrow,
Dew of a Homeland
That can swaddle us all
Like the sweetest home.

Where the primary anthem stated that officers ought to have ‘manly courage, valour and dignity’, the anthem of the *Policía Femenina* declared that officers ought to possess ‘virtue and forbearance’. Where the former asserted that officers, as fathers, must safeguard the home, the latter stated that officers should provide a ‘warm nest’ for children. This idealised vision of the dual and complementary roles of men and women—the mother, in charge of the home, remains in the private sphere bringing up the children, while the man earns a living in the public realm and protects the home from the outside world (Fuller, 1995:241)—is deeply embedded in the text of these two anthems. This vision underlay the depiction of the archetypal officer and shaped the institutional identities that members of the force were expected to identify with: “these meanings and norms reveal patterns of privileged and of marginalised actors and groups” (Lombardo and Meier, 2014:40) whose place in the hierarchy is made explicit through these organisational symbols. These anthems, then, present the simultaneous inclusion and exclusion of female officers. Women were included in the sense that they were allowed to join

the force but excluded in that the *Policía Femenina* was entirely separate from the main police force; institutional symbols such as anthems were used to reinforce the distinct professional identity that was meant to characterise women officers.

Another salient indication of the fact that women, although officers, were not to be regarded as real police is provided by the honorary titles that were granted them. The document that published the names of the first women to become *Tenientes Honorarias* [honorary lieutenants] in the *Policía Femenina* lists most of them as *Señorita* [Miss], with the exception of a few widows, listed as *Señora* [Mrs] (*Resolución 3256 de 5 de Noviembre de 1953*). To mark the entry of women to the force, the Police Magazine printed their names along with photographs of the initiation ceremony (Policía Nacional, 1953b): in these photographs, the women are identified by the title ‘*Señorita Teniente Honoraria*’, which translates as ‘Miss Honorary Lieutenant’. This stands in contrast to the case of male officers featured in the same volume, who are referred to by their rank and name, without the use of any prefix.⁶⁵ Differential forms of address are often evidence of a power asymmetry and is an indication of the subordination of one of the parties involved (Brown and Gilman, 1960)—in this case, women. This phenomenon reinforced the separation between the (male) *Fuerza de Policía* and the *Policía Femenina*, “transmitting and reinforcing the asymmetric, hierarchical and unequal relationships that exists between the sexes” (Pérez Cervera, 2011:7).



⁶⁵ Despite the fact that women are no longer granted honorary titles, the custom of addressing in a different manner has remained alive to this day. During fieldwork, I noticed that men were addressed by their rank and last name, e.g. ‘*Patrullero Gómez*’, or just by their last name, ‘*Gómez*’, while women were addressed as *Señorita* [miss] and their first name, e.g. ‘*Señorita Angie*’ or just their first name.

The story of women in the CNP, however, is not one of continuity—judging by the information available in official CNP publications, the *Policía Femenina* seems to have fizzled out as a going concern after just a couple of years. It is not entirely clear whether there was an official dissolution of the body or whether it was simply quietly allowed to fade away as the dictatorship came to an end. Only a few months after Rojas Pinilla was pushed out of power, the Police Magazine published a note-worthy piece in its November–December 1957 edition that is suggestive of a backlash against such initiatives. The article, entitled ‘Women in Modern Society’, begins with a critique of women who work in fields in which only men should work. The author then moves on to discuss the negative consequences of divorce and to argue that women should remain in the home in order to avoid the demise of the family. The *Policía Femenina* is not directly mentioned at any point, but the author’s arguments seem to be a less-than-subtle reference to that body:

Women in urgent need can be excused for working. A very different case is that of women who have no need to work, yet who dedicate themselves fully to activities that are often not even feminine. [This type of woman] spends all day away from the home with the pretence of being equal to a man and thus acting like one. They sometimes do this because their home life bores them and they are seeking a false sense of importance by moving in masculine environments (Fernandez de Soto, 1957:63).

The fact that several of the members of the *Policía Femenina* were well-off women from the upper class (see, for instance, El Tiempo, 2005) suggests that they are the people the author was thinking of. The author also critiques the state’s daycare centres for infants, which she describes as detrimental to children as they cannot replace the care of a mother at home; establishing these daycares, as we have seen, was one of the key tasks entrusted to the *Policía Femenina*. The author of the piece, who was a woman, is representative of a segment of society that strongly rejected the idea that women could find a place in the public force. Almost two decades would pass before women were again allowed to be part of the police—as we shall see, the views expressed in this article remained ubiquitous and influential.

Female officers returned to the CNP in 1977, when a group of twelve women were allowed to enrol for the first time in the General Santander Police School, after having finished their university degrees (García Fernández, 2017a:13; Policía Nacional, 2014). After three months

of training, they were allowed to exercise their own profession within the institution, working as lawyers, psychologists and sociologists in the police (García Fernandez, 2017a:15). According to the CNP's official account, as recorded in its report 'Historical Reconstruction of the Role of Women in the Armed Conflict' (Policía Nacional, 2016), this represents the second stage of women in the force.

The following year, in 1978, a group of women were allowed to enrol in Gonzalo Jiménez de Quesada Police School to begin training to become commanding officers. Shortly afterwards, a cohort of women began their training to become entry-level police officers (Policía Nacional, 2014; García Fernandez, 2017a:21). Finally, in 1981, the general course to become street officers was opened to women and, in 1984, the CNP created the *Centro de Instrucción Femenina* [Centre for Female Education] for the training of all women aspiring to become part of the institution (García Fernandez, 2017a:29). This development comes about a decade after other police forces across the world started integrating women into their organisations (García, 2003:338). Having broken into the ranks of the police, women slowly started making their way up in the institution, acquiring promotions and completing training to carry out specialised tasks (e.g. flying helicopters or training police dogs).

In the decades since, a few women have risen to the highest ranks in the force and there is technically no role that is off-limits to women in the present-day CNP. However, women still make up only 9% (Policía Nacional, 2018) of the membership of the CNP and there is virtually no further information available regarding the particularities of their work in the police. We know they earn the same as male officers, given that pay scales are based on rank (Policía Nacional, 2017b), and we know that their entry exams are more expensive than those of men (Policía Nacional, 2021), but there is little other information about the ways in which gender inequalities play out in practice. The following section will explore male views about female officers and female views about their role in the force, based on qualitative interviews I conducted during fieldwork. As we shall see, female officers inhabit a complex role filled with tension and contradictions, in many ways a continuation of the marginalising mentality that was formed in the first decades of women in the police.

Current Views of Women in the CNP

In this section, I will analyse qualitative, empirical data collected during fieldwork in order to explore male views about female officers and female views about their role and place in the modern-day CNP. We shall see that the historically-inherited narrative that portrays women as a lesser form of police officer still has purchase in the institution—these historical patterns have established “a way of seeing that makes available future ‘interactional possibilities’ and (...) helps shape a subjectivity out of which action will flow” (Shearing and Ericson, 1991:490). In this sense, by exploring officers’ perceptions of female police we can not only understand some of the drivers of current interpersonal gender dynamics in the force, but it can also give us some clues about how these dynamics can shape the future of the CNP. Such an analysis reveals that the CNP still places high value on male traits and, as evidenced by the consistent marginalisation of women, is, consciously or unconsciously, committed to protecting the masculinised nature of the institution.

