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Eliciting personal constructs to distinguish prevailing discourses in police training.

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ABSTRACT: *This paper describes the use of the repertory grid technique to elicit the police trainees' and trainers' personal constructs in order to distinguish prevailing discourses in police training. This research is in response to a literature review of the interaction of gender, "Othering" and discourses in police organisations. Anecdotal evidence and the literature reveal that pedagogical training methods are predominantly used in police training environments. Australian and international studies into police management education have revealed a 'resistant anti-intellectual subculture' and a set of unconscious and unchallengeable assumptions regarding police work, conduct, and leadership which prevents honest critical thinking. An analysis of training is pertinent given the national agenda for policing to become a profession.*

Aim and methodology

The aim of this paper is to provide an overview of the application of the repertory grid technique to a research project involving discourse in police training. The main focus of this paper will be the underlying methodological approach, use of this research method to collect and correlate data, and the juxtaposition of this method with a discourse analytic framework. The paper will provide a brief overview of the preliminary findings of the project.

This research project is inspired by the researcher's professional experiences in an educational advisory role in a police organisation and is the product of a literature review of police culture, subcultures, police training, and inherent discourses. A review of the literature reveals very limited research of police training, but common concerns as to the efficacy of training. In addition, a number of authors (Chan 1996 & 1997; Chan, Devery & Doran 2003; Cochran & Bromley 2003; Foster 2003; Shanahan 2000; Reiner 2000; Waddington 1999b) argue that police culture is dynamic and comprises a number of subcultures, and Shearing and Ericson (1991, p.487) describe police culture as 'figurative logic'. Culture, therefore, is not literal. It is symbolic, rhetorical, and metaphorical: it is the product of oral communication (story telling, narratives) which explains and justifies action. Given this conception of police culture and concerns about training, the aim of the project was to identify and analyse the prevailing discourse in police training.

This was achieved through analysing 14 police trainees' and nine trainers' personal constructs or perceptions of a range of personality and character attributes within the context of a number of police roles and functions. It was anticipated that through the analysis of these personal constructs, the discourse that configures learning in a police academy could be analysed with the intention of: confirming the findings of the literature review; identifying the potential impact of the discourse on the learning, subjectivity, and agency of the individuals; and engaging in preliminary theoretical analysis of the causes and effects of that discourse. An examination of discourse in police training is timely given the national agenda for policing to become a profession, and pertinent given anecdotal evidence and studies which reveal that pedagogical training methods are predominantly used in police training environments

with concerns identified as to their doctrinal value versus their educative value (Birzer 2003; Birzer & Tannehill 2001; McCoy 2006; Marenin 2004).

A deconstructive/post-structural approach and assumptions are applied to this research project. Key assumptions include: knowledge and power are interconnected; language contains a multiplicity of meanings; and an individual's identity is a product of encounters with a range of complex social and cultural agendas and settings (Connole 1993, pp.14-15). This research therefore aims to challenge that which is taken-for-granted by investigating the construction and interpretation of knowledge, "truth", and social realities within the complex cultural, social and political agendas of a police training environment, and the deconstruction of this, through the lens of the prevailing D/discourse.

Discourse, practice, and meaning

The researcher was interested in investigating the 'discourse-practice' (Cherryholmes 1988, p.1) framework of the occupation of policing in a training environment. In this context, a number of values, collective beliefs, and procedural and legislative requirements underlie the discourse – 'what is said' and practice – 'what is done' (Cherryholmes 1988, p.1). While educators and, in this instance, trainers might believe their discourse-practice framework is based on 'true statements' (Cherryholmes 1988, p.34), from a deconstructive/post-structural perspective, 'truth is discursive', and discourses are situated in history and are influenced by power (Cherryholmes 1988, p.34). According to Foucault (cited in Cherryholmes 1988, pp.34-35), truth is represented by:

...the types of discourse which it accepts and makes function as true...the means by which it is sanctioned; the techniques and procedures accorded value in the acquisition of truth; the status of those who are charged with saying what counts as true.