Male views of female officers

The data collected for this study suggest that men do not regard women as real officers, and that they rely on a variety of narratives to justify this view. In this section I will discuss the most salient of these narratives.

The image and role of women in the Colombian police is shaped, as we shall see, by multiple layers of meaning and of contradiction—a phenomenon that has been recognised when studying gender and equality in policing across the globe (Silvestri, 2018). The contradictory nature of these gender narratives is clearly illustrated by the following quotation:

Intendente Gaviria (male): When I was a patrullero, I worked with a [woman] subintendente, and I had the idea that everyone has about working with women: ‘what a drag’. Because it is not the same—on the streets you need to be supported by someone like you: someone who can display strength and seriedad [seriousness—meaning a professional, down-to-business attitude], but if you’re out there with a woman, you have to look after yourself and, on top of that, you also have to look after her.

But, actually, I found the opposite to be true, because I was assigned to a woman (...) [and working with her] was a cool experience because she got me rid of the idea that women are like that. It was better than working with a man. So, yeah, working with women is cool—although you have to put them in their place because women will never be the same as a man: women don't hide their feelings like a man. Women officers show their feelings more—for instance, [us men] look at the cases for what they are: 'this is a thief who messed up and we're taking him to be prosecuted', women don't. When are like 'oh no, poor man, let's look at the circumstances and see why he's stealing; let's not judge him like that', that's what a woman would normally say. That's the difference.

There are people who don't like working with women because they say 'I have to look after myself and also after her', but also because women have so many issues: 'let's stop because I'm gonna redo my makeup', 'my hair is messed up, I'm gonna fix it' (...). But I think that's chévere [neat/cool]. Some men see working with women as an inconvenience, because it is an inconvenience. But it is chévere. I have worked with lots of them and I have had no problems. It is chévere.

According to Gaviria, working with female officers is 'a drag'. Here we encounter several commonplace arguments that we will discuss in depth later in the chapter: that working with women is not real work because they are not serious and businesslike; that men dislike patrolling with women because they lack physical strength; that men feel compelled to look after female officers and that this prevents them from focusing on their own safety; and that women are fussy and overemotional and thus unsuited for police work. Despite the positive affirmations that Gaviria includes (for instance, that working with a woman is "chévere [neat/cool]" and "better than working with a man"), his main argument is that "some men see working with women as an inconvenience, because it is an inconvenience". Gaviria's viewpoint is representative of many if not all of the officers interviewed during fieldwork, in that he tries to reconcile the fact that women are now part of the police force with the fact that he does not see female officers as real police.

Strength and protection

A recurrent narrative in my interviews with male officers was that, when partnered with a female officer, they feel compelled to protect her from harm. This view is informed by the socio-political power matrix of Colombian society in which men occupy a place of dominance over women (Díaz Guzmán, 2017; Velásquez Toro, 1986; Lugones, 2008)—women are constructed as weak and men as strong, the latter are protectors, the former protected. The urge to protect women is closely tied to the idea that women need such protection because they are physically weaker than men. In the context of policing, this has become a commonplace trope around the world when it comes to assessing women's ability to carry out their job (Barberet and Carrington, 2018; Birzer and Craig, 1996; Garcia, 2003:337); Morash and Haarr, 2012; Rabe-Hemp, 2009). In this section, I will explore how this kind of narrative emerges in the CNP officers' stated opinions on female officers.

When asked about the most important characteristics and attributes a police officer should have in order to be good at their job, not a single participant in this study, male or female, mentioned physical strength. In other words, the interviewees did not see strength as a necessary requirement for being a good police officer (an assessment corroborated by other policing studies, e.g. Hunt, 1990:13). Nevertheless, when discussing the reasons why men do not like working with women officers, one of the key reasons reported was their lack of physical strength.

Patrullero Romero (male): If there's a fight you're not gonna let the girl get involved. If there's men fighting, a police car with two male officers arrives and it is much easier to stop [the fight] and apprehend the men. But a girl is not gonna have the strength to stop a man.

Intendente Melo (male): They are very good support, but in case of serious fights they have to be protected a lot. They are wearing a uniform, but the person who is in an altered state of mind, maybe having had alcohol, they don't control their strength and sometimes [the female officers] end up badly hurt. So one has to protect them a lot.

Patrullera Prada (female): Maybe [men] don't feel like we have the same skills

and strength as a man—and we sometimes feel bad about this, because we don't have the same ability or strength as a man. [Male officers working with a female partner] do not feel as safe as they would feel if a man had their back in a fight.

As illustrated by these quotations, men *and* women accept the premise that women are physically weaker than men and that, because of this, they cannot participate in certain policing activities. This premise effectively justifies the marginalisation of women and promotes the idea that they are not full-fledged officers. This state of affairs resonates with the situation of women in other police forces around the world, whose professional status is deeply affected by assumptions about their body. In their discussion of women in the police, Brown and Heidensohn (2000), drawing on Savage and Witz (1997), highlight the importance of biology and the body in the analysis of gender in the police. They suggest that “both socially constructed aspects of sexuality (sexuality paradigm) and biological aspects of women’s (and men’s) bodies (gender paradigm) are employed as devices to subordinate women and justify their exclusion from specific roles and seniority in organizations” (Brown and Heidensohn, 2000:14). In the CNP, this kind of gender-based exclusion operates not only on an informal basis, as it does in some other police forces, but is also buttressed by institutional policy: as relayed by several informants, the reason why the institution keeps the percentage of female officers low (9% at the time of fieldwork) is because women are not regarded as being physically strong enough to fend for themselves. This is also the reason why female officers must always be partnered with male officers. As Silvestri (2017) rightly points out, “through the construction of such differentiation between women and men, it is easy to understand how women become ‘outsiders’ and deemed ‘deficient’ and ‘unsuited’ for the job of policing” (Silvestri, 2017: 294).

However, the portrayal of women as ‘outsiders’, ‘deficient’ and ‘unsuited’ for the job does not necessarily generate outright rejection or exclusion, at least in the CNP. Rather, influenced by a paternalistic/patriarchal sentiment, male officers feel the urge to protect women from harm:

Patrullero Galán (male): Our instinct as men tells us we should be looking after [our female partner]—or, at least that’s what it tells me. So, because of that, you are left with double the worries: making sure nothing happens to you, and making sure nothing happens to her.

Patrullera Orozco (female): Well, I've heard several reasons [for men not wanting to work with women officers]. One of them is that they say 'I have to take care of you because you are a woman and if anything happens to you I would feel guilty'—that's what they say.

Patrullero Romero (male): The compañeritas [diminutive for partners]? You feel like the older brother, you have to take good care of them. I have had compañeritas and you have to look after them. Obviously, she's working, but she's a girl, so you have to look after them because a lot of the times people do not respect female officers—girls.

This desire to keep female officers safe from harm is best understood in light of Stiehm's (1982) discussions of the protector and the protected. Stiehm notes that, in order to maintain order and protect the defenceless, societies deem it important to identify the 'protectors' and the 'protected' among their populations. According to Stiehm's analysis, those who fall under the category of the protected usually include: the young, the old, the highly valued, the despised, the distrusted and women. Out of all of these categories, she continues, women are the only ones who are not able to transition into protectors: children can grow out of their protected status, old people may have already been protectors, the valued can lose their status, the despised can become accepted, and the distrusted may have once been trusted. But women, Stiehm argues, remain permanently in the role of the protected (Stiehm, 1982:369).