To clarify the researcher's definition of discourse, two key and interconnected definitions are relevant. Wetherell, Taylor and Yates (2001, p.5) characterise discourse according to three spheres: 'social interaction', '...identity [and] the process of making sense', and 'culture and social relations'. Expanding upon these spheres, the definition that best captures the intent of this research is discourse as the correlation between 'language-in-use' (little "d" discourse) and other elements (big "D" discourse) such as symbols, tools, values, beliefs, and thinking styles (Gee 2005, p.7). This is explained further by Gee (2004, pp.40-41) who refers to discourse as:

...a way of using not just words, but words, deeds, objects, tools, and so forth to enact a certain sort of socially situated identity, and...cultural models (taken-for-granted stories)...to construct certain sorts of situated meanings.

In the context of this research site, D/discourse therefore is seen to enact the 'socially situated identity' and 'situated meanings' of police trainees, and according to Foucault's (Cherryholmes 1988, pp.34-35) conception of truth, these identities and meanings are represented by the police trainers – '...those who are charged with saying what counts as true'. D/discourses are discursive. They are the products and resources of dominant 'cultures, social groups, and institutions' (Gee 2005, p.7). They establish "truth": 'right from wrong', appropriate from inappropriate, 'true from false' (Danaher, Schirato & Webb 2000, p.31; Waitt 2005); thereby sanctioning thoughts, speech, actions, and identities.

About the repertory grid technique

The repertory grid technique was applied as a form of interview and has a long history originating from personal construct psychology (PCP) developed by Kelly in 1955 (Cassell & Walsh 2004). It is situated within the constructionist paradigm which aims to explore how discourse creates reality and justifies and privileges certain language, thoughts, and actions over others (Terre Blanche & Durrheim 1999). Kelly (1955, cited in Cassell & Walsh 2004, p.61) believed an individual's perceptions or constructs of her or his world were often tacit and 'unarticulated'. The repertory grid technique provides an opportunity to access an individual's constructs and consequently, an individual's view of reality (Gammack & Stephens 1994). Salmon (1978, cited in Cassell & Walsh 2004, p.61) states that PCP is about making explicit what is known and how it is known – '...what we know, and how we live out that knowledge', but importantly, how reality is not final because of interactions with others. Reality therefore is in a constant state of flux.

Traditionally, the repertory grid has been a quantitative method. Prior to the 1970s it was predominantly used in clinical settings, but has since been applied to organisational psychology and other disciplines. It has been used to analyse organisational culture and in particular the examination of police culture, police work, and gender differences in performance (Dick & Jankowicz 2001), educational practices (Davis 1985; Thomas & Harri-Augstein 1985), and human resource development needs (Honey 1979). According to Dick & Jankowicz (2001) the technique has also been applied to examining organisational change, culture, and employee values and judgements. Jankowicz (1990, cited in Cassell & Walsh 2004) suggests the application of the repertory grid to a range of settings is testimony to its flexibility.

As a quantitative method there are a variety of types of repertory grid technique which enable the researcher to elicit *and* analyse data. Techniques include: rank-order grid, rating grid, dependency grid, resistance to implications grid, and resistance to change grid (Fransella & Bannister 1977). A significant advantage of the technique as a quantitative method is that a number of statistical analyses can be applied to data from an individual. As Fransella and Bannister (1977, p.v) state: 'Grids are like people. They come in many shapes and sizes; they ask questions and give answers; they can be studied as a group or individually, on one occasion or successively over time...'

The repertory grid and this project

The repertory grid interview technique (Cassell & Walsh 2004; Dick & Jankowicz 2001; Fransella & Bannister 1977) was used in this project to collect, document and correlate the extent and strength of the trainees' and trainers' perceptions (personal constructs) of the D/discourses of police training. Fransella and Bannister (1977, p.4) describe the grid as a type of 'structured interview' that assigns mathematical values to people's personal constructs, providing insights to how they see themselves and their world. It has been described as a means of measuring 'attitudes', 'meaning', 'personality', 'concepts', but essentially, it '...formalis[es]...the kind of information we are always seeking about each other, the kind of understanding we are always in process of gaining about each other' (Fransella & Bannister 1977, p.4). As mentioned previously, there are a number of approaches within the repertory grid technique, but in this project, the rank-order grid was used to determine the correlations from the interviews. A qualitative approach using a discourse analytic framework was applied to the final analysis in order to determine the prevailing D/discourse. Firestone

(1987, p.16) argues that quantitative and qualitative methods are ‘not antithetical’. While each method employs different techniques to present sets of assumptions about the project or topic and different means to provide conclusions that are convincing and feasible, they provide different information which can be coalescing and complementary.