The classification of women as protected and men as protectors sits uncomfortably with the idea that women are allowed to be police officers, a profession that heavily relies on the deployment of protector/male identities. It is no surprise, then, to find that the notion of women as weak and in need of protection comes through in officers' narratives about working with female officers. Perhaps in an attempt to avoid disrupting the image of the archetypal police officer (who is male and a protector), women officers have their 'female/protected' identity foregrounded—this, in turn, has the effect of subduing or altogether nullifying their 'professional/protector' identity.⁶⁶ As relayed by several respondents, working with a woman

⁶⁶ An intriguing aspect to consider regarding the protector/protected binary as enacted in the CNP would be that of women officers as protectors of children. The role of women officers in relation to youth and children was not discussed in detail by respondents, which means that there is not enough data to understand the extent to which such a role could be qualified as that of a protector. Nevertheless, this would be a tension worth exploring in the discussion of the protector and the protected in the police.

officer means that the male officer—the protector—not only has to protect his own life but also the life and well-being of the woman officer—the protected—as well as carrying out his policing work. We will return to the issue of the protector and the protected later in this chapter to explore how the analyses present here can be further developed by adding the analytical dimension of militarisation in the CNP to the discussion.

To sum up, the narrative that portrays men as chivalrously protecting physically weak women from harm perpetuates oppressive gender dynamics within the CNP: as Stiehm says, “the relationship between protector and protected is always asymmetric. One has access to force and one does not. One has dependents, one is dependent” (Stiehm, 1982:374). In the CNP, one is a real officer and one is a hinderance to police work. In addition to this key issue of strength and protection, there are other salient narratives that came through in the interviews. I will discuss these in the next section.

Women as supporters and helpers of real officers

We have seen, in the historical discussion at the start of this chapter, that the earliest female police officers in the CNP were conceived of as different from the real, male officers. Though female officers no longer serve simply in an honorary capacity, and although they have been integrated into the main body of the force since the 1970s, the assumption that they are separate and different from their male counterparts continues to colour the ways in which women’s work is perceived in the CNP. In interviews, several male officers implied that they placed less value on women’s work, which they saw as not ‘real’ police work. This was often conveyed through the description of working with women as a ‘fun break’ from the routine, and by making a distinction between female officers and ‘normal officers’.

Patrullero Romero (male): I really like working with girls, it’s fun, it’s like stepping out of the routine because you chat with the girls—I like sharing those [moments with them]. (...) It is recochero [fun/hijinks/horseplay], it is nice to work with a female officer, (...) [but] a lot of the times it is best for them to stay in their oficinitas [diminutive of offices], sentaditas [diminutive of sitting] calmly. That’s what I think.

Intendente Melo (male): They are very good support, but in case of heavy fights

they have to be protected a lot. (...) Being with a woman officer is an advantage and a disadvantage at the same time. They are muy queriditas [diminutive for 'very nice'] and all, and some of them are well grounded and assertive in any situation and can face the problem as if they were a normal male cop.

As illustrated in these statements, the perception is that 'real' police work is done by 'normal', i.e. male, officers, and that the work of female officers is in some sense less legitimate and that it is frivolous and light-hearted in a way that real police work is not.

Working with female officers thus has the potential to make male officers deviate from their normal police style:

Patrullero Galán (male): (...) Sometimes we see things with a tougher eye, you know what I mean? As a man you are used to seeing things in a harsher way. When you work with a woman—well, not all of them, but some of them—you try to see things in a different way, in a more...I don't know how to say it. Like, you see things in a way that is not so strong, not so drastic; you try to use your feelings a bit more. Do you know what I mean? Something like that.

Galán states that working with a female officer has the potential to change his practice, yet he is careful to note that any such change is limited to those times in which he is partnered up with a woman. Even when this man adopts a feminised approach to policing, he does so on a temporary basis: he suspends his normal, masculinised *modus operandi* while he is working with a policewoman, and then resumes his 'real' police style once he is partnered up again with a 'normal' officer.

Not only are women often framed as a welcome distraction or an opportunity for temporary change, they can also be framed as an active hinderance to real police work. An issue that was raised by a number of interviewees was that women are too fussy to be good officers. *Intendente Gaviria* provides an illustrative example:

Intendente Gaviria (male): Women have so many issues: 'Let's stop because I'm gonna redo my makeup', 'My hair is messed up, I'm gonna fix it', 'My trousers are sticking out of my boot', 'Don't go so fast because it makes me

nervous', or, for instance, when you're with a man on the streets you just eat whatever, but women are like 'Take me to this place so I can have a salad'.

Interestingly, this narrative is also deployed by female officers in reference to other female officers. For instance, *Patrullera* Molina described her fellow female officers in the following terms:

Patrullera Molina (female): [Some female officers are like:] 'Oh, this' and 'Oh, that' and 'Oh, the gun!', [so male officers] think you will get all flustered and confused. (...) Or [some of the women will say] 'Oh this hurts, that hurts, I'm tired'.

In the next section I will return to Molina's statement and analyse what it means in the context of 'defensive othering'. For now I want to highlight the way in which this image of women as ditzy and fussy complements the overarching narrative discussed earlier about women being unsuited for police work. Their shortcomings are not just physical, in other words, but also related to their character and the traits embedded in their gendered identity. The display of such traits is not well regarded by their male counterparts, as illustrated by this quotation from Gaviria:

Intendente Gaviria: Working with women is cool—although you have to put them in their place because women will never be the same as a man: women don't hide their feelings like a man. Women officers show their feelings more—for instance, [us men] look at the cases for what they are: 'this is a thief who messed up and we're taking him to be prosecuted', women don't. When are like 'oh no, poor man, let's look at the circumstances and see why he's stealing; let's not judge him like that', that's what a woman would normally say.

The characteristics that Gaviria attributes to female officers are very much grounded in the notion that women are compelled to act on their feelings of compassion, empathy, care and their need to connect (Miller, 1999:63), all of which gets on the way of police work.

The disdain for women and their work in the police is so entrenched, that even when the work carried out by women is of indisputable importance, officers still frame their work as different

to real work. For example, Article 159, Paragraph 2 of the Police Code states that members of the public can only be searched by an officer ‘of the same sex’. Male officers know that they need women for this purpose, but nevertheless they find a way to demean the value of this work:

Intendente Melo (male): There are benefits [to having women in the police]. For instance, they help by frisking women, because the delinquents always look at you and they think ‘there’s only men; let’s give the illegal things to the woman (...) body because they can’t touch her’. So, in that sense, there is an advantage in being with a woman [officer].

Intendente Mosquera (male): I like to keep company with women officers because they are an important source of support: if there is a case where a woman needs to be frisked, [a man] cannot do it—the woman [officer] that is there with us has to do the procedure, and this is important.