Whilst the grid is traditionally and predominantly a quantitative method, in recent years, it has been applied as a qualitative method (Cassell & Walsh 2004), perhaps because some assumptions underlying the repertory grid technique are qualitative in nature. In particular, that reality is diverse, subjective, and in people’s minds (Sarantakos 2005), or as Salmon (1978, cited in Cassell & Walsh 2004, p.61) states, there is no ‘...single, final version of reality’. Kelly (cited in Fransella & Bannister 1977, p.2) proposes that everyone has ‘theoretical beliefs’ – implicit and/or explicit – which represent ‘networks of meaning’ that overlay people’s experiences. These comments add further weight to the reasons the grid was chosen for this project.

The technique offers a number of advantages, some of which are: it enables participants’ realities to be understood; it focuses on the participants’ personal or subjective responses to a particular issue or topic thereby achieving greater clarity; the data obtained are ‘rich’ and textured and the content can be analysed and checked for reliability (Dick & Jankowicz 2001); anonymity can be achieved and maintained as the personal constructs elicited from all of the participants are given mathematical values; and it produces a large amount of data which is both positive and challenging to manage (Cassell & Walsh 2004). Easterby-Smith, Thorpe and Holman (1996, cited in Cassell & Walsh 2004, p.62) state: ‘...the grid provides the representation of the individual’s own world...As such the individual can explore the world him/herself’. In this project, even though the elements and constructs were defined and offered rather than elicited from the participants, the rankings and correlations for each individual’s responses represent their perception of the importance or not of various character and personality attributes and gender as they relate to a range of policing functions and roles.

Applying the repertory grid

There are five basic stages to the application of the repertory grid technique (Gammack & Stephens 1994; Stewart 2006), the first of which is either the elicitation or offering of elements. In this project, the researcher defined and offered 18 elements. Dick and Jankowicz (2001, p.186) describe elements as, ‘...processes that exemplify the realm of discourse of the topic in question’. The elements therefore represented the potential D/discourse framed in terms of personality and character attributes (including gender), and were the products of an extensive analysis of the literature which revealed a number of key qualities, attributes, and social and cultural markers. The relevance of these to the participants was confirmed through consultation and validation interviews with experienced police officers. As a result of validation interviews the researcher removed some elements and reworded the definitions. The following list of elements and definitions was used by each interviewee.

Elements (personality + character attributes) and their definitions		
	Elements	Definitions / meanings
	<i>Someone who...</i>	
E1	Is tough	Not easily intimidated; an air of toughness
E2	Is authoritative	Taking control; willing to act

E3	Is willing to exercise power	Delegated authority (police powers); to take control
E4	Is compliant	Obliging; yielding
E5	Is strong	Physical strength
E6	Is willing to use force	Police powers / force
E7	Is female	
E8	Is male	
E9	Is accepted	Belonging; "fitting in"; being received favourably by others
E10	Is different	Dissimilar; having qualities different from others; seeing self as such
E11	Is loyal	Being faithful to the group / organisation / allegiances
E12	Is reputable	Having a reputation / respectability within the group / organisation and the community
E13	Is sensitive	Aware of others' situations; having acute mental / emotional sensibilities
E14	Is tolerant	Being patient and fair towards others; less inclined to judge others
E15	Is logical	Thinking and acting in a reasoned manner
E16	Is assertive	Being confident and willing to assert / defend; self-assured
E17	Conforms	To "fit in"; to maintain harmony by complying
E18	Has self-control	To control one's actions, emotions / feelings

The second stage involves constructs, and again the question of whether to define and offer or elicit these. The researcher defined 15 constructs which represent various policing functions and roles. The constructs provide situations or a framework within which to locate and explore the elements. Fransella and Bannister (1977, p.20) outline various types of constructs; the type that best represents those offered in this project is 'situational constructs'. The constructs listed below are derivatives of the literature, and consultation and validation interviews with experienced police officers. Similarly to the elements, the validation interviews enabled the researcher to remove some constructs and determine the sequence for presenting the constructs.

Constructs (representative of policing functions + roles)	
<i>An officer you ...</i>	
C1	Want to be like
C2	Want as a partner on patrol
C3	Admire and look up to
C4	Want in a violent situation
C5	Want as a supervisor
C6	Prefer to work with
C7	Want as an instructor
C8	Want as a partner giving evidence in court
C9	Want peer support from
C10	See as the ideal police officer
C11	Want to talk to at the end of a shift
C12	Want as "back-up"
C13	Want to be with when liaising with the public
C14	Want as a friend
C15	Trust with your life

The remaining stages involve the construction of a matrix (grid) of elements and constructs for scoring responses and then transposing those onto another matrix of

rank orders for each element in readiness for the next stage – statistical analysis. The responses from the interviews are calculated using Spearman's rank-order correlations. The final stage involves interpretation and analysis of findings (correlations) according to relevant theoretical frameworks. In this instance, a discourse analytic framework was used to distinguish prevailing D/discourse from the results of the element–construct relationship scores.

Times constraints and requirements of the recruit training programme presented challenges for the researcher to access trainees (group 1) for the interviews. As a result, the interviews with group 1 were conducted when they were probationary constables; between the first and sixth weeks after graduation. The trainees (group 2), however, were interviewed between the eighth and 13th weeks of the 32 week recruit training programme. Interviews with the trainers occurred over a two month period. The interviews were conducted with 14 trainees (seven from each course) and nine trainers. Each interview took approximately 45 minutes to complete.

Each element and construct was written on a separate card with a number ranging from 1-18 or 1-15, written on the back of each card. The interviewer held the construct cards, and initially arranged the element cards on the table in front of the interviewee. The interviewer placed the first construct card in front of the interviewee, stating what was written on the construct card, e.g. “an officer you would want to be like”, and instructed the interviewee to select the card (i.e. personality or character attribute or gender) that he or she believed was the most important or applicable to that statement. The card chosen by the interviewee was then handed to the interviewer and the interviewee continued to rank the remaining cards in order of importance until all of the cards were ranked for construct one and removed from the table. The interviewer noted the rank-order of the elements for each construct on a matrix. This process was repeated for the remaining construct cards.

Analysing personal constructs

The repertory grid technique produced a surfeit of rich and textured data in the form of personal constructs which represented the trainers' and trainees' perceptions of specific character and personality attributes, and gender, in relation to particular policing functions and roles. The volume was so great that decisions had to be made as to what to use and how best to analyse them in order to identify D/discourses. The researcher applied an iterative analytic process via a method used by Fransella and Bannister (1977) which allowed distance between each element within each construct to be quantified. For example, the relative importance of a patrol partner who is authoritative, willing to use force, and accepted. Given that the aim of this research is to explore the participants' personal psychological space and to make assumptions about how this relates to prevailing D/discourse, the researcher chose to examine the top three positive element scores within each construct for each participant.

Identifying D/discourses

Having essentially scoped the data, the next step was to analyse it according to Fairclough's (1995, pp.96-97) domains – 'local' (language in use), 'institutional' (social institutions), and 'societal' (policies and meta-narratives) – and through Gee's (2005) analytic process of exploring cultural, social, personal, individual, and situational facets and meanings within these domains. To achieve this, the researcher classified the 18 elements according to the three D/discourses identified

through the analysis of the data from the questionnaires which were used as a supplementary research method. The element-D/discourse classification is as follows and a brief definition of each D/discourse is also provided.

Warrior D/discourse	Tough-love family D/discourse	Perfect self D/discourse
E1 – <i>tough</i> E2 – <i>authoritative</i> E3 – <i>willing to exercise power</i> E5 – <i>strong</i> E6 – <i>willing to use force</i> E7 – <i>female</i> E8 – <i>male</i>	E4 – <i>compliant</i> E9 – <i>accepted</i> E10 – <i>different</i> E11 – <i>loyal</i> E17 – <i>conforms</i>	E12 – <i>reputable</i> E13 – <i>sensitive</i> E14 – <i>tolerant</i> E15 – <i>logical</i> E16 – <i>assertive</i> E18 – <i>self-control</i>

Defining the D/discourses

The focal point of the *Warrior D/discourse* is gender and in particular the notion of 'hegemonic masculinity' (Connell 1995, p.77) where one form of masculinity dominates (Hearn & Collinson 2006) and is 'culturally exalted' (Connell 1995, p.110). A consistent theme throughout the literature is the 'cult of masculinity' (Waddington 1999b, p.302). This D/discourse incorporates what the researcher calls the *command and control* subculture with its paramilitary ethos and the organisation's strict hierarchical command structure (Bonifacio 1991; Heidensohn 1992; Cain 2002; Fleming & Lafferty 2003; Kappeler, Sluder & Alpert 2001; Palmer 1994; Panzarella 2003; Waddington 1999a) which represent a 'punishment-centred bureaucracy' (Waddington 1999b, p.301).