Mosquera and Melo both acknowledge the fact that women are needed when frisking female suspects, but the wording that they use suggests that female officers are only ‘helping’ or lending ‘support’ to male officers. This phenomenon can be analysed in light of Velásquez Toro’s (1986:185) observation on the value of jobs. She argues that the social value attributed to different types of jobs is closely connected to whether they are feminised or masculinised (Velásquez Toro, 1986:185). Brown et al. (2018) have suggested that when it comes to policing, “values associated with masculinity map onto, and are congruent with police culture” and that such “male-type jobs require characteristics that are contrary to those thought stereotypically appropriate to women” (Brown et al. 2018:5). Building on these observations by Velásquez Toro and Brown et al., it is clear that female officers’ work is undervalued by their male counterparts because it is at odds with the masculinised archetype that they associate with the job of policing. In other words, if masculinised jobs are held in higher esteem because they are male, men can protect the value of their role by framing women as helpers or supporters. As Garcia rightly points out, “the policewoman’s purpose was not to replace men in their occupation but to aid and assist them, quietly and unassumingly” (Garcia, 2003:333)

The excerpts analysed above illustrate the two main narratives that connect to the idea that women are not real police officers, and that the work they carry out is not real police work:

women either occupy a supporting or helping role that complements the work of the male officers; or they hinder male officers by distracting them from their duties. The one is framed positively and one negatively, in neither case is the work of female police officers presented as equal to that of men.

Female officers' views of their professional persona

We have seen how women are often portrayed by male interviewees as incompetent officers, incapable of fulfilling all of the requirements needed to be considered 'real police'. In this section, we will turn to the ways in which female officers respond to and make sense of this institutional and interpersonal othering, and the strategies they use to reconcile their female gender identity with the male 'good officer' archetype. First, I will explore the complex narratives that women weave in their attempt to identify an ideal of the good female officer, particularly in the context of a militarised police force. Second, I will discuss how, in the absence of such a female officer archetype, women engage in a practice called 'defensive othering' (Schwalbe et al., 2000) in order to secure themselves a favourable place within the CNP's gender identity hierarchy.

Women in a militarised police force

The perceived incompatibility between being a woman and being a police officer naturally gives rise to various identity challenges for women in the CNP. I have already noted that such a phenomenon is not unique to the Colombian context—we find the narrative that “women do not possess the necessary masculine traits of rationality, aggressiveness, bravery, objectivity, suspicion, and brutality required of good cops” (Garcia, 2003:337) across the world. What is distinctive about the Colombian case, however, is that, as discussed in Chapter 7, the CNP is a highly militarised institution. Because of this particularity, we must bear in mind that the kind of imagined standard of policework against which female officers are being measured encompasses not only the ability to wrestle a knife off a mugger but also to spend several months deep in the mountains engaged in armed conflict. Female officers' narratives of their role in the force, particularly with regard to the waging of war, are thus a clear illustration of the high level of tension that exists between their feminised gender identity and the highly masculinised task of serving in a militarised institution.

As noted by Barberet and Carrington (2018), “armed conflict is a strongly sexed and gendered phenomenon” (Barberet and Carrington, 2018:825–6). Following Stiehm’s theory, Kinsella (2006) notes that “participation in war (...) is structured according to a dyad wherein men are regularly positioned as combatants and protectors during war and women as civilians and protected” (Kinsella, 2006:164).⁶⁷ The inherently violent character of war means that there is even less space to deploy the already questionable argument that the CNP are a civic service that operates on the feminised principles of prevention and conciliation (Miller, 1999; McCarthy, 2013). This forces women to negotiate a gendered professional identity that can fit within the *macho* world of war. The following excerpt details a conversation between female officers about women who work in all-male task forces. It is a particularly illuminating illustration of the complex ways in which women attempt to reconcile the perceived incompatibility between their professional identity and their gender identity:

Female officer 1: It is really awesome—I mean, how could you not feel proud [as a woman] to be part of one of those [special task forces]? Those groups are for men only, and you can understand why: you have to carry all the arms and all the things you have to do are more difficult for women. Let’s not kid ourselves, I am not saying we are not able to do it, but you can’t compare a man’s strength with that of a woman. The life of those people is very hard—one would think that [those] women do not have children or families, right? Because how can you be immersed in el monte [literally means the mountain, but it can refer to the wilderness in general] for months? To whom can you entrust your children and husband? When you come back your husband will be gone or with another woman. So yeah, they are verracas [very capable, strong/tough, resilient] and admirable.

Female officer 2: Yes, the thing is, as a woman, the most important thing is family, your children, so the women who have gotten that far—which are not many, they really are few—have made many sacrifices. I mean, they have to go at the men’s pace and, to some extent, they have to lose their feminine essence to be able to get there.

Female officer 3: Oh no, I don’t really agree that they have to lose their feminine

⁶⁷ This tendency is partially true for Colombia, where the number of women in the state’s armed forces has remained marginal—9% in the CNP (Policía Nacional, 2018)—and slightly less true regarding their participation in illegal armed forces like FARC, where the number of women combatants is estimated between 29-40% (Salazar, 2017).

essence, I don't think so. You never lose that. The fact that you're doing men's things does not mean that you have to stop being a woman, I don't agree with that.

Female officer 2: No, I'm not saying that you stop being a woman, but that you have to do things that...I mean, you do have to change a bit because a delicate woman who is afraid of bugs and dislikes mud and dirt (...) will not last long [in those task forces]. But also you have to train to gain strength because the equipment weights an inordinate amount, and they have to carry it on their backs while walking for days without showering. That must be very tough—I mean, I would not do it...Imagine all that and not being able to shower.

Female officer 3: Yes, well, you do have to change some things, but you don't stop being a woman. Even if you don't want to, you have to become more verra[ca].

(Molina Cristancho, 2017)

The initial question posed by Female Officer 1 ('How could you not feel proud as a woman of being part of those groups?') is answered by her and her colleagues in a series of statements that illustrate the tension between gender and professional identities. The respondents simultaneously praise and shame the female officers they are talking about for not displaying entirely feminised identities and for adopting some of the masculinised traits required for this type of work. They feel proud of women who break into male task forces and who are able to prove that they can keep up with men, carry heavy things and withstand the same harsh conditions as the rest of the officers. At the same time, they shame these same women for having left their families behind or, even worse, for having declined the opportunity to have a family in the first place. Matters get even more complex when the officers move on to talking about the 'feminine essence'. Here, the respondents are effectively arguing about what it means to be a woman and, in doing so, they highlight the complexity of their gendered professional identities: displaying too many feminine traits (such as being delicate, disliking mud and dirt, and being afraid of bugs) can bar a female officer from being considered 'good police' (in general, but particularly in a militarised context), yet neglecting family or prioritising work over child-rearing can lead others to question whether they are good women.