Combine this with Westmarland's (2001, p.5) study that examines the representation of policing in terms of '...physical abilities such as running, climbing, and fighting...' and carrying weapons and accoutrements which are the symbols of police power (Westmarland 2001). Such a conception portrays the body as 'physical capital – a possessor of power, status and distinctive symbolic forms' (Shilling 1997, cited in Westmarland 2001, p.5), or the body as a political object (Foucault 1977). These abilities, functions, and symbols translate to the body and its physical applications being valorised and used as markers of success, ability, competence, credibility, status and reputation (Westmarland 2001). Embedded in this conception of the body is 'performativity' (Butler, cited in McNay 2000, p.33; Webster 2006, p.5), not only that of an effective student (or trainee) and demonstrating conformity (Freire 1970/2000, cited in Webster 2006), but importantly, that associated with gender identity. Butler (cited in McNay 2000) argues gender identity must be performed or enacted, and the more often it is enacted or performed, the more it is etched on the body and the more it reinforces the norms.

Tough-love family D/discourse aligns with the researcher's notion of *family-relationship* subculture characterised by solidarity, cohesion, a common understanding and identity provided by peers ('family') and the department ('parent') (Bonifacio 1991; Fielding 1994; Neyroud & Beckley 2001; Prenzler 1998; Reiner 1992, cited in Shanahan 2000; Waddington 1999b). At the heart of this relationship is the supportive *and* punitive relationship with the 'family' (peers) and the 'parent' (the department) (Bonifacio 1991). It is essentially about a D/discourse that is both a product and resource of the dominant culture, the power relations inherent within it,

and how that D/discourse circumscribes an individual's subjectivity and consequently her or his agency. This occurs not only within a particular category or occupation (i.e. police officer) and as part of a larger organisational context, but also within a particular group or unit (i.e. peer group). It is therefore about membership and acceptance within an organisation, occupation, and a peer group – how one perceives oneself, how one is perceived by others, and is “Othered” by others (Hall 2004). “Othering” can be understood as a consequence of a number of D/discourses produced by organisational and occupational police subcultures. These D/discourses construct difference and enact “Othering” based around a number of factors such as gender, sexuality, commitment to the ‘family’ (peers) and the ‘parent’ (department), and lack of conformity. A New Zealand study by Frewin and Tuffin (1998, p.181) of homosexuality in policing identified what they called ‘internal pressure discourse’ with resources of marginalisation, isolation, surveillance of peers by peers, rumours, and threats to safety which are performed ‘on those who fail to conform’: who fail to function as committed team members. Studies by Frewin and Tuffin (1998) and Cancino and Enriquez (2004) found that police culture and peer retaliation function as a form of social control to essentially maintain the status quo.

Image, behaviour, discipline, ability to handle self (Westmarland 2001), separateness, and a sense of superiority underlie the *Perfect self* D/discourse and link to the “*real*” *police work* subculture, as identified by the researcher, and aspects of the *family-relationship* subculture. The *family-relationship* is built upon the perception of and ability to be capable and reliable which necessitates the need to be or be seen to be “perfect”, thereby avoiding mistakes (Bonifacio 1991; Neyroud & Beckley 2001; Manning 1978, cited in Chan 1999; Shanahan 2000; Waddington 1999a & 1999b). This supports the “*real*” *police work* subculture which is grounded in operational policing and represented by a ‘sense of mission’ (Reiner 2000, p.89) and political and legal sanctions to control society (Manning 1977). In essence, this D/discourse and complementary subcultures support the development of particular thinking styles or rationalities which simultaneously support and maintain culture, D/discourses, actions, and power and gender relations. The application of Foucault’s ‘governmental rationalities’ (Adlam 2002, pp.15-16) to this research reveals an élitist identity as the result of the ‘socio-biological élitist rationality’ (Adlam 2002, pp.27-28) – built on the notions of legitimate power and authority (Silvestri 2003) and the belief that police “know best” (Adlam 2002, pp.27-28). This is complicated by the imperative to “manage the look” through the construction and maintenance of a credible, professional police image according to the ‘post-modern rationality’ (Adlam 2002, p.31). Frewin and Tuffin (1998) also identified the ‘conformity discourse’. This represents an obligation to “look the part” and appear to “fit in” with the images and ‘standards’ of the occupation (Frewin & Tuffin 1998, pp.178-181): an adherence to standards and images by whatever means (Frewin & Tuffin 1998, p.178).

Having defined the D/discourses, the reasons for classifying the majority of these elements within these three D/discourses are self-explanatory especially those in the *Warrior* D/discourse which includes gender given that it is a central feature of that D/discourse. The classification of some elements however can be clarified. Firstly, the inclusion of E10 – “different” in *Tough-love family* D/discourse is related to the punitive nature of the relationship with peers (‘family’) and the department (‘parent’) (Bonifacio 1991), and essentially, it provides the opposite to being accepted, complying and conforming. This D/discourse has a focus on internal relationships, where *Perfect self* D/discourse is about external relationships and image. With this in mind, apart from E12 – “reputable”, the remaining elements in *Perfect self* D/discourse are seen to represent attributes that underlie what police refer to as “being professional” which incorporates being seen to be in control; maintaining a calm, slightly removed yet assertive demeanour in the public domain.

Analysing the D/discourses

Following the quantification of the distance between each element within each construct, the researcher looked at the number of times each element was represented within the top three positive element scores for each group and each construct. It is noted that the total number of elements provided by each group differs. Essentially, the trainers provided a wider range of elements than the other groups. This could be attributed to their more extensive and broader experience. The researcher acknowledges challenges in analysing the data based on different totals, but believes the analysis is indicative of the value afforded these D/discourses by each group, and therefore worthy of consideration and interpretation.

Trainers (9 participants)		Trainees (group 1) (7 participants)		Trainees (group 2) (7 participants)	
Total elements = 53		Total elements = 32		Total elements = 39	
<i>Warrior</i>	39.5%	<i>Warrior</i>	56%	<i>Warrior</i>	33%
<i>Tough-love family</i>	26.5%	<i>Tough-love family</i>	31%	<i>Tough-love family</i>	31%
<i>Perfect self</i>	34%	<i>Perfect self</i>	12.5%	<i>Perfect self</i>	31%

Preliminary interpretation of these results provides insights to the context, status and role as they relate to the participants. It also establishes a platform for further interpretation and analysis of training and learning perspectives and the impact of the training environment and the D/discourse on trainees' identity, subjectivity and agency.

The D/discourses most evenly distributed in the trainers' responses (elements) are those of the *Warrior* and *Perfect self*. These are followed reasonably closely by *Tough-love family* D/discourses. The trainers' results reveal a relatively comparable distribution of the D/discourses. The trainers interviewed were all very experienced police officers; the majority with more than ten years in policing. The researcher noted the initial correlations of the interview revealed more consistency in their responses to the various elements and constructs which could also be seen to be a product of experience. A point worthy of note and further discussion, but not within the scope of this paper, is that in three constructs the majority of trainers ranked "male" as the preferred gender. "Male" was "most admired" in C3, was seen as the "most suitable instructor" in C7, and the "ideal police officer" in C10. In these three constructs "female" was least represented. This certainly raises questions about hidden curriculum, and places gender very much on the agenda.

The D/discourse most predominant in the responses (elements) of the trainees in group 1 is that associated with *Warrior*. *Tough-love family* D/discourse is next, but the D/discourse of *Perfect self* does not seem to be very significant for this group. To place this in context, the researcher interviewed this group following graduation within the first six weeks of their role and functions as a probationary constable at a city police station. Their focus on the *Warrior* D/discourse is likely due to the fact they now have legislative powers, a warrant card, a uniform with the necessary weapons and accoutrements, and they are positioned to start applying that D/discourse to their daily policing practices. Their journey from applicant, to trainee, and now to

probationary constable means what they had been anticipating they have now attained: the identity of the 'police self' (Conti 2006, p.240). Further to this, they are in an environment that is perceived as the setting where "real learning" occurs, as opposed to the learning that occurs in the formal training environment.