The evidence of this conversation suggests that women struggle to reconcile the feminine archetype that is associated with their gender identity—one that frames them as mothers and wives whose role is to care for the home (Reyes Cárdenas and Saavedra Restrepo, 2005:13)—with the masculine archetype that is associated with militarised police work—one that frames

officers as men who, unburdened by familial responsibilities, can focus on using their physical prowess to wage war. Female officers thus find themselves navigating complex ontological questions in an attempt to sketch out the contours of their place in the police: what is the ‘female essence’? Must we give it up to be police officers? Can we be women and police officers? And, perhaps more importantly in the context of a militarised police, should women focus on developing a masculinised capacity for war, or should the CNP reevaluate its role as a key actor in the internal armed conflict in favour of more feminised forms of policing? This question will be addressed at the end of this chapter. For now, the somewhat-convoluted nature of these conversations is a reminder of the fact that “contradictory and inconsistent categorizations underlie gender identity and that meaning changes from one situation to another. This situation does not suggest that female police officers are particularly deceptive but that recalling and creating multiple versions of truth or reality is endemic in any discursive exercise” (Rabe-Hemp, 2009:118). In fact, the evidence discussed above demonstrates that such contradictions serve a fundamental purpose in women’s efforts to reconcile their gender and professional identities in the context of a militarised police force. Engaging in conversations that negotiate conflicting and inconsistent markers of a ‘good female officer’ is a better strategy than to accept the fact that their gendered identity will always prevent them from living up to the archetypal (male) good officer ideal.

It is clear, then, that there is no consensus on the appropriate female-to-police ratio that women officers must maintain in order to be regarded as good policewomen. In other words, there is no clear guidance on what traits, behaviours and characteristics a woman must display in order to be considered a good officer. Nevertheless, the need remains for these women to assert themselves as competent police.

Defensive othering and the construction of a multi-tiered gender identity hierarchy

The previous section has highlighted how challenging it is for policewomen to reconcile their gender identity and professional identity, particularly in a highly militarised institution. The tension between these aspects makes it particularly difficult to establish a model of ‘the good policewoman’ against which officers can compare themselves. This section will suggest that, instead of trying to conform to an ideal model, alternative to the male archetype, female officers define themselves in contrast to other policewomen; a strategy called ‘defensive othering’ (Schwalbe et al., 2000).

In conducting my interviews with female participants, it became apparent that the interviewees did not necessarily identify with a single, unified female identity; instead of espousing the position that they were good officers because women (as a generalised gender identity) make good officers, they highlighted their own competence by comparing themselves with the less competent performance of ‘other’ women officers. This phenomenon is illustrated by the following excerpt:

Patrullera Molina (female): As humans, we are different from one another, and there are indeed women who are more difficult than others. So [when male officers] have had a bad experience with a woman, they are like ‘I don’t like working with women’. (...) One day I was assigned to a senior officer who said ‘I don’t like working with women—don’t partner me up with her’. He still had to go out with me that day and everything was fine. From that moment on if my partner was not there, he would be like ‘I want to work with you’. I asked him ‘Why did you not like working with women?’ and he said ‘Well, because once I had to work with [a fussy woman]’. It’s like I tell you, [some female officers are like that]— everyone is different.

Instead of rejecting the male officer’s dislike of working with women, Molina confirms that the officers’ concerns were warranted because, in her opinion, there are indeed women who are ‘more difficult’. She aims to challenge his view, not by proving that women make good officers but by demonstrating that she was not like those ‘other’ fussy women. The implication seems to be that women can be good officers—as Molina regards herself to be—but that there is something about the behaviour or characteristics of ‘other’ women that makes male apprehension about working with them justified.

This same phenomenon has been reported before. In a 2009 article on doing gender and police work, Rabe-Hemp illustrated how female officers in the US would often compare themselves positively to other women in the force in order to communicate their identity (122). Highlighting negative traits in other female officers—such as being “badge bunnies,” “cutesy,” “lesbians,” and “mean” (Rabe-Hemp, 2009: 125)—allowed them to unequivocally position themselves at the opposite end of the spectrum from such undesirable characteristics. Boogaard and Roggeband independently came to the same conclusion in their 2010 article about social

inequalities in the Dutch Police. They found that women officers were able to deploy “one identity (...) to gain advantage over others” (Boogaard and Roggeband, 2010: 63). For example, executive policewomen might deploy their identity as full-time working officers, able to work at all times and capable of facing “all kinds of things and people” (Boogaard and Roggeband, 2010: 63), as an explicit contrast to their female counterparts working in administrative jobs, who they portrayed as old women, mothers or simply women with no ambition (Boogaard and Roggeband, 2010: 63). The same phenomenon was highlighted in Chan et al.’s (2010) study of women in the New South Wales Police, in eastern Australia. They report that “some female recruits differentiated themselves from other females who they regarded as lazy, incompetent or wanted special treatment because of their lack of physical fitness” (2010: 435).

The phenomenon observed by Rabe-Hemp (2009), Boogaard and Roggeband (2010), Chan et al. (2010) and the present study, fits what Schwalbe et al. (2000) refer to as ‘defensive othering’. In their article exploring the processes of reproduction of inequalities, they describe this as the process whereby a marginalised group “accept[s] the legitimacy of a devalued identity imposed by the dominant group, but then say[s], in effect, ‘There are indeed Others to whom this applies, but it does not apply to me’” (Schwalbe et al., 2000: 425). A multi-tiered gender identity hierarchy is conjured up through the notion that ‘some’ women are good officers and ‘other’ women are not. However, the existence of these types of officers does not necessarily need to have purchase in the material world. As Rabe-Hemp (2009) has put it: “when asked if these ‘other’ [undesirable] women were in their department, few officers could identify a particular person” (122). This suggests, then, that the multi-tiered gender identity hierarchy does not necessarily need to materialise in practice beyond its notional existence. Thus, Molina is able to deploy defensive othering by placing herself in contrast to an ephemeral ‘other woman’ whose existence she conjures up in order to assert herself as a good officer.

This lack of grounding in the material world does not mean that the hierarchy does not produce real effects—it ultimately serves to buttress the notion that the male officer stands higher in the hierarchy, thus fostering gender inequalities in the institution. As Schwalbe et al. (2000) put it, “defensive othering is an adaptive reaction” (425) employed by subordinate parties in an attempt to gain advantage over the other members of their group; yet, by virtue of working within the belief system of the dominant group, they end up “aid[ing] the reproduction of inequality” (425). Without being aware of Schwalbe et al.’s conceptualisation of defensive

othering, Boogaard and Roggeband (2010), Rabe-Hemp (2009) and Chan et al. (2010) all came independently to the same conclusion: by engaging in such comparisons, these women officers “end up reproducing structures that generate inequality” (Boogaard and Roggeband, 2010: 63). In their attempt to position themselves as better than ‘other’ female officers, “women have also marginalized their positions in the police culture” (Rabe-Hemp, 2009: 126).

Another effect of defensive othering is that it imparts significant flexibility to the gender hierarchy: women can use whatever parameters they consider relevant in order to evaluate other female officers. Let us recall the conversation between the women officers in the previous section: a multi-tiered gender identity hierarchy with no fixed parameters gave them the opportunity to place their peers who work in predominantly male task forces in a high position with respect to themselves, because they had the ability and determination to keep up with male officers under harsh war conditions; but it also allowed them to then position themselves higher than those same women when talking about the fact that the latter had probably abandoned their families and children, thus betraying a key aspect of their feminised identity.

To sum up, defensive othering allows women to position themselves in the gender identity hierarchy, without having to clearly define what makes a good policewoman. More importantly, it allows them to cast themselves as competent officers without having to disturb the underlying principle on which the hierarchy is built: the archetypal CNP officer is male and, unburdened by familial commitments, is ready to harness his physical endowment to perform in a highly militarised institution. As it stands, then, the gender hierarchy disfavours feminised traits and constantly reinforces an organisational culture where militarised maleness is still the norm.