In terms of *Tough-love family D/discourse*, this is likely to be due in major part to the fact that they are in the process of forming relationships and bonds with their peers and superiors – starting to demonstrate their ability to "look out for each other". Anecdotal examples suggest that the "talk" of operational police officers about the nature of "real" police work is more likely to reflect aspects of the *Warrior D/discourse*, and either explicitly or implicitly, the key features of the *Tough-love family D/discourse*: the expectations of those who are in effect the "experts", role models, and those who essentially "know best".

The responses (elements) of the trainees in group 2 show a relatively comparable distribution across the three D/discourses with *Warrior D/discourse* first, immediately followed by both *Tough-love family* and *Perfect self D/discourses*. The predominance of all three D/discourses is likely given that the trainees were interviewed between the eighth and 13th weeks of their training programme and there is much emphasis on fitness and defensive and operational tactics. Additionally, implicitly (through hidden curriculum) and explicitly, surveillance of their behaviour and attitudes is also a key feature. This involves assessment of behaviour and attitudes which reflect extent of dedication, discipline, image, conformity, fitting in, and becoming a member of the team. This is supported by the fact that trainees are assessed on their attitude towards others, their course work, and their role; albeit according to the expectations of the course directors and other trainers. The researcher is reminded of trainees' comments in the questionnaires: in response to barriers to learning – "Being afraid of ridicule from instructors", and in response to fitting in/belonging – "If you aren't you will be told by your peers and course directors during the personal behaviour profiles".

Reflecting on the repertory grid interview technique

On reflection, the researcher notes that this was an interesting process for both the interviewee and interviewer. The interviewees were given the element cards to arrange and "play with" after the process was conducted for first construct card. The majority of interviewees made comments – essentially thinking out loud, but quite often reflecting their thoughts, challenges in selection, and justification of final decisions – to the interviewer. These comments were not documented by the interviewer however they provided insights to individual's perceptions of self and others within her or his context, status, and role. For future reference, the researcher acknowledges that while the repertory grid interview produced a surfeit of rich data, it would also provide a positive platform for developing questions in subsequent in-depth interviews. The comments of the interviewees during the process highlighted a number of areas the researcher would have liked to explore and clarify.

Touching, sorting, and arranging the cards seemed to relax the interviewees and, in a sense, placed them at a slight distance from the interview process and the interviewer. Most interviewees appeared to be absorbed in the process – taking time to consider their selections. On completion of the interview, the majority of the interviewees sat back, turned to the interviewer and expressed interest in the whole concept – asking for more detail about the research, sharing personal insights triggered by the interview, and suggesting they would like to repeat this interview in 12 or more months' time, "To see how I have changed". Even though this style of

interview is different from in-depth and other types of research interviews, a relationship or bond between the interviewer and the majority of interviewees was established easily and quickly. As Harri-Augustein (1978, cited in Cassell & Walsh 2004) claims, the format or process is simple and is therefore appealing to the interviewees.

Further reflection on the application of the repertory grid interview reveals a number of positives. First and foremost, access. The technique enables access to individuals' perceptions of themselves and others in relation to police work. Through insights to how individuals construe the importance of various attributes to functions and roles within policing, it was possible to identify linkages between these perceptions and the training context. Supporting this access and essentially enabling it is format and structure. The process provides a very structured format for educating and presenting data and this is reinforced by Harri-Augustein (cited in Cassell & Walsh 2004, p.70) who claims that '...within the grid meaning is embodied and displayed within a relatively simple format'.

Another aspect is comfort and ease. As mentioned previously, the interviewees appeared to be comfortable and at ease in the interview and in major part this was due to the process, and enhanced by the use of the cards. Having something tangible with which to engage established a safe, non-threatening setting and the majority of the interviewees were actively involved with the cards – placing, sorting, and grouping them in order to make distinctions. In many respects, on the surface, the process appears more impersonal, yet the data educed is very personal.

In keeping with underlying assumptions of this technique, reflexivity is also a significant feature of the grid. Each interviewee is able to reflect on her or his own assumptions / beliefs about attributes he or she values and wants from others in a policing situation. For example, "wanting a patrol partner" who is authoritative, reputable and loyal, or "wanting an instructor" who is accepted, strong, and logical, or "wanting to be like someone" who is strong, authoritative and reputable. Continuing the theme of reflexivity, the researcher has been able to reflect upon and assess her assumptions and expectations surrounding the research project and its findings. Within the project, reflexivity enabled continuous review and adjustment of the research process.