Conclusion

Throughout this chapter I have explored the place of women in the CNP. First I discussed the conditions under which they were admitted for the first time in the force: women were conceived as honorary officers; they were assigned jobs that were compatible with the roles they were socially expected to fulfil (specifically, caring for minors); and their place as a ‘lesser’ kind of officer was made explicit not only through their segregation from ‘real’ officers, but also through organisational symbols (anthems, forms of address) that emphasised their

status as outsiders, as ‘others’. Nowadays, women are given regular, as opposed to honorary, titles yet they remain marginalised and are still considered a lesser form of officers. The gender hierarchy in wider Colombian society, as well as the CNP’s institutional memory of being an all-male organisation, have shaped the place of women in the police and influenced the views that men and women have about female officers—thus, the attempts to open up the CNP along the lines of many Northern police forces must reckon with a local context which habitually undermines such changes. The rejection and marginalisation of femininity, in turn, feeds the militarised, *macho* culture that exists in the CNP and thwarts the institutional aspiration of adopting some of the more feminised traits that characterise a civic police service. It is clear, therefore, that in upholding the gender identity hierarchy that diminishes the value of the feminised, the Colombian Police protect and give preference to masculinised, coercive forms of police practice. The question, thus, remains: What can be done about gender discrimination in the CNP?

We might argue that one way of fostering gender equality in the CNP would be to recognise the fact that women can perform well in a militarised institution, as they are “no less capable than men in handling potentially violent situations” (Garcia, 2003: 337). Like female Olympic athletes, female officers are capable of developing the “forms and capacities” of their bodies to fit their identity or occupation (Gatens, 1999). This is a powerful argument, because it addresses the predominant idea—among men and women—that female officers are not strong enough to be protectors and can therefore not be real police. Accepting the fact that women can be good fighters can effectively clear the way for women be folded into a masculinist, militaristic structure. However, “advocating for the recognition of women as combatants (...) does not dismantle the binary logic [on which gender inequalities are based]; it simply reconfigures it” (Kinsella, 2006:166). What is more, maintaining the masculinist nature of the CNP nurtures coercive, violent and oppressive forms of police practice in the name of public order and at the expense of citizens’ rights and wellbeing, as we saw in Chapter 7.

It is my contention, therefore, that the issue of gender inequality can and should be tackled with an abolitionist agenda executed through a series of non-reformist reforms (Mathiesen, 2014) aimed at shrinking the scope of police action and diverting the funds that currently support a sexist, masculinist, violence-prone force, to social services that can better aid and support citizens. I will develop this argument in the conclusion to the thesis due to the fact that this strategy would not only address the issue of gender inequality, but also most of the problematic

aspects of policing that have been outlined throughout the thesis. For now, it is enough to note that the CNP was conceived an all-male institution in charge of maintaining public order and endowed with the capacity to exercise “the use of legitimate force” (Bottoms and Tankebe, 2012:127). The assumption that police actually fight crime has put the ability to display physical power at the core of the policing ideal and has thus created a convincing argument for the exclusion and marginalisation of women in the institution. If the *raison d’être* of the police force is indeed to fight crime, then the first thing to do would be to acknowledge the well-researched fact that police in fact do very little crime fighting (Bayley, 1994; Bittner, 1967; Reiner, 2010). This acknowledgement should lead to de-emphasising the ‘force’ aspect of police force, which could potentially result in women’s work being recognised as ‘mainstream’ policing. This aim, however, should not be the end goal of police reform. The acknowledgement that police work is only marginally about crime fighting should also lead to the shrinking of the police’s purview and field of action given that most of their work can be carried out by other public service bodies. Once again, this argument will be more thoroughly discussed in the conclusion, but it is important to highlight for now that the path to gender equality in the police should be but one stop in the road to police defunding, disarming, and scaling back the police force (Seigel, 2018:3).

CHAPTER 10

Implications and Conclusion

It is difficult to study or critique the Colombian police because information is scarce and what information there is is wrong or misleading. The official narrative provided in CNP literature and in many other sources is inadequate for reasons that have been laid out in Chapters 5 and 6 of the present study. The modern-day CNP, meanwhile, is an opaque body, providing few details or figures about its operations. This fact is exacerbated by a managerialist presentation of data: as we saw in Chapter 8, what information it does provide, in its annual reports, is collated and presented in a format that provides very little insight into police practice. This makes it difficult to understand let alone contest things like institutionalised police violence or discrimination against female officers. Nevertheless, this thesis has been able to offer a number of important details that flesh out our picture of the CNP.

In the introduction to this thesis I laid out four key themes that, I argue, serve to question received narratives and traditional presentations of the CNP (see page 5). Let us return to these points, developing them further and considering some of their implications for scholarly approaches to the history, functioning and present-day role of the CNP. Two things more than any other can be said to drive police practice in the contemporary CNP: militarism and managerialism. Militarism has had a long history in the CNP, inculcating a response to

problems that favours force and violence. Now this militaristic ideology has met with a new Northern trend in policing: managerialism. The merging of the two is a deadly brew: good performance is now virtually synonymous with numbers showing apprehensions and interventions (shorn of justification or context) and the purchase of new army-grade weaponry and vehicles. Officer training is not aimed at fostering safer communities, but at the completion of quantifiable tasks that are often completely abstracted from their original context and rationale. Managerialism, furthermore, makes less visible to the public many salient aspects of the CNP: the presentation of performance indicators and quantifiable results allows the police to report good performance in concrete and seemingly unequivocal terms. It also allows them to counter the idea that police work does not tackle crime or foster security in a way that *does not require them to actually* tackle crime or foster security. The prominence of numbers in current narratives about the merits and indispensability of the police corps has given the institution a simple strategy to justify its existence: producing (often poor-quality) quantitative data.

The result of all this is that the CNP directs inordinate force against certain sectors of the population, generally along class-based and racial lines. Wealthier neighbourhoods effectively lie under a different legal jurisdiction, such is the reticence to enforce the rules in those places compared to the eagerness with which force is brought to bear against marginalised populations—an eagerness that is further incited by quotas and targets aimed at these groups.

This naturally leads us to question statements such as the claim found in the Constitution that the National Police is a “permanent, *civic*, armed corps in charge of the Nation” (*Constitución Política de Colombia*, 1991, Article 218, emphasis mine). This image of the CNP as a civic corps remains a premise based more in aspiration than in the reality of police practice. Despite the rhetoric, the CNP practices a coercive kind of policing that is not focused on community safety and, through the marginalisation of women, it protects and perpetuates the idea that the world of policing is a *macho*, militaristic one. This institutional character reinforces individual officers’ social and cultural assumptions that police work requires strength *so as to* engage in violent confrontation.

The Constitution also denies any role for the police in political matters: the police force “does not take part in political deliberation (...) members of the Public Force cannot exercise their vote as long as they remain in active service, nor can they participate in activities or debates

involving political parties or movements”. (*Constitución Política de Colombia*, 1991, Article 219). Again, such an idea is the ideal but does not represent reality. As we have seen, even before the term came to refer specifically to the police force, *policía* was a wide-ranging concept to operationalise the colonial state-making project. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, during the Thousand Days War and *La Violencia*, the police acted as a politicised force. The official narrative is that the modern force has been detached from any such political role, and the wording of the Constitution attempts to enshrine such an apolitical role in law. But officers do not need to participate in political debates or cast their ballots in order to be a political force—the CNP retains the power and duty to keep the state and its structures of inequality in place. This is an inherently political role—to quote Reiner, “in a society that is divided on class, ethnic, gender, and other dimensions of inequality, the impact of laws, even if they are formulated and enforced impartially and universalistically, will reproduce those divisions” (Reiner, 2010:33). The CNP, in other words, remains a tool for the enforcement of an inherently political state-mandated order, enforcement that is achieved through militaristic, violent means. Those who have challenged the status quo, whether through protest or simply by being part of a marginalised group, have been met with repression and sometimes lethal police violence.

Yet despite the fact that their training and practice are geared towards a militaristic model, the problems that officers are called to deal with are much more varied and require a different set of skills. Nor do they lend themselves to the kind of quantification favoured by managerialist policing. From my observations, the officer of the CNP must play the role of jack-of-all-trades, not because of training or vocation but because there is frequently no one else to fill that role: they play the social worker, the street-corner psychologist and even sometimes the medical doctor. When asked about their proudest moments as police officers, respondents recalled stories that had nothing to do with fighting crime or crime prevention: both *Intendente* García and *Patrullera* Orozco mentioned times when they had assisted citizens with severe mental health problems; *Intendente* García also made mention of an occasion when the commander of a station treated an injured dog; *Subintendente* Lopez spoke of helping an elderly couple with groceries and odd jobs around the house; *Sargento* Andrade remembered reacting calmly and efficiently to a multiple car crash; *Patrullera* Prada helped deliver a homeless woman’s baby. There is truth in Bittner’s observation that “there is scarcely a human predicament imaginable for which police aid has not been solicited and obtained at one time or another” (Bittner, 1967:703), a fact recognised by officers (*Patrullero* Sierra’s comments are representative: “As

a police officer you have to fulfil all the roles! The police officer ends up being the psychologist even”). But no matter how gratifying officers found these interactions, or how proud they felt of the way in which they handled them, the fact remains that they do not have the necessary training and qualifications to deal with these kinds of situations. It is likely that the case of Colombia matches the situation in other countries, in that the police spend very little time actually fighting crime (Bayley, 1994; Bittner, 1967; Reiner, 2010). Officers also recognise that they are “not the best trained or qualified” to deal with many situations, but that “[citizens] know that if they do not call us, who will help them?” (*Patrullero Ronderos*). “We are not psychologists,” Teniente *Posada* told me, “but we have to learn about psychology. If somebody is about to throw themselves off a bridge, you cannot wait for the psychologist to arrive, you have to start talking to them.” Needless to say, this situation is hardly ideal. Sending armed officers (they are all armed) indoctrinated in a militaristic logic to handle situations requiring entirely different tactics and skill sets is a recipe for miscommunication, escalation and tragedy.

It should be noted that some problematic aspects of the CNP highlighted in this thesis are changing: for instance, the force have begun a process of supposed de-militarisation in recent years. They have begun phasing out the military style ranks that had been used until now. They have also changed the police uniforms—and plan to make further changes—in order to move them away from their militaristic image. Studies that connected the militarism of the Colombian police with such cosmetic and overt aspects—which can of course be important—might lead to the conclusion that such changes represent a step towards ‘de-militarisation’. However, as we saw in Chapter 7, the militarism of the CNP is wider and deeper and connected to more intrinsic ideological commitments that are more difficult to shift, if there were even a desire to do so. In fact, while the CNP sheds some militaristic aspects, it also plans to continue growing its ESMAD division, equipping it with self-driving tanks, and the institution has given no indication that it plans to move away from a core approach of a militaristic, coercive form of police practice. Managerialism, meanwhile, continues to penetrate the CNP at every level. It remains the chief organising logic when it comes to measuring how the police are performing despite the fact that managerialism, as we have seen, does not provide a good measure of policing; it neither shapes better policing nor reports more clearly what the CNP is doing.

The introduction of community policing initiatives in the 1990s as well as the model of *Vigilancia Comunitaria Por Puadrantes* [quadrant-based community policing] indicates the existence of at least a modest will to emphasise non-violent forms of policing. Still, as

discussed in Chapter 6 and 7, these attempts at moving towards community-oriented policing have only had limited impact on the way in which police carry out their practice, and the CNP's coercive, violent ways are still going strong. In fact, women are regarded as inadequate officers by their male peers because they lack the strength to fight (the latter a claim that the female officers interviewed accepted without challenge). The exclusion of women is, thus, often based on the grounds that they are unable to perform *macho* forms of policing, including physical coercion and violence, which are regarded as a corner stone of police practice. Through the marginalisation of female police officers, male police, consciously or unconsciously, uphold and reinforce the militarised character of the CNP.

If the issues raised in this thesis are to be dealt with, then, a more radical approach is required. We might begin by asking: what is it we want the police to be doing? It can be difficult to approach with fresh eyes an aspect of society that appears built-in. An institution such as the CNP can appear particularly fixed and unchanging. Rodríguez, in an article about abolition in pedagogy, formulates the following question: “What has made the (...) policing apparatus in its current form appear to be so permanent, necessary, and immovable within the common sense of social change and historical transformation?” (Rodríguez, 2010:13). In challenging some of the received notions of the official narrative—that the institution was established in 1891, that it has operated as a non-partisan force in recent decades—I have attempted to show that the CNP is not as “permanent, necessary and immovable” as it might at first appear. But the “common sense” of police as inevitable is wider than the Colombian case. As Kaba has put it, “as a society, we have been so indoctrinated with the idea that we solve problems by policing and caging people that many cannot imagine anything other than prisons and the police as solutions to violence and harm” (Kaba, 2020:2). Periodic attempts have been made to ‘reform’ the Colombian police. It seems to me inescapable that further ‘reform’, in the shape of more training or resources, is a fool’s errand. Instead of fortifying an institution whose intrinsic ideologies mitigate any attempt at community or civic support, the power of police to intervene in every human predicament should be curtailed. The abolitionist project, as I espouse it,⁶⁸ aims at reducing the number of predicaments for which police aid is solicited or obtained (Herzing, 2016) by introducing non-reformist reforms—that is, reforms that curb instead of solidify the power of the institution (Gilmore, 2007; Gorz, 1967; Mathiesen, 2014)—and building and nurturing lasting alternatives to police intervention (McDowell and Fernández,

⁶⁸ There are several paths and approaches to abolition, see Critical Resistance 2004.

2018:377), thus working toward making the existence of such an institution unnecessary. It becomes imperative, therefore, that we shrink the police's scope of action and divert the resources that currently go to the keeping of a massive, militarised, armed force, towards social services that are better equipped to intervene in such predicaments.