Moving beyond the process and critiquing the project, the researcher notes some aspects that require evaluation and change. In particular, that the number of elements and constructs could be reviewed and perhaps reduced. Some constructs are similar and perhaps repetitive, for example, C9 – "peer support from" and C14 – "friend". The number of constructs and elements meant the data were challenging to analyse. In hindsight, eight to 10 of the constructs would have been sufficient to represent key functions and roles, these are: C2 – "patrol partner"; C4 – "violent situation"; C5 – "supervisor"; C7 – "instructor"; C10 – "ideal police officer"; C11 – "talk to end of shift"; C12 – "backup"; and C15 – "trust with life". In addition, C1 – "be like" and C3 – "admire" provided insights to participants' perceptions of self, and would therefore balance the other eight constructs noted above. In relation to the elements, E4 – "compliant" and E17 – "conforms" were similar. E13 – "sensitive" and E14 – "tolerant" could also have been perceived as similar in meaning and action. Either removing some of these and / or reworking the definitions would enhance the elements on offer.

Another consideration would be to explore other repertory grid analytical techniques thereby enabling different aspects of data to be correlated, interpreted, and incorporated in the overall analysis. This would permit more focus on participants'

psychological space in relation to their perceptions of themselves and others, and this could be integrated into the final analysis. Time would be required to allow the application of other statistical analyses.

Conclusion

This research project aimed to investigate the construction and interpretation of the 'discourse-practice' (Cherryholmes 1988, p.1) framework of policing in a training environment. Whilst the trainers might believe their teaching is based on 'true statements', from a deconstructive/post-structural perspective, 'truth is discursive' (Cherryholmes 1988, p.34). Within this context, particular conceptions of policing language, knowledge, practice, and meaning are privileged over other conceptions and are supported by the trainers '...who are charged with saying what counts as true' (Foucault, cited in Cherryholmes 1988, p.35).

The trainers' and trainees' personal constructs or 'networks of meaning' (Kelly, cited in Fransella & Bannister 1977, p.2) inform their experience, produce reality, and create their 'situated identity' and 'situated meanings' (Gee 2004, pp.40-41). The repertory grid interview technique facilitated access to trainers' and trainees' perceptions of personality and character attributes and gender in relation to a range of policing functions and roles. Their personal constructs represent their inner-most beliefs about themselves and others, either as real trainers and police officers or in the case of the trainees, as their anticipated 'police self' (Conti 2006, p.227), and expectations of their policing 'discourse-practice' (Cherryholmes 1988, p.1) framework. For the trainees, these personal constructs are the products of their experiences of training and learning in a police training environment, and the "truth" represented by the trainers.

The combination of the repertory grid interview technique as a quantitative method for gathering data and initial statistical analysis with a qualitative discourse analytic framework, within a deconstructive/post-structural perspective, has proven workable. The simplicity of the repertory grid interview technique and its potential to provide a rich and textured set of data are key features of its success. Whilst challenges were encountered in prioritising the extensive amount of data, opportunities have been identified to refine key aspects of the research and analytical processes.

The integration of the prevailing D/discourses – *Warrior, Tough-love family, Perfect self* and the subcultures within police culture – *family relationship, command and control, "real" police work*, support the conception of police culture as 'figurative logic' (Shearing & Ericson 1991, p.487). As the product of rhetoric and story telling which emphasises the need to conform, to "fit in" and belong, to commit to being capable and reliable, and "war stories" that valorise the 'cult of masculinity' (Waddington 1999b, p.302), a 'sense of mission' (Reiner 2000, p.89), and legal and political sanctions to control society (Manning 1977). Compounding this is the role of formal training and the predominance of pedagogical methods in police training (Birzer 2003; Birzer & Tannehill 2001; Marenin 2004). These methods arguably reinforce 'the chain of command, rules, regulations, and policy and procedures' (Birzer & Tannehill 2001, p.239) which establish and privilege as "truth" particular knowledge, symbols, practices, and meanings, thereby maintaining the status quo and sustaining police culture.

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