Even thinking along more modest lines, the predicament in which we find ourselves—with a militarised, violence-oriented police force whose approach often worsens situations—could be at least partially addressed by displacing the police as the first point of call for every citizen problem, by making it so that citizens call mental health services instead of police when there is a person in psychological distress, or social services to deal with the homeless. It is plausible to suggest that if enough resources and visibility are given to social services—better trained and more qualified services—then people would have the option to call them instead of police in order to receive assistance. This is not to say that all officers handle non-crime-related situations poorly but, taking into account the findings of this thesis, having police respond to all human predicaments puts citizens—particularly marginalised populations—at risk of receiving inadequate care or even aggressive responses to their issues, as we saw in Chapter 7 in the case of homeless people. In this sense, it would be more beneficial to have communities where social services are robust, diverse, and competent, with the resources and capacity to respond to these situations, instead of having armed police officers with little to no training responding to most citizen concerns. Providing better, safer services to citizens is, thus, the key argument in favour of shrinking and defunding the police in order to cultivate more humane and holistic approaches to community well-being.

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Appendix 1 – Participants Chart

Interviews

Number	Pseudonym	Category	Rank	Gender	Years in the police	Length Interview (in minutes)
1	García	Ejecutivo	Intendente	M	21	59
2	Restrepo	Ejecutivo	Patrullero	M	7	59
3	Botero	Ejecutivo	Patrullero	M	1	36
4	Gaviria	Ejecutivo	Intendente	M	19	60
5	Florez	Ejecutivo	Intendente	M	21	65
6	Obregón	Ejecutivo	Intendente	M	22	30
7	Martinez	Oficiales	Mayor	M	20	54
8	Molina	Ejecutivo	Patrullera	F	3	59
9	Paz	Ejecutivo	Patrullero	M	13	35
10	Torres	Ejecutivo	Patrullero	M	12	47
11	Andrade	Suboficiales	Sargento	M	17	47
12	Lopez	Ejecutivo	Subintendente	M	8.5	30
13	Galán	Ejecutivo	Patrullero	M	2.5	45
14	Ronderos	Ejecutivo	Patrullero	M	2	45
15	Herrera	Ejecutivo	Patrullero	M	1.5	42
16	Sierra	Ejecutivo	Patrullero	M	8	21
17	Romero	Ejecutivo	Patrullero	M	4	27
18	Melo	Ejecutivo	Intendente	M	18	39
19	Orozco	Ejecutivo	Patrullera	F	1.5	30
20	Mosquera	Ejecutivo	Intendente	M	21	50
21	Salas	Ejecutivo	Patrullero	M	5	65
22	Prada	Ejecutivo	Patrullera	F	4	32

Other salient interactions during ride-alongs and observations

Number	Pseudonym	Category	Rank	Gender		
23	Correa	Oficiales	Mayor	M		
24	Posada	Oficiales	Mayor	F		

25	Ángel	Ejecutivo	Patrullero	M		
26	Uribe	Ejecutivo	Patrullera	F		
27	Suarez	Ejecutivo	Patrullera	F		
28	Campo	Ejecutivo	Patrullero	M		
29	Arango	Oficiales	Mayor	M		

Appendix 2 – Interview Schedules

1. WARM-UP QUESTIONS		
Topic	Question	Q #
Routine	How was work today? Does that happen often?	11
Number years in the police force	How long have you worked as a police officer?	12
Good policing day	What does a good day at your job look like?	13

2. MOTIVATIONS		
Topic	Question	Q #
Original motivation	Why did you choose to become a police officer?	21
Current motivation	Is your motivation the same nowadays? What makes you get out of bed every day and do your job?	22
Expectations	Before you started to work, what did you think being a police officer was going to be like? Were you right about that?	23
What they like about the job	What do you enjoy the most about being a police officer?	24
Collective motivation	Tell me about a time when the police were really motivated to make something happen	25

3. SITUATION MANAGEMENT		
Topic	Questions	Q #
Situation management	Can you tell me about a time when you felt proud about the way in which you dealt with a difficult situation?	31
Challenging situations	What is the most difficult area to police in the city? Why?	32
Dealing with challenging situations	What would be the best tip you could give to a colleague that will be policing that area for the first time?	33
Policing tools	What is the best tool you have at your disposal to carry out your job?	34
Citizen treatment	What is the most important thing that you keep in mind in an encounter with a citizen?	35

4. JUSTIFICATION AND RELEVANCE OF THE JOB		
Topic	Questions	Q #
Justifications for their job	Why do citizens need the police?	41
Justifications for their job	Why are police officers the best people to deal with [whatever they said in the previous question]?	42
Training	What kind of training do you get in order to achieve that?	43
Important part of the job	What is the most important part of being a police officer?	44
Characteristics of a good officer	What are the most admired traits in an officer?	45

5. POLICE'S TASKS AND RESPOSIBILITIES		
Topic	Questions	Q #
Police's tasks	What are the police's responsibilities?	51
Police powers and effectiveness	Do you think the tools you have are enough to fulfill those responsibilities?	52
Undesirable parts of the job	Is there anything you wish you didn't have to do as part of your job?	53
Police priorities	What are the priorities of the police as an institution? Do they match yours?	54

6. POLICE OFFICERS AS HUMAN BEINGS		
Topic	Questions	Q #
Expectations police requirements	What do you think should be the requirements to become a police officer?	61
What is valued in police work	If you had a daughter or a son that joined the police force, what would make you feel proud as a parent about the way they did their job?	62
Good police work	Can you tell me about a time when you felt proud of being a police officer?	63
Qualities of a good police officer	Can you tell me about a colleague of yours that you think is a great police officer? (citizen treatment; difficult situations; personal qualities)	64

7. GENERAL FEELINGS ABOUT THE POLICE		
Topic	Question	Q #
Main characteristic of the police	If you had to describe the police of Bogotá in one word, what would that word be? Why?	71
Citizen support	Do you think the citizens of Bogotá support your work?	72
Citizen expectations	What do you think people expect from the police?	73
Perceived general feeling about the police	What do you think is the general view of the majority of the citizens of Bogotá? Why do people think that?	74
General feeling over time	Have you noticed any significant change in the police as a body? For better or worse?	75

8. A BETTER POLICE FORCE		
Topic	Question	Q #
Positive view of the police	Can you remember a time when you felt glad we have a police force?	81
Characteristics of a good police force	What characteristic would the police force have to have for you to be more proud of it?	82

Appendix 3 – Police Ranks and Grades

People whose grades belong to the ranks *oficiales*, *suboficiales*, *ejecutivo* and *agentes*, are police officers. Those whose grades belong to the ranks of *auxiliares*, *estudiantes* and *no uniformados*, are not officers, either because they are students, volunteers, or because they work for the police in a different capacity (e.g. consultants). The terminology will be kept in its original Spanish for clarity and they will appear in hierarchical order with *oficiales* in the top of the hierarchy.

Oficiales

General
Mayor General
Brigadier General
Coronel
Teniente Coronel
Mayor
Capitán
Teniente
Subintendente

Suboficiales

Sargento Mayor
Sargento Primero
Sargento Viceprimero
Sargento Segundo
Cabo Primero
Cabo Segundo

Ejecutivo

Comisario
Subcomisario
Intendente Jefe
Intendente
Subintendente
Patrullero
Agente

Auxiliares

Auxiliar Bachiller
Auxiliar de Policía

Estudiantes

Alferez
Cadete

Alumnos a Patrullero

No Uniformados

Asesores Profesionales

Orientadores Técnicos

Auxiliares

(Policía Nacional, 2018)